

strengthening families

Issue 14 Summer 2006

The newsletter of *Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities*

Louise and Trish from Open Doors International Language School in Plymouth have been using SFSC with refugees and asylum seekers. Here they explain to us why it is a useful tool in supporting these families...

Raising children far away from home

Moving house they say, is one of the most stressful events in a person's life! Some of us have experienced this more than once, but it has usually been a choice we've made that seemed to be for the benefit of self or family.

Those who are forced to flee from their homes for fear of persecution, find themselves surrounded by other circumstances that often appear to bring another conflict into their new home environment.

Louise, working for Open Doors International Language School, and Trish with the Devon and Cornwall Refugee Support Council, have sought to support asylum seekers and refugees in the city of Plymouth for the past six years. They have become increasingly aware of the challenges that face parents whose ethnicity, language, traditions, faith and culture immediately become a source of debate and tension, not necessarily in the media or community, but in the home itself.

Refugees often sense a loss of dignity in a foreign country, being outside all the family support networks that make moving home and settling into another community lifestyle an achievable prospect. The clash

of cultures can stir strong reactions between reason and emotions, causing an undermining of identity and a sense of inadequacy as they try to be the best parents possible in a society that seems to challenge every family norm and cultural value.

Over the course of two SFSC programmes, Trish and Louise have seen 26 parents of 16 nationalities and 9 languages come together with one common goal — to be the best parent for their children. Of the 23 participants to successfully complete and graduate, 50 per cent have been asylum seekers and refugees,

Conflicting viewpoints and opinions come into all family relationships, so the times of sharing childhood memories and positive family backgrounds quickly created a genuine respect amongst the parents for their true diversity, which established a common bond and a foundation for learning together the skills and tools they require to achieve their goal.

As they discussed the differences of cultural customs it enhanced their self-esteem and restored their sense of national pride. *"This course helped me to mix with other cultures in*



I feel I have benefited a lot from this programme

the community because everything has a different viewpoint and we should respect all to be respected by others."

Refugee families with children, whose own identity is challenged by trauma and peer pressure, often react aggressively in the home, demonstrating their frustrations in a variety of disrespectful behaviours or introspection which hides the pain of uncontrolled anger. Parents on the course found the programme gave them keys to understanding through the initiation of special time and understanding of child development. *"It has given me much more insight into my daughter's perception of the world and of what she needs... I feel I have benefited a lot from this programme and am quite likely to avoid mistakes I may have made beforehand."*

In discovering a greater choice of discipline methods to add to their own and through role playing, parents felt better equipped to respond rather than react to negative behaviour. *"I have a choice now. If I try one way and it doesn't work, try another."* This proves very empowering and confidence building, *"I'm more assertive to discipline my children."* *"I'm not feeling stuck anymore with my children... I now know how to reward them."*

Often with the loss of a partner, single parent refugees made strong relationships with others on the course which became a means to establish a new network of support in the local community. *"The other parents gave me the chance to look at other cultures and we develop friendship with each other. I hope we can keep this relationship."* The group relationships provided much needed support and encouragement, particularly with new concepts like special time, which proved difficult at first for many parents to put into practice.

One refugee participant commented on the programme, *"I think before joining the course I was already a good parent, but after all those weeks, I've learnt more methods of discipline and this is helpful. The course gives more information on extra help, like if you work how you can find a crèche... Now I have someone to talk to when I have a problem."*

She went on to say how it has impacted herself and her family, *"I listen more to what they want. Before what I say is what they should do. Now try to negotiate. It is very hard but I'm trying. I'm now more attentive to children's needs. Try to understand them and be interested in what they are doing. I've learnt to praise the kids even if they don't do well or what I've asked. Usually praising when happy with them, now still praise. Think much closer to them than before."*

Though challenging to facilitate, such diversity provides a unique opportunity for discussion which in turn increases cultural awareness and appreciation. It has been a means of encouraging and empowering each participant with the added benefit of them establishing a circle of support within the group that has, in practise, also increased their integration in the wider community and bought some form of stability into the home.

Trish and Louise hope to see some of the parents train to become prospective facilitators in the future. This would provide access to speakers of other main languages who have limited English but never-the-less also need the skills to manage children in a changing environment.

As one parent said, *"Wherever we come from we have the same problems with our children and we all want to be the best parent to them that we can be and are willing to seek help to do it."* Trish and Louise believe *Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities* is the ideal programme to enable this to happen.

Scary ...but exciting



That's the facilitators' verdict on the Islington Children's Centres' project to enable the training and support of workers in its Children's Centres to deliver the *Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities (SFSC)* programme to parents.

"Our main fear..." *was that we would not have any parents turn up on the induction day. However, we managed to increase our numbers to 19... We have had positive feedback from both group members and professionals who referred parents to our group".*

"I have run..." *parenting groups, workshops and courses before of many different hues but SFSC is a very different experience. In the past I have been happy to have three or four parents come to a session. I was very anxious and frankly extremely sceptical that I would be able to recruit a sizable group to SFSC and that they would come back for 13 weeks! Astonishingly, we have just facilitated our sixth session... Most impressive of all, of course have been the parents... I feel very confident that the next time we run it we will have more than enough applicants."*

Funded by Excellence in Communities and based in the heart of the borough at the Holloway Parent Centre, the Islington Children's Centres' project has organised training and support for children's centres to deploy the SFSC programme across the borough.

This borough-wide approach has enabled exciting, creative and effective models of multi-agency and partnership working to emerge at practitioner level. A Sure Start Outreach team leader with an Extended

Schools Co-ordinator; a nursery school practitioner with a private voluntary agency worker; a parent worker with a family support worker; an Anti-Social Behaviour Team worker with a Social Worker. The project has also created a support hub that helps disseminate best practice and build a strong community practitioner network.

"It was refreshing..." *to join a training course and be greeted on day one by friendly, familiar faces. I also had the opportunity to get to know some new colleagues from the borough."*

"Spurred on..." *by the parents' immensely positive response to the curriculum, I've really enjoyed the whole experience. I hope that the legacy of this project will enable Children's Centres in Islington to offer support to local parents through the Strengthening Families programme for a long time to come."*

The six-month timescale has been the most challenging issue for centre heads and the project as many of the borough's services are still under construction and in transition to the new Children's Centres. In spite of this, however, eight centres are already delivering programs to nearly 100 parents, many from hard-to-reach communities.

Anne Braithwaite, ICCs SFSC Project Manager

Below a number of the facilitators from Islington give their verdict on what it has been like to be involved in the innovative

Islington Children's Centre Project

At the end of March...

...Islington Early Years, in partnership with the REU and Holloway Parents Centre, secured funding from Excellence in Communities to deliver the programme across the borough. Training was offered to all Children's Centres with support provided for the new facilitators.

It was refreshing to join a training course and be greeted on day one by friendly, familiar faces. I also had the opportunity to get to know some new colleagues from the borough.

The timescale for the project has been tight. We all trained just before Easter and our courses needed to start on the first week of term to enable us to finish before the summer holidays. Panic spread amongst the participants — it seemed like a great leap from sitting in the classroom with Marilyn to actually delivering the programme. But our fears were eased by a sense of all being in it together. Sharing both worries and success stories has been a great reassurance.

As part of the Islington project, we've been privileged to have Anne Braithwaite as Project Co-ordinator. She's offered advice and support around practical issues and, more than anything, has been a warm and encouraging presence. She organises monthly peer support sessions which focus on the specific issues involved in running the course for the first time. These sessions are also a chance to meet up and share experiences with our fellow facilitators

And so, with Marilyn's wise words still ringing in my ears and the support from Anne and the other participants, I took a deep breath and embarked on delivering my own *Strengthening Families* course. I've just completed session 6 and so far it's all going well. Spurred on by the parents' immensely positive response to the curriculum, I've really enjoyed the whole experience. I hope that the legacy of this project will enable Children's Centres in Islington to offer support to local parents through the Strengthening Families programme for a long time to come.

Nicola Lintern, Sure Start Highview



are very involved in the topic discussions and role plays. We have come across some difficulties in regards to group members' opinions and views however we have been able to manage this by making all group members feel safe due to the group confidentiality rule. The group has discussed issues as they arose and has resolved them between themselves with no casualties!!!!

We have had positive feedback from both group

The group has gelled together well and all but one

I have just been trained as an SFSC facilitator...

...through the Islington Children's Centre Project. I am an Assistant Head teacher at Kate Greenaway Nursery School and Children's Centre.

I knew very little about the programme prior to training but was very lucky to have Sara Blakemore as my co-facilitator, who is an old hand. I have run parenting groups, workshops and courses before of many different hues but SFSC is a very different experience. In the past I have been happy to have three or four parents come to a session. I was very anxious and frankly extremely sceptical that I would be able to recruit a sizable group to SFSC and that they would come back for 13 weeks!

Astonishingly, we have just facilitated our sixth session (including a taster) and nine of our group of ten attended. As a new Children's Centre that is trying to make itself known to the local community we are extremely pleased that some of the class were recruited through local schools. So much interest in SFSC has been generated locally that I feel very confident that the next time we run it we will have more than enough applicants.

members and professionals who referred parents to our group. During one session a group member said 'What will I do on a Tuesday morning when the program finishes?' Introducing the stars for attendance and homework tried and completed has really boosted morale and excitement.

The group really enjoyed 'creating a vision' and putting their ideas and hopes into a creative context. However, there have been times when group members have found some of the topics challenging and deep - almost draining.

Sara and I have developed some ways to encourage everyone to enjoy and benefit from the group. We have free raffles for small educational prizes to use at special time (crayons, paints etc.) and have given away play dough, along with the recipe, of course! We always try to make sure breakfast and lunch (our group is 10-1.00) are fun and tasty and we write a postcard to every one enrolled each week thanking them for their contributions.

The Islington Children's Centre Project has been supportive in several ways. In addition to our training Islington have funded or subsidised the parent manuals and the food we offer. We have the reassurance of having Ann Braithwaite (co-ordinator of the project) on hand for help and advice. It is also comforting to know that there are other newly trained facilitators like me out there running their first groups, who I can call on if need be.

Most impressive of all, of course have been the parents who attend the group. I have been endlessly impressed by their energy, humour and resilience. Most humbling has been their clear commitment to do their very best for their children and I hope SFSC helps with this in some way.

Jan Stillaway, Kate Greenaway Nursery School

The process of the programme has also been quite draining for us in regard to our work commitments and we have lots of preparation to do for each session and sometimes finding the time can be really difficult. We still get anxious prior to each session and always feel a mix of excitement and exhaustion after each one.

We are already talking about the possibility of running another group in October and have had lots of interests from professionals wanting to refer families.

C. Ricketts and J Quinlan.

We had mixed feelings of excitement and fear...

...on our first session! It was a relief that we had a good turn out of 14 parents despite schools not returning back until later that week. Although the recruitment process of parents and the setting up of the group was very difficult, our main fear was that we would not have any parents turn up on the induction day. However we managed to increase our numbers to 19, 4 of which were men!

The group has gelled together well and all but one

Training News

Developing confident, competent and capable facilitators

Several training courses and support meetings are planned over the next six months which will help SFSC facilitators to explore the programme and develop their skills further.



Peer Support Group meetings

South West region (Bristol)

Friday September 8th 2006

12.30pm — 3.30pm

Contact Janette Bryan on 020 7619 6223

Delivering SFSC

A one day course aimed at facilitators who have just completed training or are about to start their first SFSC programme and want to think through some of the issues associated with this.

This is a training course that agencies commission.

Contact Leandra Box for further information on 0207 619 6226

Effective Groupwork with Parents

Effective Facilitation with Parents

See additional information...

London October 31st and November 7th 2006
Contact Bendu Walker on 020 7619 6220

Delivering SFSC with Fathers

This is a new course that will be delivered by Working with Men specifically for SFSC facilitators who want to think about how better to engage men in their parenting work. It will cover

- ¥ why we need to work with fathers
- ¥ What works with fathers
- ¥ Developing better practice
- ¥ Planning and developing a strategy to engage fathers

London September 20th 2006
Contact Bendu Walker on 0207 619 6220

SFSC five day facilitator training

This is the facilitator training course run over five days, delivered by Marilyn Steele.

Training dates are as follows:

London 25-29 September 2006

London 13-17 November 2006

I don't want everyone to know my business

A one day course on effective groupwork with parents

Exploring with other parents how you are bringing up your children, can be a frightening prospect. Facilitating these discussion, whilst delivering a parent programme, can be one of the most challenging tasks that facilitators perform. However, by implementing best practice, facilitators can alleviate worries that parents have, encourage open discussions and ensure fruitful learning.

This one day course developed by the REU, will help those who work with parents in groups to:

- ¥ understand how groups work;
- ¥ build skills and experiences that are useful in working with groups of parents;
- ¥ help identify and use the strategies that will ensure groupwork provides a safe, enjoyable and effective environment for learning.

A range of teaching methods are used and there is opportunity to use the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities parent programme. The programme is also designed to support the National Occupational Standards for work with Parents.

This course is complemented by the one day course on effective co-facilitation.

The cost is £150, inclusive of lunch and materials. A small number of bursaries are available (terms and conditions apply, see www.reu.org.uk/sfsc/training). To book please complete and return the application form available at www.reu.org.uk/sfsc/training or call Bendu on 020 7619 6220.

Two heads are better than one

A one day course on implementing best practice in co-facilitating a parent programme

Evidence shows that the role of facilitators is crucial in ensuring that programmes impact on parents and their children. However, the requirement of parent programmes, such as Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities, that two facilitators work together with parents can be challenging. Facilitators are faced with establishing effective relationships with parents, but also their co-facilitator. On the other hand, evidence also shows that when best practice is implemented co-facilitation can transform the quality of parents' experience of programmes.

This innovative and enjoyable one day course will help you implement best practice in co-facilitation by:

- exploring how co-facilitation helps parental learning;
- developing awareness and strategies for working well with other facilitators;
- promoting confidence and competence of facilitators by building on their capabilities.

A range of teaching methods are used and there is opportunity to use the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities parent programme. The programme is also designed to support the National Occupational Standards for work with Parents.

This course is complemented by the one day course on effective groupwork.

The cost is £150, inclusive of lunch and materials. A small number of bursaries are available (terms and conditions apply, see www.reu.org.uk/sfsc/training). To book please complete and return the application form available at www.reu.org.uk/sfsc/training or call Bendu on 020 7619 6220.

About the REU



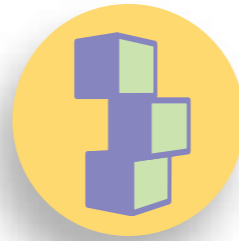
The REU (formerly the Race Equality Unit) is the leading national agency working to develop appropriate social care services to Britain's black and minority ethnic communities. The REU does this through training; consultancy; research; publications; workshops and conferences. The REU has published reports and good practice guides on subjects such as user involvement, child protection, social work and social work education, and ethnic record keeping and monitoring.

Support, supervision and evaluating the programme

In order to receive certification as an official Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities Parent Programme Facilitator, you must implement the curriculum, and administer the programme evaluation. Facilitators must continue to submit this information for each programme that they run. (See below).

		Data Required
Pre-course	Course registered with REU at least 3 weeks before start date	Course registration form
Session 1-3	Initial support visit or phone call by the REU	(a) Parent Registration Form to be completed by Facilitator (b) Pre-Parent Questionnaire
Session 6-8	Mid programme observation visit of group in action (Mandatory for first course run)	Observation checklist (REU)
Session 10-12	End of programme support visit or phone call	(a) Parent Post Questionnaire (b) Facilitators Class Summary
Post Course	Certificate Ceremony	Participants and facilitators Certificates (REU)

SFSC Team Profile



Leandra Box is the SFSC Programme Manager. She has worked and written extensively around black and minority ethnic families, including adapting the Strengthening Programme for use in the UK. More recently she has been supporting the development and delivery of a Strengthening Families Young People's Programme.

Janette Bryan is the SFSC Parent Programme Officer. In addition to running parent groups, Janette supports facilitators and agencies in the delivery of SFSC, organises regular facilitators training and oversees the registration of programmes and the collection of evaluation data.

Amina Lone is the Regional Parent Programme Officer based in the North West. She supports and monitors facilitators and agencies in the delivery of SFSC, focusing on expanding the programme's use in the North West region.