A Summary of Research and Evidence of Impact of Family Learning

Family Learning

Family learning has evolved as an intergenerational model of learning with learning outcomes for adults and children. Both generations learn from and with each other and this nurtures a culture of learning within the family. It can include a wide range of activities: some informal; some specific government funded programmes.

This paper summarises evidence to the Family Learning Inquiry about the impact of family learning. Most of the research and evidence focuses on the impact of specific learning programmes, including family English and maths.

Summary of the evidence of impact

Family English and maths and family learning programmes have as their principal aims:

- to benefit parents'/ carers' own skills, and/or
- to benefit parents'/carers' ability to assist their children's development, and/or
- to benefit children’s skills.

There is evidence of impact of family learning on each of these areas, with especially strong quantitative evidence for the impact on children’s attainment.

Research also provides evidence for the wider benefits of family learning with impacts on adult confidence, self esteem, motivation, self efficacy, parenting skills and practices, health and well being, employability, progression to further learning, involvement in culture and sport, as well as social impacts such as improved integration and community involvement.

With regard to the wider benefits of family learning, programme evaluation is largely based on testimonials and use of qualitative interview or observational data. There are multiple reasons for the lack of quantitative evidence. However the consistent reports of the wider benefits of family learning make a compelling case of wider impact and cry out for these research gaps to be addressed.

Method

The Family Learning Inquiry collected evidence in a variety of ways.
We commissioned a literature review from the NRDC. This document provides an authoritative summary of the evidence of impact of family learning programmes.

We sought further information from an open call for evidence from the field as well as approaching some key organisations for specific feedback. 32 submissions of evidence were received (as at 11.03.12): 20 from LAs of which 5 were from Wales, 9 from VCS organisations, 1 museum, 2 private companies. The wealth of qualitative evidence and the consistency of messages from case studies clearly suggests family learning can impact positively on a range of policy agendas.

A list of evidence submitted and some of the reports can be accessed at: http://www.niace.org.uk/current-work/family-learning-inquiry

In addition we brought together a research reference group, which met twice and supported us in collating a range of research reports and providing insights into the available research. The research reports are available at http://www.niace.org.uk/current-work/area/centre-for-the-learning-family

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2 Campaign for Learning, Supplementary Schools, Booktrust, National Literacy Trust, Community Learning and Health Foundation, NATECLA, Birmingham Churches, Ormiston Trust
Overview

We have pulled together the research and evidence submitted to the Inquiry and have summarised the information on evidence of the impact of family learning under the following headings:

1. **Impacts on children**
   - Skills
   - Non cognitive impacts
   - Child poverty and social mobility

2. **Impacts on parents**
   - Skills gains
   - Progression from learning
   - Confidence, self esteem, motivation, self efficacy
   - Parenting skills and practices

3. **Impacts on wider policy agendas**
   - Employability
   - Health
   - Improved relationships with school and positive impacts on family life
   - Social capital, integration, community involvement and volunteering
   - Involvement in culture and sports
   - Reducing Re-offending

4. **Gaps in research**

5. **The fiscal case for family learning**
1. Impacts on children

Parental engagement has a large and positive impact on children’s learning. This was the single most important finding from an influential review of the evidence:

‘Parental involvement in the form of ‘at-home good parenting’ has a significant positive effect on children’s achievement and adjustment even after all other factors shaping attainment have been taken out of the equation. In the primary age range the impact caused by different levels of parental involvement is much bigger than differences associated with variations in the quality of schools. The scale of the impact is evident across all social classes and all ethnic groups.’

(Desforges and Abouchar 2003)

Children do not learn only in formal settings. Since the majority of a child’s time is not spent in formal education, schools can only do so much.

1.1 Skills

Brooks et al 2008 found good quantitative evidence of benefits to children’s literacy, language and numeracy skills. Twelve of the nineteen studies in their review had test-based data showing evidence of child literacy improvements; eight studies had test-based data showing child language improvements; and six studies had test-based data showing child numeracy improvements.

The UK’s SPOKES programme (Supporting Parents on Kids Education in Schools), 2008, was targeted at children just beginning primary school, and aimed to address two issues in one intervention: children’s reading difficulties and behavioural problems. The intervention was part of a Randomised Control Trial and found in one year the intervention group showed an average reading improvement equivalent to 6 months of reading age; children also improved their writing skills and behaviour. Parents improved their use of reading strategies with their children. Despite the success of this programme, it does not appear to have been taken up widely.

Carpentieri et al (2011) summarised a number of meta-analyses of family literacy programmes throughout the world. All six of these analyses concluded that family literacy programmes produce positive effects on quantitatively measured child literacy outcomes. In four of the six meta-analyses the effect size of family literacy programmes on child literacy was greater than 0.4 and therefore greater than the

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3 Quoted in DfE 2010 Best Practice in Parental Engagement P5 DFE-RR156
4 NRDC/NIACE http://www.niace.org.uk/sites/default/files/project-docs/family_learning_research_review__final_-_8_june_2012.pdf P 29
5 Ibid p 29
6 NRDC NIACE pages 42-47
effect produced by the majority of educational interventions, as measured in meta-analyses.

**Table 1 Selected educational intervention effect sizes (adapted from Hattie 1999, 2009) and family literacy interventions compared**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention type</th>
<th>Effect size</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repeated reading programmes</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics instruction</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in pre-school programmes</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing class sizes from 23 to 15</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualised instruction</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework (at primary school level)</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention (i.e. repeating a school year)</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family literacy interventions</td>
<td>0.25 - 0.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In their review, Carpentieri et al (2011) summarised the findings of a meta-analysis conducted by Senechal and Young (2008). Sénéchal and Young analysed the effects of three types of parental involvement interventions: 1) those in which parents read to children; 2) those in which parents listened to their children read; and 3) those in which parents were trained to teach specific literacy skills to their children. These researchers found an overall effect size of 0.68, with outcomes for disadvantaged children being just as good as those of other children. Sénéchal and Young found significant variation depending on intervention type: programmes in which parents taught reading skills to their children produced a very large effect size: 1.15.

Findings of the REAL project show that family learning can be particularly effective for certain groups. For some children, particularly those whose mothers had no educational qualifications, the effects of family learning on their literacy development were large and more persistent.

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8 Adapted from: NRDC/NIACE [http://www.niace.org.uk/sites/default/files/project-docs/family_learning_research_review_final_-_8_June_2012.pdf](http://www.niace.org.uk/sites/default/files/project-docs/family_learning_research_review_final_-_8_June_2012.pdf); page 44 and 47

9 School of Education-Sheffield University; Effects of the REAL project (Raising Early Achievement in Literacy) [http://www.real-online.group.shef.ac.uk/docs/REAL%20EFFECTS%20POSTER%20FINAL%20with%20copyright.pdf](http://www.real-online.group.shef.ac.uk/docs/REAL%20EFFECTS%20POSTER%20FINAL%20with%20copyright.pdf)
A number of local authorities are beginning to collect and analyse data on the impact of family learning on children’s attainment. When looking at pupils that are deemed to be making a good level of overall development at the end of the foundation stage, data from Sheffield Local Authority show the difference between those pupils involved in a family learning programme is up to as much as 15 percentage points higher for some groups compared to those that have not been involved in family learning programmes. The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language who are deemed to be making good overall development is 64.8% for those involved in family learning v 48.0% for those not involved. Likewise the percentage of pupils from the 30% most deprived wards who are deemed to be making good overall development is 63.8% for those involved in family learning compared to 51.3% for those pupils who had not been involved in family learning programmes.

Table 2  Sheffield City Council analysis of foundation stage pupil data 2011-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Family Learning pupils</th>
<th>Non family learning pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of pupils achieving a good level of development*</td>
<td>64.7%</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6+ in each of PSED and CLL and 78points plus</td>
<td>Non family learning pupils</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English as Additional Language Pupils</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
<td>48.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of pupils achieving a good level of development</td>
<td>Family Learning pupils</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6+ in each of PSED and CLL and 78points plus</td>
<td>Non family learning pupils</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BME pupils</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of pupils achieving a good level of development</td>
<td>Family Learning pupils</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6+ in each of PSED and CLL and 78points plus</td>
<td>Non family learning pupils</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDACI 30% most deprived</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluation of the Booktrust programme\textsuperscript{11} showed when children who received Bookstart began school they had improved language and literacy performance in comparison to other children, and differences in attainment are still evident when the children are aged seven, based on their SATs results (Wade and Moore, 1998 & 2000).

The Dads in Demand programme\textsuperscript{12} designed by the Campaign for Learning engages fathers from BME communities in learning with their children. The evaluation of impact of delivery showed significant impact on children and young people’s motivation and attainment:

\textsuperscript{10} Evidence to the NIACE Inquiry into Family Learning
\textsuperscript{11} Evidence to the NIACE Inquiry into Family Learning \url{http://www.niace.org.uk/current-work/family-learning-inquiry}
\textsuperscript{12} Evidence to the NIACE Inquiry into Family Learning \url{http://www.niace.org.uk/current-work/family-learning-inquiry}
‘There was a dramatic improvement in progress for children who were involved in the Project (73% achieving the expected progress compared to 15% the previous year). A second noticeable area of impact is that 54% of the children actually exceeded national curriculum expectations in that year and in doing so thus narrowed the gap in their underachievement, some to the extent of completely catching up in their age related level of achievement. 23% of the children made the progress you would expect in two years over the single academic year of the Project.’ Mark Smith, Senior Ethnic Minority Achievement Consultant, London Borough of Harrow

The authors of the DfE review of most effective practice in parental engagement conclude that:

‘Many of the most impressive programmes included in this review are family learning programmes and, of these, the evidence of the impact of literacy interventions is particularly robust.’

1.2 Non cognitive impacts

There is strong evidence of the long-term benefits of programmes which focus on children’s non-cognitive development. For example, Nobel-prize winning economist James Heckman and colleagues\textsuperscript{14} have found that the primary benefits of high quality preschool programmes come from their impact on children’s behaviours and attitudes, not their impacts on cognitive skills. Family learning programmes are particularly well-suited to bring about sustainable changes in non-cognitive traits, both in children and parents. The best available evidence of this impact is a longitudinal study of a Turkish family learning project: children who participated in the programme had improved educational outcomes (up to and including university) and, as adults, tended to have higher occupational status\textsuperscript{15}.

Surveying the teachers of children participating in family learning courses, Ofsted (2009) found children had experienced a range of positive benefits. They had settled better in class, had improved their relationships with their peers, and had improved their relationships with the teachers. Teachers also felt that children participating in family learning had become more self-confident and had improved their communication and interpersonal skills.\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{13} DfE 2010 p85
\textsuperscript{15} Kağıtçibaşı, Ç., Sunar, D., Bekman, S., Cemalci\c{s}ar, Z. (2005). Continuing effects of early intervention in adult life: Preliminary findings of Turkish early enrichment project second follow up study. Istanbul: Mother Child Education Foundation Publications.
\textsuperscript{16} NRDC /NIACE p 30
\end{flushleft}
Horne and Haggart (2004) argue that improved confidence can play a crucial role in helping individuals and families to overcome what McGivney (1993) called the dispositional barriers to further learning. These dispositional barriers are related to learners’ attitudes, perceptions, motivations and beliefs about learning and themselves. Researchers suggest that dispositional barriers to learning are potentially the most important factors influencing motivation to learn and can be even more difficult to overcome than situational or institutional barriers (Porter et al, 2005). For many adults, increases in self confidence and self esteem may be essential stepping stones towards long-term skills development.17

1.3 Child Poverty and Social Mobility

There is a large and enduring education attainment gap between rich and poor which impacts on social mobility. It is well documented that children growing up in poorer families tend to have lower levels of educational attainment and participation in post-compulsory education than their peers. Research18 shows that the ‘attainment gap’ begins to emerge early in children’s lives, even before entry into school, continues throughout childhood, and leads to considerable gaps at age 16 and beyond. For example, poorer children are half as likely to go on to study at university as their more affluent peers. Recent research commissioned by the Sutton Trust19 found that high-achieving English boys from the poorest families lagged 30 months behind their high-achieving male classmates from the richest backgrounds in reading. For high achieving girls, the reading gap between those from the richest and poorest homes was two years and four months.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation review of the literature around aspirations and attitudes to learning20 explores the evidence for effective interventions in closing the attainment gap. It identifies three levels of intervention: effective, promising, and those interventions that do not work. The review concludes that the area with the most promise for the immediate future is parental involvement21 in children’s education. It found a ‘reasonable case’ that parental involvement in their children’s education has a causal influence on children’s school readiness and subsequent attainment.

‘Even when demanding standards were applied, interventions focused on parental involvement in children’s education demonstrated evidence of impact on raising attainment. This suggests that an immediate focus for both policy

17 NRDC NIACE p 8
18 Joseph Rowntree Foundation Research (Goodman and Gregg, 2010) and DfE statistics (DfE, 2011
accessed July 2013
20 http://www.niace.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/projects/Family/External_research/JOSEPH-
21 parent’ here is taken to include adult carers and guardians
and practice should be on developing a full cost-effective model of delivery of this type of intervention and ensuring detailed ongoing monitoring.\textsuperscript{22}

The Joseph Rowntree review presents a strong case for evidence of impact of family oriented programmes and for rolling out and closely monitoring the impact of family learning.

The evidence from longitudinal studies such as the Turkish Early Enrichment Project and Mother Child Education Programme shows that by their mid-20s, children who participated in family learning earned more and were more likely to have attended university. This finding is consistent with other evidence about the long-term returns to child and family development programmes\textsuperscript{23} and shows the impact of family learning on poverty and social mobility.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid Page 5
\textsuperscript{23} Reported in NIACE NRDC 2012 page 23
2. Impacts on parents and carers

2.1 Skills gains

Most publicly funded family learning in England comes from the Department of Business Innovation and Skills through the Skills Funding Agency and data on adult engagement and progression is recorded. The most recent statistics show that in 2011/12:

- of 58,000 learners enrolled on family English, Maths and Language programmes 50,900 (86.7%) achieved their learning aims
- of 72,800 learners on Wider Family Learning programmes 67,500 (92.7%) achieved their learning aims.

The England and Wales Family Literacy and Numeracy Demonstration Programmes were evaluated by Brooks et al in 1994–95. These evaluations found that the programmes were associated with statistically significant improvements in literacy skills for parents (and children) (Brooks et al, 1996). In a follow-up study, two years later, all these specific and many wider gains were being sustained (Brooks et al, 1997).

Swain et al (2009) found that the average proportion of parents achieving a qualification (looking only at family literacy) was 56% on short courses and 71% on standard courses.

2.2 Widening participation

Family learning reaches out to people from disadvantaged areas and includes people from BME backgrounds.

Black and minority ethic parents and carers are well represented in family learning. The percentage of black parents and carers participating in England in 2011/12 was 5.4%, compared with 3.3% in the general population. Asian parents are particularly well represented, with 13.9% Asian parents and carers taking part in these programmes, compared to 7.5% from Asian backgrounds in the general population.

Table 3 Community Learning by ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>FLLN</th>
<th>WFL</th>
<th>FLLN/WFL combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White British</td>
<td>66.2%</td>
<td>76.6%</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24 [Link to data source]
25 NRDC/NIACE page 16
26 NRDC/NIACE page 15
27 [Link to report]
28 Community Learning by type, by region, equality and diversity: participation and achievement (2005/6 – 2010/11), Data Service: 27.7.12
In England government statistics show that 54,600 participants in Family English, maths and language and wider family learning courses in one year lived in areas that are identified as ‘disadvantaged’ (see table 4). The recent government report of the Family Learning Impact Fund (FLIF) found evidence that the programme was successful in reaching disadvantaged learners. In 2009/10 49% of FLIF participants (over 6,000 learners) and in 2010/11 48% came from the 27% most deprived postcodes in England29.

Table 4 Community Learning Participation by Disadvantaged Status and Type, England, 2011/1230

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Disadvantaged Learners</th>
<th>Non-Disadvantaged Learners</th>
<th>Total Learners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Learners</td>
<td>206,600</td>
<td>476,700</td>
<td>683,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal and Community Development Learning</td>
<td>137,200</td>
<td>381,400</td>
<td>518,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities</td>
<td>25,800</td>
<td>29,900</td>
<td>55,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family English, Maths and Language</td>
<td>27,700</td>
<td>31,000</td>
<td>58,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wider Family Learning</td>
<td>26,900</td>
<td>45,900</td>
<td>72,800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Learners participating on more than one type of Community Learning course will be counted in each category but only once in the ‘Total Learners’ category. Postcode analysis is used to gain a proxy for identifying ‘disadvantaged’ learners.

2.3 Progression

One of the primary policy objectives of family learning programmes is to provide parents with a low-pressure step back into formal adult learning, taking advantage of parents' strong desire to support their children. Progression from family learning courses onto further learning opportunities is not easy to measure, as it requires tracking learners after they leave family learning courses.

Ofsted’s 200931 evaluation of family learning programmes found that in many providers most adults progressed on to longer courses where Skills for Life was more central to the programme. Successful adults progressed to further learning or

29 BIS; 2013; Family Learning Impact Fund Summary Paper
30 Source: BIS/SFA data service; information supplied June 2013; from Individualised Learning Record and OLDC uplift
31 NRDC/NIACE p16
vocational qualifications, most commonly in childcare and support work in schools. Many became more active in their child’s school or in their local community. OFSTED noted that a number of parents progressed to attending wider courses, including university courses. In one provider, a partnership with a local university provided specific progression routes for family learning participants to Access to Higher Education courses.

The Department of Business Innovation and Skills recently commissioned a literature review of the wider benefits of family learning. The review found the following educational gains for individuals taking part in family programmes:

- interest in further learning
- higher educational aspirations for parents and their children
- empowering experiences and process of learning.

Families and Schools Together (FAST) is an established international multi-family group programme offered after school to all reception year children living in a disadvantaged community (80% of the families taking part in the programme live below the poverty level). Four randomized controlled trials since 2004 showed that 44% adult/parents return for further education within two years. This was a surprising and positive outcome to evaluators since adult skills progression wasn’t an explicit part of the programme.

The summary paper of the Family Learning Impact Fund identifies that 85% of a sample of 2,643 learners reported some sort of progression after participating in a FLIF course.

- **61% reported progression in terms of their own learning or employment.** This includes progression to another family learning course, a higher level of learning, any other learning or training, new or improved employment.
- **60% reported progression in their social and personal lives.** This includes increased involvement in voluntary and community activities and improved personal confidence.
- **59% reported that they were better able to support their children’s learning and development.**

### 2.4 Confidence, self esteem, motivation, self efficacy

There is clear, consistent evidence regarding the impact of family learning on parents’ development of a range of competencies which better enable them to

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32 Evidence of the wider benefits of family learning: a scoping review BIS Research Paper 93 Nov 2012 Olga Cara Greg Brooks


34 BIS;2013;Family Learning Impact Fund Summary Paper
support their children's cognitive and non-cognitive development. These benefits include: improved confidence (in general, and specific to educational domains); improved self-efficacy and self-concept as a learner, and as a supporter of other learners, e.g. their children and their partners; and greater understanding of the importance of shared learning activities, such as parent-child reading. Numerous studies have identified these impacts eg Brooks 2008, Carpentieri et al 2011 35, and the 2013 BIS scoping review36.

Horne and Haggart (2004) found improved (reported) confidence in the survey data on family learning programmes in Lancashire. 85% (of those just completing their courses) reported increased confidence in at least one aspect of their lives. This improved confidence can lead to the development of a new self-concept as the person forms new additional skills and confidence.

2.5 Parenting skills and practices

There is a growing body of methodologically robust evidence demonstrating gains in parenting skills and practices. For example, quantitative research on the Turkish Early Enrichment Project (TEEP) and the Mother-Child Education Programme (MOCEP) has demonstrated the added value of family learning programmes which strive to improve parenting skills, not just children’s and/or adults’ cognitive skills. Such programmes aim to help parents develop the competencies, attitudes and practices needed to make the family a learning environment. Such an environment makes a large difference to the educational trajectories of children and young people including improved educational outcomes and better employment once the children reach adulthood.37

The recent BIS scoping review38 also confirms the family learning impacts on:

- improvement in parenting attitudes
- decreased parental stress
- increased knowledge of child development
- enhanced parenting skills
- bonding with children.

35 NRDC NIACE page 19
37 NRDC NIACE page 22
3. Impacts on other policy agendas

3.1 Employability

In the survey report 2009 Family learning: An evaluation of the benefits of family learning for participants, their families and the wider community, Ofsted note that gaining employment was a key benefit and progression outcome for parents who engaged in family learning provision. Parents frequently progressed into paid roles such as teaching assistants or lunchtime supervisors. Some took on voluntary roles such as becoming a school governor or to helping to support fundraising activities.

In England, OFSTED provide numerous examples of parents gaining employment following family learning:

Many parents gained employment, often starting from very low levels of confidence, skills or qualification base.

A Pakistani parent obtained paid employment for the first time in her life at her children’s school. She gained English for speakers of other languages qualifications, starting at entry level and progressing to level 2, and provided a positive role model for others when working in the school’s office.

A man who originally struggled in the family learning provision due to memory issues associated with a brain injury, successfully retrained and gained qualifications in childcare. He gained employment working as a teaching assistant.

Family learning had made a long-term impact on employment in one disadvantaged area. The family learning team made a significant input into the regeneration work of the area, and for one community that had high levels of need. This work was externally recognised. In 2008 the Family Learning Award was given to the neighbourhood partnership by the National Association for Neighbourhood Management, for a project aimed at breaking the cycle of educational underachievement by adding to the skills of adult family members so they could better help their children. Over a three-year period, 15% of the adults who took part in family learning had found work. This had a positive effect on the employment rate for the area and for household incomes, which had risen by 8%.

The summary report of the FLIF indicates 17% of the sample of 2,643 reported their family learning course was instrumental in them attaining new or improved employment.

39 http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/family-learning
40 OFSTED p20-21
41 BIS,2013; Family Learning Impact Fund Summary Paper
3.2 Health and wellbeing

Many of the organisations submitting evidence to the Inquiry indicated the benefits of family learning to health and well being.

_Skilled for Health_ is the evidence based English Health Literacy embedded learning resource. It is aimed at those adults who have the poorest health and learning outcomes.

The _Skilled for Health_ (SfH) programme was delivered across a range of contexts, including a variety of family learning settings during its pilot phase. The evaluation by the Tavistock Institute \(^{42}\) was based on participation by 3,500 people across 17 projects (157 settings) in England. In essence the evaluation, which applied across all settings showed that:

- Participants’ health behaviour improves: 88 per cent of participants reported to be eating more healthily by the end of the course and 65 per cent said they were exercising more often.
- Participants’ health knowledge increases significantly, particularly in the areas of healthy eating, exercising, smoking, drinking and looking after their mental health.
- Participants’ improved health knowledge and skills around healthy eating have secondary outcomes in terms of improvements made to their family’s diet and the cascading of their new knowledge back into their communities.

In addition, there have been numerous local SfH programmes, some of which have been evaluated and where they have the findings have mirrored those of the Tavistock Institute. Of particular note is a SfH programme which has been running for 5 years with Army Families in Wiltshire \(^{43}\). It has won best practice awards for its innovative work in tackling health inequalities among army families and within the communities that they are based in. Among the evaluated impacts are improved mental well being (increase in confidence, self esteem etc) and reduced isolation. This in turn has led to:

- Enhanced coping mechanisms which have a knock on effect to give learners stronger self confidence, thus reducing the likelihood of crisis situations when soldiers are on operational tours.
- Ability to make informed choices in respect of lifestyle changes, motivating them to seek wider life opportunities and care for themselves and their families.
- Reduction in attendance at GP’s surgeries.
- Change in what families eat.
- Improved behaviour of children within school.


\(^{43}\) Further details available from [http://www.chlfoundation.org.uk/](http://www.chlfoundation.org.uk/)
The Northumbria University evaluation of family learning at Sunderland Football Club identified health impacts\textsuperscript{44} for participants. Qualitative evidence showed how family learning courses had provided parents with the impetus to lose weight or to stop smoking or to take up sport in an effort to improve their overall levels of fitness.

Neuroscience research suggests that resilience, our adaptive response to stress and adversity, can be built up through education with lifelong effects into old age\textsuperscript{45}.

### 3.3 Improved relationships with school and positive impacts on family life

A number of local authorities submitted evidence indicating positive impacts on family life. Bradford council for example submitted evidence from their survey of local head teachers who reported improvements in relationships between families and the school.

The Isle of Wight Family Learning Programmes in schools and children’s centres support ‘readiness to learn’ and help improve parents’ relationships with schools, and ability to support children’s ‘at home’ learning and involvement in learning activities. Of 693 enrolments on Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy programmes in 2012, learner evaluations show that:

- 81% parents had increased motivation and enthusiasm for supporting their children after the course.
- 94% parents felt that their knowledge and skills to support their children with ‘at home’ learning had increased.

In England, Ofsted’s survey (2009) of teachers (reported above) found evidence from schools of improved relationships as a result of attending family learning.

In the post-course evaluation, of the Dads in Demand programme\textsuperscript{46} involving over 400 families, dads were asked how their relationship with the school had changed as a result of doing the course. Only 5% recorded no change, while 95% stated that the course had improved their relationship with their child’s school. After the programme 54% of dads reported they would now speak to teachers, go to school events and get involved in school activities, when previously they would not have done.

Changes fathers identified included greater confidence with school staff, (‘I now find it easier to contact teachers, while I hesitated before.’ ‘This has made me confident to speak with school staff.’), increased participation in school activities (‘Previously, I

\textsuperscript{44} \url{http://www.niace.org.uk/current-work/family-learning-inquiry}

\textsuperscript{45} The Royal Society; Neuroscience: implications for education and lifelong learning; Feb 2011

\textsuperscript{46} \url{http://www.niace.org.uk/current-work/family-learning-inquiry}, submission of evidence by the Campaign for Learning
didn’t really have much to do with school’), greater confidence through meeting other parents (‘Met other dads which gave me a lot of confidence’), improved perception of school and better understanding of how school operates (‘I feel positive about the school now and hope they will continue courses like this’; ‘made me more aware of how the school contributes to my children’s day to day learning’; ‘School appears more approachable.’) There were also reported effects on family life: 95% stated that the course had a positive impact on their family, and 91% identified a positive impact on their ability to learn together.

The NIACE review (2009)\(^{47}\) highlights fun, enjoyment, and improved family relationships as impacts for families amongst a range of other reported impacts of family learning programmes.

### 3.4 Social capital, integration, community involvement and volunteering

The recent BIS research review of the wider benefits of family learning\(^{48}\)identifies evidence that family learning:

- develops a sense of community
- improves social cohesion through higher involvement in local community and school
- increases social networks, that is, improved and newly formed social relationships
- leads to greater integration within the community
- promotes active citizenship
- improves capacity to advocate for themselves and their children.

Evidence from local authority family learning programmes in the IOW, showed of over 1,000 parents who came to courses nearly a half said that they were now more involved in school and community life.

The National Literacy Trust’s evaluation of their London Literacy Champions Project (June 2011- July 2012) provided compelling evidence of the benefits of using volunteers to engage families into learning and increase children’s attainment in literacy. \(^{49}\). The project used over 450 volunteer ‘Literacy Champions’ to shift the attitudes and behaviours of more than 1600 disadvantaged families in their communities, giving them the confidence and knowledge to support their children’s literacy development.

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\(^{47}\) Providing the Evidence: the impact of wider family learning’ carried out by NIACE (Lamb et al. 2009)


The review found that two months after involvement in the project, 46 per cent of participating children had improved their communication development in terms of speaking and listening from emergent levels to levels expected of their age. 52 per cent improved their engagement with books and stories from emergent to expected levels, with 16 per cent improving from expected levels to exceeding expectations for their age.

In addition to gains in children’s attainment the project was effective in introducing families to the available support in their communities through family literacy activities in libraries and children’s centres. Over half the families who attended these sessions reported that it was unlikely that they would have done so without the support of the volunteers. All families felt more confident about attending activities after the project, with 94 per cent intending to go again.

Supplementary schools provide powerful evidence of the impact of family learning on integration and cohesion through the personal testimonies submitted as youtube videos:

- **Shpresa** [http://shpresaprogramme.com](http://shpresaprogramme.com)
- **Paiwand** [www.paiwand.com](http://www.paiwand.com)
- **HuaHsia** [www.huahsiachinese.org.uk](http://www.huahsiachinese.org.uk)
- **Kensington & Chelsea Partnership of Supplementary Schools** [www.westway.org/education](http://www.westway.org/education)
- **Bright Education Centre** [http://brightcentres.co.uk](http://brightcentres.co.uk)

Personal testimony from participants in the Manchester Adult Education Service intergenerational buddy project shows how the project reduced negative stereotypes and supported cohesion. 50

### 3.5 Involvement in culture and sports

Museums and Libraries provided many examples of family learning which introduced families to the arts, for example the Manchester Museum family learning programme. 51 Others include the National Museum of Wales, the Glynn Vivian Gallery Swansea, the Museum of Childhood London, the National Trust, Newport City Council.

The research by Northumbria University\textsuperscript{52} on the impact of family learning at Sunderland FC shows a variety of outcomes, including widening involvement in sport and coaching. Of those taking part in the family learning through sport programme:

- 93\% improved their motivation and aspirations
- 94\% raised their self esteem
- 95\% increased their knowledge and understanding of being a coach
- 93\% increased their skills to stimulate their child’s learning
- 93\% increased communication/interaction skills
- 79\% improved their relationship with the school
- 86\% improved their relationship with their child

\section*{3.6 Reducing Re-Offending}

There are very few robust studies of the impact of family learning on reducing reoffending. Two studies indicate positive effects:

The Ormiston Trust \textit{You and Your Child} programme was evaluated in 2008 with a sample of 20 learners taking part in follow up interviews 6 months after the completion of their course. The research relates to attitudinal changes and showed all but one respondent felt that doing the course had strengthened their motivation to reduce re-offending behaviour in the future\textsuperscript{53}.

A longitudinal study of prisoners, partners and their children by the Ormiston Trust and Cambridge University (2012) concluded that participation in family oriented programmes is one of the predictors most consistently linked to positive resettlement outcomes\textsuperscript{54}.

However there are many vibrant examples of family learning with dads taking place in prisons which report impact but which haven’t been subject to research. Examples include: the Storybook Dads project which started in Dartmoor, and Park Prison, Bridgend.

\textsuperscript{52} \url{http://www.niace.org.uk/current-work/family-learning-inquiry}
\textsuperscript{53} \url{http://www.niace.org.uk/current-work/family-learning-inquiry}
\textsuperscript{54} \url{http://www.niace.org.uk/current-work/family-learning-inquiry}
4. Gaps in the research

Our review identified gaps in the research on the impact of family learning. There is an alarming absence of longitudinal studies assessing the long-term impacts of family learning. There are gaps too in assessing the impact of family learning across a range of policy agendas since the primary aim of most government funding is on children and adults’ skills attainment. This situation means that the field is wide open for better research.

There are a range of reasons for these gaps in research, not least because conducting robust research is resource intensive and provision does not usually include sufficient funding to collect and analyse data in a systematic and rigorous way. There is evidence that family learning programmes provide a catalyst for long-term changes in the aspirations, confidence and life chances of children and adults. However, the funding that supports programmes is usually renewed on an annual basis and does not include resources for tracking longer-term changes and impact. We believe it is essential these gaps are addressed.

Promising areas for research are:

- a longitudinal study of the wider benefits of family learning using evidence from UK birth cohort studies including the National Child Development Study and ILRs;
- a pilot RCT of the impact of Family Literacy programmes on parents/carers gaining employment and increasing participation in their children’s schools;
- a full RCT to explore a range of impacts of Family English and maths programmes including parental engagement and practices in the home (good at home parenting), home learning environment, child literacy scores, etc;
- measuring return on investment.
5. The fiscal case for family learning

Carpentieri\textsuperscript{55} argues that the key question in deciding whether or not to employ a particular educational intervention is not ‘Does it work?’ Most educational interventions work to some degree (Hattie, 2009). The key question is: ‘How well does an intervention work in comparison to other viable alternatives?’ The meta-analytic evidence indicates that family literacy programmes have a greater impact than most educational interventions. This impact is heightened by consideration of the reduced opportunity cost associated with family literacy programmes. While school-based interventions tend to be “either-or” propositions – if one intervention is being implemented in a classroom, others cannot be – family interventions (the vast majority of which occur outside of school hours) are more likely to complement than to compete with school activities.

Longitudinal research from outside the UK has found that family learning produces large returns to society. For example, a longitudinal study of an American preschool programme (which also included a 1.5-hour per week ‘parental training’ component) found that for every dollar spent when the participants were young, society had saved $12.90 by the time they were 40\textsuperscript{56}. Almost all the evidence of social return on investment in parental intervention is American. There are very few robust quantitative UK studies to draw on.

A recent DCLG report provides the Inquiry with a strong case for government investment in family learning. The DCLG report Feb 2013 (the Fiscal Case for Working with Troubled Families)\textsuperscript{57}, found that the overall cost of troubled families to the government is estimated to be around £9bn per year. Of this, £1bn is targeted and £8bn reactive spend. Overall, the analysis estimated that government is spending “eight times more reacting to the problems of troubled families than we are delivering targeted interventions to turn around their lives”. This ratio is most extreme in the case of crime, where the reactive spend was over 80 times that of the targeted spend.

Investing in family learning will enable savings in other departmental costs. Family learning is a cost effective and sustainable approach because it delivers multiple outcomes through a single intervention and embeds these changes in attitudes and behaviours, as well as new knowledge, understanding and skills, within the family.

\textsuperscript{55} NRDC NIACE 2012


A case study to demonstrate these potential savings was developed in the Isle of Wight (see below):
### Table 5 costs of interventions and benefits supporting Learner A at start of involvement in Family Learning and final costs once moved into work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Annual estimated cost before Family Learning intervention</th>
<th>Annual cost of Adult, Community &amp; Family Learning intervention</th>
<th>Annual cost once moved through Family Learning into work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GP</td>
<td>Mental health issues</td>
<td>£1849</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescription**</td>
<td>Mental health issues</td>
<td>£1000</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art and Samba Sessions</td>
<td>Helped with mental health issues</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse**</td>
<td>Support with health issues including weight and smoking cessation</td>
<td>£3000</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community mental health team**</td>
<td>Support with mental health issues in community</td>
<td>£6000</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art classes through WEA</td>
<td>Progression within arts learning</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>Issues with partner</td>
<td>£850</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal aid</td>
<td>Dealing with issues with partner</td>
<td>£3000</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early interventions Multiple services**</td>
<td>Early interventions with partner</td>
<td>£25000</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting support</td>
<td>Issues around youngest child</td>
<td>£300</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Literacy, Language &amp; Numeracy with her youngest daughter took her literacy level 1 and 2</td>
<td>Stopped taking drugs for mental health issues due to increase in confidence friendships and improved relationships with youngest daughter</td>
<td>£700</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginners’ IT</td>
<td>Keeping up with the children</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>£50</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Archaeology course</td>
<td>Embedded numeracy course leading to work experience</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>£200</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First aid course</td>
<td>To enhance employability skills</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>£50</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOCN Law and Order levels 1 and 2</td>
<td>Used at interview to gain employment in care home as domestic due to knowledge of confidentiality and understanding of negotiation skills and willingness to learn</td>
<td>£200</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits**</td>
<td>Paid benefits as a single mother of two</td>
<td>£24000</td>
<td>£11000</td>
<td>£11,000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering in community with Town Hall planting scheme gaining an award</td>
<td>Community run group to enhance local area (still involved)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work based courses at nursing home</td>
<td>Nursing home managers comment positively on her eagerness to learn</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total average costs</strong></td>
<td><strong>£64,099</strong></td>
<td><strong>£1,370</strong></td>
<td><strong>£11,000</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interventions longer than one year

* Unable to do contracted hours at work due to needs of younger daughter so still some residual benefits received.

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58 From report prepared by the FLLAG Group and NIACE March 2011.