

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

Issue 5 Summer 2003

Making a difference: SFSC Conference success

"The conference was very informative and a joy to attend... lets go on talking and working together"

"An excellent first step to strengthening your family and community"

"A great chance to catch up with familiar faces, meet new people and share experiences"



The annual *Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities* Conference took place on Monday 23rd June 2003 in Central London. Over 200 people attended from a range of agencies in the statutory and voluntary sectors. There were a large number of people who had participated in SFSC programmes whether as facilitators or as parents and also representatives from several government departments.

The first keynote speaker was Marilyn Steele who many

of you will know from attending facilitator trainings; and who developed the SFSC programme. Marilyn talked about how SFSC was different to other parenting programmes, with a particular focus on how ethnicity, culture and spirituality were central to SFSC and why this was important to black and minority ethnic parents and their experience of parenting programmes. Jabeer Butt, Deputy Director of REU, followed Marilyn with a presentation which focused on



the challenges that black and minority ethnic parents face in raising happy and successful children, and what the evidence says about how SFSC can help parents make a difference.

In the afternoon, we heard from Naomi Eisenstadt, Director of the Sure Start Unit at the Department for Education and Skills. She spoke about the Government agenda, how Sure Start is able to support parents and how the Strengthening Programme is being delivered through Sure Start Projects. Following the presentations there was an opportunity for the audience to direct questions to speakers.

In addition, a number of workshops were run on the day including: Delivering SFSC to young parents; Delivering SFSC to parents through Sure Start; Working with refugee communities; Better play grant funding; OCN accreditation – what it is and how it works; Introducing Start, a young people's programme; Delivering parenting programmes to Asian fathers; Strengths and weaknesses of parenting orders; Group work and facilitation skills; and A SFSC taster session. These workshops were run by facilitators and parents who had participated in SFSC programmes.

One of the highlights of the day was the performances that took place after lunch by a young people's group from East London¹. Two of the young people who performed had participated in the Start Young People's programme which took place earlier this year in Tower Hamlets and had reported to us the positive experience of participating in a performing arts group. At the conference around twelve young people demonstrated their talents, singing, mcing, dancing and reciting poetry. They were truly inspirational performances and many of the delegates commented that this had been a really positive and enjoyable part of the day.

At the end of the day, delegates heard about future plans for SFSC, these included:

- the continued development of the Start Young People's programme;
- building the capacity of black and minority ethnic voluntary organisations to deliver SFSC in areas where there is little appropriate provision (work funded by the Family Policy Unit);
- future training developments, including future SFSC trainings in September and November; and a facilitator skills and groupwork training planned for September.

The final announcement related to the next SFSC conference which will be taking place on July 8th 2004 in London. The theme of next year's conference will be Children Are Our Future and we are currently planning the programme for this event. If anyone has any suggestions or wishes to raise any issues relating to the next conference, please do feel free to contact us.

To contact Entwine, the young people's performance group, please call co-ordinator Diane Savage on 07984 025258.

Supporting black and minority ethnic parents by developing good practice

Tracey Bignall from REU reports on an innovative project she is working on which aims to support the black and minority ethnic voluntary sector and in doing so to improve services to black and minority ethnic families.

The role of a parent is an enjoyable and demanding one. Parents rejoice at their children's achievements; first steps, first words, passing their GCSEs' and seek support at times of crisis; such as over managing their child's behaviour, or if the child takes up smoking or drinking alcohol. Parents want their children to grow up to be happy, well grounded adults, but face pressure in their child rearing from different areas of life.

We acknowledge the demands made on parents and the need for support in this challenging role. A role that includes balancing work and family life, making ends meet, finding appropriate and affordable childcare and steering children away from anti social and risk taking behaviour.

Black and minority ethnic voluntary organisations play a valuable role in supporting African Caribbean, Asian and African parents to bring up their children and manage daily family life. Yet these organisations themselves need assistance to develop their skills and knowledge in order to provide more effective services to the families they support.

The development of good practice in parenting and family support to black and minority ethnic families is a project being undertaken by the REU to do just that. We are currently working in Bristol, Wolverhampton, Coventry, Gloucester, Croydon and Bromley in London.

Drawing on good practice and innovation within the black voluntary sector, this project aims to support organisations through local networks and share good practice. These networks provide the opportunity to explore problems which affect how these organisations function (such as, funding, staffing, developing new services) and find solutions through learning from and with each other. There is also an opportunity to keep up to date with government initiatives to support families and share good practice through a national annual conference. The end result will hopefully see the reduction of some of the pressures facing black and minority ethnic parents as organisations become better equipped to provide appropriate support.

For further information, contact Tracey Bignall at the REU on 020 7619 6225 email tracey@reunet.demon.co.uk.

Parents gain college credits for the Strengthening Programme

Many of you will be aware that the Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities Programme is accredited by the Open College Network. This means that those parents who choose to can gain open college credits for attending a SFSC programme and compiling a portfolio to demonstrate their learning.

This summer saw the first batch of parents successfully gain credits for participating in the SFSC programme. REU wishes to congratulate these parents and thank Newham African Caribbean and Asian Advocacy project for being the first project to sign up to the accreditation process. A lot of hard work was involved, both for parents in developing portfolios, and for facilitators in supporting this and carrying out internal assessments.

Below Modupe Olaniyi from NAACAP, an experienced programme facilitator, writes about her experience of the accreditation process.

When I introduced the concept of accreditation to parents who attended the *Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities Programme*, they accepted it with mixed feeling. Some said they would give it a try, others said they would not be able to cope with the workload because of other commitments. For those who wanted to take up accreditation, I had to spend some time explaining what would be expected of them.

Part of the requirement was for me, as a programme facilitator, to assess them. This included observation of role-play, oral presentation and how they responded to questions. In addition to that, they had to complete all the work in the parents manual and worksheets given out throughout the programme. I told parents to call on me any time they needed support with their work. This was mostly

given on the telephone, as parents could not find extra time to see me after the classes. After the programme had completed, I gave parents three additional weeks to complete their portfolios of work for assessment.

Once parents had submitted their portfolios, I started the assessment process. I had to find evidence in their work folders to make sure each assessment criteria was met. I recorded all the information in the assessment sheets and learner tracking forms and submitted the portfolios to REU to organise the internal and external moderation. In early July I met with the external moderator identified by London Open College Network, who then looked through the assessment sheets together with the parents' portfolios to make sure all the evidence of work and assessment paperwork had been completed. The moderator worked very hard with me and REU to ensure we understood the process - that can appear complicated when being done for the first time. Ultimately, she was satisfied that everything was in order and so awarded the parents' passes.

In total nine parents registered as learners for accreditation, all but one were awarded level two (the other parent gained a level one pass). They are now awaiting their certificates. The certificate will provide parents with social recognition for their achievement, and there is no doubt that it is a great achievement and they should be commended for it. Hopefully it will be a ticket to the next stage of learning or relevant job.

Supporting parents to gain Open College Network credits was possible through the support I received from the co-facilitators and from REU - a big thank you to all! I would like to encourage SFSC facilitators to encourage their parents to register to be accredited. It is hard work but it is worth it. Parents will be appreciative and it will boost their confidence to move forward in life.

"I told parents to call on me any time they needed support with their work."

New training dates

SFSC facilitator trainings have been scheduled for Autumn 2003 to Spring 2004. The dates are as follows:

September 8th - 12th

November 10th - 14th

February 9th - 13th

Registration forms are available from Janette Bryan.

All trainings are scheduled for London, however we are hoping to schedule in additional trainings outside of

London for the new year. If anyone has any suggestions for where trainings out of London should take place, or suggestions of agencies that may be interested in hosting trainings and helping to support the administration of the event, please do let Leandra or Janette know.

We have also scheduled an additional training for SFSC facilitators around developing facilitation and group work skills. This runs for one day per week over five weeks in London, and is a repeat of the training that took place in November 2002. For those of you who have been unable to attend either of these but would like to do so in the future, we are hoping to provide this training again in the new year.

A step towards a stronger community

Susan Jones, from the Southwark HAZ Young Refugee Project looks at delivering the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities programme to Refugee Communities.

Southwark Refugee Project and HAZ Young Refugee Project conducted a workshop at REU's annual conference in June. The project workers shared how they conducted the parent programme with Somali and Latin American communities. They also spoke about why it is important to extend this programme to refugee communities. A discussion completed the session, which explored different ways of delivering the programme. This article describes the contents of the seminar.

The refugee experience is a complex process involving loss and regeneration. The loss occurs in most areas of refugee's lives. All aspects of their lives are called into question, including ethnic and national identity, gender roles, social relationships and socio-economic status. The process of adaptation is a creative one, which involves establishing a new culture and new identities of exploration and experimentation. Family life has many challenges. While children spend hours in school every day with established Europeans their parents do not share the dominant society's values. Friction is likely when the process of adaptation affects the generations differently. Usually children model themselves on their peers and take on more of the values and customs of the host society than the parents; they may well come to know more about the host country than their parents and become critical of their lack of know how. This issue of intergenerational conflict is one issue that the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities programme can respond to.

Southwark Refugee Project and HAZ Young Refugee Project (based in south London) planned to conduct the parent programme with four communities: Somali, Spanish speaking, Arabic speaking and French speaking. It was decided to work with these four communities because of the high numbers of these groups in South London. After conducting two programmes the project workers could identify good practice in delivering this programme. It was delivered in a partnership between voluntary and statutory agencies. Intergenerational conflict was identified by community organisations and therefore the programme was based on community need.

The facilitators themselves were recruited and selected from refugee communities and trained by REU. Having facilitators who spoke the community language and who had a network within those communities advanced the recruitment of parents and deepened understanding between the parents. The programme ran on Saturday morning. A commitment to translate the parent manual into the community language was also made by the organisers.

A video was also played in the conference workshop, which showed parents of the programme talking about the course. An interesting discussion took place after the initial presentation, which revealed how other organisations have been delivering the SFSC programme in different ways. One had delivered the parent programme with a group of Albanians through an interpreter. Others shared how the group of refugees they knew were a mixture of different nationalities and raised questions about how to deliver a programme to them. From this discussion it became apparent that more reflection and discussion is required in delivering such programmes to refugees who are living in different settings and geographical areas.

From my experience, the advantage of working more closely with refugee community organisations in London is that people can be empowered to deliver their own courses. Establishing a group that shares a common language can promote more parent discussion, mutual support within the group and lessen prejudices between people from different countries with political tensions. However, this approach takes time, long-term commitment and financial support.

Videos made by this project will be available by April 2004 for community groups to use to inform them of the programme and to promote SFSC to parents who may want to know more before signing up to a programme. The languages of the videos will be Somali, French, Spanish and Arabic. An English video which aims to raise awareness for statutory organisations will also be available.

For more information please contact Susan Jones at Health First, Mary Sheridan House, 15 St Thomas Street, London SE1 9RY. Tel 02079554366. susan.jones@lewishampct.nhs.uk

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.