

CITIZENS' CURRICULUM CASE STUDY

MANTON CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Charlotte Robey

June 2015



© NIACE 2015

Published by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (England and Wales)

21 De Montfort Street

Leicester LE1 7GE

Company registration no. 2603322

Charity registration no. 1002775

NIACE is the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, the national voice for lifelong learning. We are an international development organisation and think-tank, working on issues central to the economic renewal of the UK, particularly in the political economy, education and learning, public policy and regeneration fields.

www.niace.org.uk

Follow NIACE on Twitter:

[@NIACEhq](https://twitter.com/NIACEhq)

[@NIACEDC \(Wales\)](https://twitter.com/NIACEDC)

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without the written permission of the publishers, save in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency.

CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Background.....	4
How it worked	5
Impacts and outcomes	6
For learners	6
For staff.....	7
For Manton Children's Centre	7
Critical success factors	8
Further information and contact.....	8

Introduction

Taking a Citizens' Curriculum approach ensures all individuals have the core set of skills they need for the 21st Century, including English, maths, ESOL, digital, civic, health and financial capabilities. NIACE is committed to widening access to these skills, particularly amongst under-represented groups in society, as well as improving the range and quality of provision available to all adults. These interrelated skills, which underpin lifelong learning, can be made more accessible by being contextualised and developed as an integrated curriculum offer or framework.

In 2015/16, the development of a Citizens' Curriculum was taken forward by thirteen pilots across a range of organisations including colleges, local authorities and charities. The pilots tapped into what motivates adults to learn, ensuring that more people are learning skills which are relevant to their lives, their needs and their work. Particular areas of focus included provision for homeless / vulnerably housed adults, offenders, ex-offenders, migrants, families and disadvantaged young adults. The pilots provided insight into methods of adopting a Citizens' Curriculum approach, how effective the approach is in engaging disadvantaged learners, the impact on learners and providers, and key success factors for both the learner and the provider. This case study tells the story of one of the pilots.

Background

Manton Children's Centre is based in Manton Wood, Worksop. There are two main companies in the area which regularly hire migrant workers, and as a result there are an increasing number of migrant families living in the local area. One of the Centre's targets is to reach and engage these migrant families in their provision to support their integration into the community. For the last three years, staff have been running a Polish family stay and play at Kilton Children's Centre, which is supported by a Polish volunteer. This has proven very popular with migrant families and often acts as a springboard for parents to access further learning.

However, the Centre has found it difficult to engage families before their children start school. Because many of these parents cannot speak English, they are often unaware of the Centre and what it offers, or are reluctant to engage with a centre where staff do not speak their home language. As a result, their children are at a disadvantage when they start nursery or school because they have few opportunities to practise English at home or in the community.

The aim of the Centre's Citizens' Curriculum pilot was to engage with these families, identify their learning needs and provide an environment which embedded language learning into a range of other capabilities. The Centre hoped that, as a

result of this approach, the attainment gap for migrant children would lessen and parents themselves would improve their English by learning with their children.

How it worked

The Centre has three Polish volunteers who run sessions with families during school holidays. At the last parent forum meeting for this programme, the pilot lead asked whether parents would be interested in having an additional weekly session which they could attend with their children. Parents were involved in discussions about the timing and content of sessions to ensure they were suitable for those who worked.

To engage other families in the programme, the pilot lead spoke directly to the personnel departments at the two main companies who regularly hire migrant workers. They designed posters and asked if they could put them up around the workplace, and also asked if they would notify them when they hired a new migrant worker so they could offer them the opportunity of engaging with the programme.

In addition to this, the Centre worked closely with the two coordinators at the nearby Centre for Sport and Learning who run a Language Café, which has been very successful at engaging parents from Polish families. The coordinators advertised the pilot programme by speaking directly with learners, putting up posters and promoting it through their Facebook page. One of the coordinators of the cafe also pulled together a database of the Polish families in the local area, which enabled the Centre to contact families directly.

The pilot was planned jointly between a tutor, a Speech and Language Therapist and an Early Years Specialist Teacher. They worked together to develop the session plans for the pilot, taking into account the needs of the learners expressed at the parent forum meeting. The programme was then delivered by the Centre's tutor who was supported by a Polish volunteer and two Care, Play and Learning Workers. Sessions were run on a weekly basis at the Children's Centre and lasted for one and a half hours.

The programme aimed to develop parents' ability to support their children to understand and use English words and interaction strategies which will impact on their literacy levels at a later stage. Each session started with "circle time", which encouraged the families to greet one another and make friends. The programme then embedded the language, literacy and numeracy capabilities into different weekly themes which encouraged parents and children to speak, write, read and count together. For example, one week the theme was clothes and families dressed up dolls and teddy bears then described what they were wearing. In another session, families sang Old MacDonald Has a Farm and described and counted the different animals. The Care, Play and Learning Workers were crucial in supporting parents to learn how to embed learning into playing with their children. They provided parents with hand-outs so they could continue to use these strategies at home.

'So the parents are using and learning strategies from ourselves, early language strategies to support their children to develop the vocabulary that they need to, learning songs and rhymes and building that confidence, so when have their free play they build that in as well.' (Tutor)

Impacts and outcomes

For learners

Both staff and learners were very positive about the outcomes which learners had experienced as a result of participating in the pilot. By the end of the pilot, parents were more confident in using English with their children and in supporting their language development. The staff involved in the project commented that, although these families already had very positive attitudes towards learning, they were not using the 'school language' or effective learning strategies with their children at home. As a result of working with the Care, Play and Learning Workers, parents had started to use the strategies taught in the sessions in their own homes to support their children's language development, thereby not only improving their own but also their children's language capability.

'Now those parents realise how important it is for those children to have those basics to help them into school... this [programme] was specific to what they may come across when they start nursery or school. So the adults will then have learnt the school language, if you like - in its crudest terms. So I think they will have picked that up.' (Tutor)

The importance of speaking English and encouraging their children to do the same was a key outcome for the parents on the programme. In particular, they felt that the strategies they had learnt will give their children a head start at school as they will know some of the language and be able to make friends more easily.

'This course helped me because I've been told before that I shouldn't talk to my little girl in English and I should only teach her Polish language. Because of this course, I realised that I was doing very good and I should still talking to her in English and teach her more English so it is easier for her and it will be easier for her when she will go to school.' (Learner)

'Well, it will be easier for the little ones to go to school and pre-school because they will learn more English and all that so that's good for them.' (Learner)

All of the parents on the programme were keen to continue learning. By the end of the programme, the majority of parents had already started or signed up to a further course. Four parents enrolled on the English for Beginners at Manton Children's Centre which was starting the following September. Some parents were attending a Family Cooking course with their children, while others were starting to take their children to a play session at the local library where they read and played together. Two of the parents had also expressed an interest in volunteering at the Children's

Centre and another two had started attending the local language cafe which aims to support migrant adults to learn English.

The interactive nature of the programme meant that learners had become firm friends over a short timeframe. Because the programme targeted migrant families, many of the parents attending the programme had felt quite isolated in their community. Their participation in the Citizens' Curriculum pilot had helped them to build social relationships with others in a similar situation and had given them a sense of belonging in their community. This had improved the civic capability of some parents who felt more confident to engage in community activities and access local services. Some parents also felt more confident to engage with the school that their older children attended and to speak to their children's teachers.

'I think socialisation, interacting with other parents, sharing ideas and being part of a community really. These sessions have been useful to reinforce that.'
(Tutor)

For staff

The staff involved in developing and delivering the pilot felt that they had learnt a lot from working with this target group. In particular, the Centre's tutor found it beneficial to work alongside the Speech and Language Therapist and the Care, Play and Learning Workers to build both of these aspects into their provision. This had helped her to develop her practice and increase her confidence in working with younger children.

'I think I've noticed the change in [the tutor], a really positive one. I think I've identified it, that [the tutor's] more tuned into the children and adopting more of the strategies that you would be suggesting as speech therapists, so those interaction strategies.' (Pilot lead)

For Manton Children's Centre

The positive outcomes of the pilot confirmed to Manton Children's Centre that the Citizens' Curriculum approach is effective in supporting their target group to develop their language skills and integrate into the local community. As a result, they are looking to work with schools in their local area to deliver the programme to migrant families with young children who have not had support to develop their English vocabulary. The Centre are hoping to offer the provision as a rolling programme which families can access term by term and which will support their children to develop their English vocabulary and confidence in speaking.

'So we're determined I think now that because it's just been such a huge success that we will carry it on and that we will do a package, give it schools and say look this is what's available, it's free and that's the thing, isn't it? That sustainability really.' (Pilot lead)

Critical success factors

- A combination of recruitment methods and engagement strategies, including working in close partnership with the Centre for Sport and Learning and local employers, was highly effective in recruiting migrant families onto the programme.
- Consulting with parents about the content and delivery of the programme prior to engagement ensured that it was accessible for the target group and met their learning needs.
- Having Care, Play and Learning Workers to support the tutor in delivering the programme helped parents to develop effective learning strategies to support their children's language development.
- The interactive and social nature of the programme supported learners to develop friendships and reduce their social isolation, increasing their confidence to get involved in the community and use local services.

Further information and contact

For more information about Manton Children's Centre, please visit

http://www.bassetlawchildrenscentre.co.uk/?page_id=33

For more information about the NIACE Citizens' Curriculum, please contact Alex

Stevenson at alex.stevenson@niace.org.uk