

Improving initial assessment and target setting in family learning

Blackpool Adult, Community and Family Learning



What we do

Blackpool Council delivers a range of adult, community and family learning courses at venues across the town, including: information technology, family learning, volunteering, English, maths and personal preparation for employment. Provision of adult education is planned in conjunction with Blackpool and the Fylde College so that Blackpool Council specialises in targeted provision focused on delivering first step courses in ICT, family learning and Life and Work programmes for the most deprived residents.

A strong focus on maths and English

Blackpool has been delivering family learning over many years. Family learning offers opportunities for families to work together through a wide range of courses and workshops for families in schools, children's centres and libraries throughout the year. Many of these courses are specifically designed to help to improve reading, spelling, speaking and listening skills and maths of both adults and children.

Supported provider

Blackpool Adult, Community and Family Learning:

- Gwen Harris, Lynn Howarth and Jackie Simpson

Improvement partner

Oldham Lifelong Learning Service:

- Mary Grainger, Gail Rocca

Challenges and priorities

After the last Ofsted inspection we were keen to ensure that a 'fit for purpose' initial assessment was in place. We also wanted to improve the quality of the target setting for learners, so that they have challenging targets. It was clear that English, ESOL and maths were embedded, but we needed formal policies on standards of working with learners on target setting. Ensuring learners' ownership of these targets was a priority. In drawing up the action plan it was agreed that we would work with our improvement partner in two areas:

- 1) Ensuring that the policies and procedures were in place so that all learners on family learning programmes were assessed in line with the skills for life standards and that all tutors were using the same documents and processes.
- 2) Provision of continuous professional development for staff on:
 - assessing learner needs/strengths and target setting;
 - helping learners with their maths.

“It has been valuable for tutors to have the opportunity to attend CPD specifically related to family learning and being involved in this process has helped them to improve their skills and confidence in initial assessment procedures and given them a renewed interest in numeracy. Blackpool Family Learning Service is a small provider and it is really valuable for our service to be involved in sharing good practice with other family learning teams.”

Jackie Simpson, Blackpool Family Learning Manager

What improvements have we made?

Quotes from a managers' report demonstrate the improvements.

We have:

- reviewed our initial assessment procedure and have adapted initial assessments to incorporate ideas from CPD training. Tutors feel more confident in carrying out initial assessment and target setting
- implemented a systematic approach to initial assessment across family learning provision;
- increased numeracy provision;
- increased learner satisfaction and achievement.
- Initial assessment procedure implemented leading to improved target setting.

Progress recognised by Ofsted

Ofsted recognised that we had made 'significant progress' in initial assessment and subsequent target setting since the last inspection.

Further developments

As a result of the Ofsted inspector's feedback Blackpool Adult, Community and Family learning is now delivering a wider range of literacy and numeracy courses. We are new to delivering maths and English as individual courses and there has been significant turnover of tutors, so we felt that recapping on training would be beneficial for those who are new, especially concentrating on speaking and listening and understanding how these skills are recorded.

Keeping up the momentum

We are monitoring the impact of this training on learners. The anticipated outcome is that tutors will have an improved understanding and ability to embed maths, English and ESOL. This will be monitored during observations of teaching and learning and will affect grading.

In addition we have now increased the employability and life skills programmes by 13 percent and need to develop the embedding of maths, English and ESOL into these programmes. A training session on this was well received.

Our top tips

Do

- Attend ongoing training and sharing good practice to improve planning and delivery across the provision.
- Ensure that you have the support of the senior manager when developing the action plan and reviewing it.
- Involve the teaching team in any planned improvements at the earliest stage
- Develop a consistent approach to assessment and target setting to support achievement for learners
- Get copies of good examples to help with drawing up your procedures, policies and strategies.

Don't

- Be frightened to share your resources – nothing is perfect and we are all learning from each other as we strive for the best for our learners.
- Think you have finished improving when the training is done. Monitor and evaluate impact and continue to adapt and improve.