

Questionnaire Ireland for Family Literacy Project QualiFLY

1. In the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) 1995, 25% of the Irish population were found to score at the lowest level, Level 1. This means that 500,000 individuals are only able to cope, at best, with the most basic literacy tasks in society.

The findings of the survey resulted in a significant increase in the level of government funding to adult literacy. Previously nearly all adult literacy tuition had been provided by volunteers. Now volunteers still provide one to one literacy tuition but the range of group classes has increased significantly. All group tutors are paid.

The adult literacy service which is administered and managed by the Vocational Education Committees (VEC's) work in partnership with the schools, community groups and other agencies to deliver an adult literacy service that includes progression routes for students to gain basic educational qualifications if they so wish.

2. The term family literacy refers to programmes that focus on the interactions between parent and child which promote the development of literacy and numeracy skills. In family literacy, it is implicit in the goals of the programme that participants will lead to further involvement in lifelong learning and especially in improving literacy skills.
3. The focus on family literacy is from the perspective of the adult learner. The mission statement of NALA, which is embraced by the service providers, "to ensure that all adults with literacy difficulties have access to a range of high quality learning opportunities." The aim of the family learning programmes is to facilitate and support groups wishing to develop programmes for adult learners which recognise and support their key role as family members.

In learning about and gaining skills to assist in their role as the first and primary educators of their children, parents and other care-givers in the family are developing and educating themselves.

4. Family literacy courses tend to be of eight to ten weeks in duration. They are usually held in the school or community based centres. The family literacy programmes embrace the ideals of adult literacy which states that "all good adult literacy work starts with the needs and interests of the individuals." The programmes focus on activities which help to develop literacy and numeracy learning in a family context. They aim to support and develop language, literacy and numeracy skills. They are targeted at parents/families where the adults are interested in the opportunity to develop their own basic education as well as to help their children learn.

The family literacy programmes provide an ideal opportunity to encourage the parents of young children to actively participate in the early education of their children. A further objective of the programmes is to create a

positive learning environment for the parents to encourage them into basic education classes. Basic education classes contain their own progression routes and offer the opportunity for accreditation if learners so wish.

5. Family literacy programmes are delivered and facilitated by experienced and qualified adult literacy tutors. All adult literacy tutors complete the initial tutor training programme. This is a thirty hour programme and equips tutors to work with a one to one student to improve their literacy skills. Experienced one to one tutors who wish to further themselves in the area of adult literacy work have the opportunity of availing of further qualifications in adult literacy. Certificate and degree courses, run on a modular basis, are delivered by the Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) in association with NALA. Family literacy modules are available at both the certificate and degree level.
6. The focus of the family literacy programmes is on improving the literacy skills of the adults. With their improved literacy skills they are in a better position to promote literacy skills within the family.
7. The curriculum is worked out in consultation with the learners.
8. All family literacy programmes are delivered within the framework of best practice in adult literacy work. It encourages adult learners to be actively involved in their own learning, including having a say in what they want to learn and how they wish to go about learning it.
9. Courses are usually evaluated on a qualitative basis. Approaches to evaluation include: group discussion, individual evaluation sheets and brainstorming sessions.
10. All money allocated to adult literacy work comes from the Adult Literacy and Community Education budget from the Department of Education and Science. The budget for this work is also supported by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Irish National Development Plan. The budget is administered through the education boards of the Vocational Education Committees (VEC's)
11. Many partners can be involved in the family Literacy Programmes. Tuition is provided through the local Vocational Education Committees (VEC's). Training of tutors is provided by the VEC's, NALA, Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT). The mainstream schools can provide venues as well as help to recruit parents for the courses, and the Area Based Partnerships can help with non tuition funding of projects.
12. Successful programmes are delivered when all the relevant partners meet and co-operate in the planning, delivery and evaluation of the programmes. For example a management group could include representatives from (i) the service providers (VEC's) (ii) home school liaison teachers (have a role in recruiting the parents from the school), (iii) Area Based

Partnerships (sometimes the local Partnerships can provide for extra funding covering costs other than tuition).

Finally, an awards ceremony presenting certificates to all the participants, and attended by all the relevant personnel associated with the course, gives the course participants a real sense of recognition for their achievement.

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