

Change for families: A briefing by Capacity and Take Three Days

Nearly 1.8 million children in England live in families where parents are not in employment.¹ Three quarters of those children are in families headed by a lone parent. More than 40% of lone parents are unemployed.²

In addition, an estimated 2% of families in England experience multiple difficulties. A study of pathfinder approaches to supporting such families found that the largest single risk to families' social and economic well-being was unemployment.³

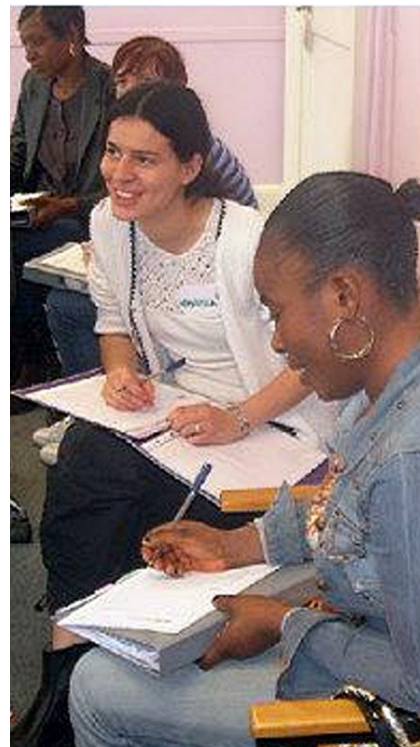
The Work Programme is intended to help people to get back to work, but without a parallel investment in family support and education, will not enable families with complex needs move very far from poverty.

Unequal access to skills increases the likelihood of unemployment or low-paid, unskilled work. Yet adults on limited incomes have the lowest participation rates in post-school education and according to the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), the gap between the learning rich and the learning poor is widening.

¹ HMR&C NI116 2008

² ONS Labour Force Survey updates April 2011

³ Department for Education (2011) Redesigning Provision for Families with Multiple Problems – an Assessment of the Early Impact of Different Local Approaches



This briefing has been produced in response to the announcement of forthcoming DWP/ESF funding to support families with multiple problems to take steps towards employment.

To be successful, services must work together to support families from their own starting points and at their own pace. Embedded access to learning and skills is essential.

Closing the achievement gap

Skills also have an important bearing on financial capability; on health and well-being; and on the capacity of parents to support their children's learning. Approximately half of the working age population lack basic numeracy skills and one in six lack basic literacy skills.⁴

The 2003 Skills for Life Survey estimated that more than one million adults had insufficient literacy skills to capably describe a child's symptoms to a doctor or to withdraw money from a cash point. Nearly seven million adults with poor numeracy skills might not be able to understand price labels or pay household bills.

A report from the National Literacy Trust suggests that failure to tackle poor literacy is threatening action on child poverty. A survey of 500 local providers found that nearly half rarely or never signpost parents to support for themselves and more than a third rarely or never talk to parents about how they could support their children's literacy.⁵

... ensuring everyone has the opportunity to improve their skills is the best way to improve social mobility in the UK

Leitch Review of Skills 2006

There is too often a divide between services which work to support parenting, adult training providers and services to help individuals to find employment. Families need a single point of access to all of the help they require; to feel in control of their own futures and to progress at the right pace for them.

A new approach to building capacity in families and communities

Capacity and *Take Three Days* are now joining forces to develop and offer a new programme - *Change for families* - bringing together children's centres, schools, employment advisers, housing partnerships and families themselves, to take decisive action to address child poverty and worklessness.

Take Three Days is a programme developed by Liz Sewell, former Chief Executive of Gingerbread and now a consultant programme designer and trainer. *Take Three Days* has helped parents to transform their lives by giving them the confidence to return to work, education and training.

Wishes is an award-winning programme to intensively support parents with no or low qualifications to address literacy and numeracy needs, gain qualifications and to move into employment. It has been designed and delivered by Capacity, led by Margaret Lochrie, former Chief Executive of the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

⁴ Skills for Life Survey 2002/2003

⁵ National Literacy Trust (2011) Local authorities improving life chances: A review of a new approach to raising literacy levels

The approach is based on three ideas:

Partnership - between professionals, individuals, and communities

Ownership - families work together and are involved in decision-making

Learning - as a tool for supporting aspiration and overcoming disadvantage

Re-designing delivery

Change for Families offers a new and different way of thinking, for example, about families thought to be *hard to reach* instead focusing on any aspects of service delivery which may put people off.

Parents feel they are listened to and are in control. Each has his or her own individual learning and development plan, tailored to provide suitable and achievable progression. Professionals receive training in how to create engaging and effective motivation and confidence building events - which respond to families' needs.

“Wishes has changed my life. It’s changed my children’s lives too because now I am able to help them”

The programme also builds capacity in families at the time they most need that help, often when their children are very young. By providing a *whole family* approach, including help with basic skills; work-related training; opportunities to meet and work with other parents; and other tailored supports, parents are empowered to take charge of their lives.

Change for Families also tackles the barriers which prevent people from moving into employment or addressing learning needs. Some of these barriers are related to family circumstances, or health or emotional issues while others stem from the lack of certain resources, such as childcare or transport or access to IT. Through working through all of these factors, barriers are overcome.

Contact us

If you share our ideas, would like to work with us, or would like more information.

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“The boost I needed to get me back to work”

Parent

Take Three Days