

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

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SFSC engages Asian fathers in the North West

Azzam Sheik of the Gabriel Project in Hyde tells us about his journey towards SFSC and the challenges in delivering the programme to a group of Asian fathers.

'Thought is processed into purpose; purpose conforms into action, action translates into habit, habit defines a mans character, and character decides your destiny'

Paul McKenna (The TV Hypnotist) has written in one of his books that he does not believe in consequences. In fact his belief is that if the minds eye can visualise a goal or objective, clearly and strongly enough; then the manifestation of this will occur in reality. Now of course this is somewhat theoretical and you may be wondering what this has to do with the 'SFSC' programme, well; let me tell you about my journey on the 'SFSC' programme.

I was first exposed to child development, child behaviour, child/parent relationship, etc, when I was about the age of 17 by a brilliant Islamic Scholar 'Sheikh Hamza Yusuf Hanson'. I was fascinated by these processes that consequently take place in all of our lives. Since then I have always wanted to make the study of these issues an integral part of learning. Regardless of the acceleration of other academic pursuits, I believe that development of human psyche is the core for true advancement and harmonisation.

"Kind sir, do tell; science has taught man to fly in the sky, science has taught man to float on water, science has taught man to explore the heavens, what more can one ask!"

"Oh respected friend, so true you are, science has taught man to fly in the sky, science has taught man to float on the water, and science has taught man to explore the heavens; however science has not taught man to walk on the earth!"

My role at my workplace is relevant to research within illegal drugs. I was invited to attend a meeting between 'Sure Start' Hyde, Hyde Bangladeshi Welfare Association and other agencies. Now the only reason I was invited was to make up the numbers because certain members of the committee could not attend, I did not have the faintest idea

what the issues at hand were. I decided I would contribute and mingle with the crowd (refreshment meant I would not have to go out for lunch). Two days later I received a call from Ruth from 'Sure Start' Hyde as to whether I wanted to attend this 'SFSC' facilitator programme. Without hesitation I accepted, I must have made some impact in some strange way at the previous meeting. Now I hope you can see the similarities between Paul McKenna's theory and my attendance on the 'SFSC' course.

'Opportunities are like clouds, if you do not catch first sight of them, they will float on by'

I emptied my schedule for that week and attended the full five day programme. The entire session was fascinating; Marilyn had this charm and charisma that lit up the room. She was jubilant and dynamic. She brought that typical American character, which we are all familiar with from the Hollywood movies, and she worked it right to the bone.

What appealed to me overall was how the 'SFSC' programme is structured, the lay out of the step by step guidance. You could tell that, not just immense work had been put into the programme; but work with passion. And not to mention that we all benefited therapeutically somehow!

On completion of the course I was fired up to go out and conduct one of these parent courses. My initial intention was that unless one of the courses is conducted; then not only will we lose the momentum but would also not retain the information gathered.

REU and Sure Start Hyde expressed their enthusiasm when they heard we were ready to start a course, and their surprise that it would be an Asian male group. Apparently accessing male only groups, especially Asian men; has proven to be difficult in the past. But we did not allow this to be a hindrance, deep within we had a belief in the 'SFSC' program; and everyone should be on the parent programme!

Within a matter of days we collected 10 men who were



ready to go on the course. 'Sure Start' Hyde appointed Shani as support worker, who had also been trained as a facilitator. I met up with Shani on a weekly basis discussing the ups and the downs of the previous session. And of course Leandra Box from the REU was at hand for any additional support.

We managed to retain five out of the ten men throughout the course. Those fathers who could not attend had genuine reasons such as work and family commitments. Yet they did drop in over the remainder of the session, as the refreshments were scrumptious.

We ended up deciding within the introduction to cut our course down to just two hours per session as the fathers felt three hours was too much. We found this decision to be a mistake as the sessions become more and more engaging, and the fathers were playing a more active role. Two hours just was not sufficient!

Azzam asked two of the fathers from his course to say something about how they felt SFSC had impacted on them:

I found the parenting course, first and foremost enjoyable and fun, yet very well structured. It was also very easy to follow and understand. It made me understand a little more on how the mind of others works. It has helped build my confidence and broadened my view. I found that the information I have gained from it will assist me in creating a greater bond with my children. I experienced insight on the perspective of a child and I learned ways in which to speak to a child.

I feel that such training courses should be offered to all adults, both male and female. Doing this course has built an awareness in me, which will in turn enable me to play a key role in developing our community.

Shain Miah

I feel that the course has been very beneficial. It has covered very important aspects of parenting that would not have been so obvious. It is easy to under-estimate the importance of the successful contributions that we can make to developing a young individual.

The course covered essential components needed to develop our own skills in being aware, and taking on board

On a personal level I found it challenging, I guess at times I felt I wanted more from the group, and at other times I felt I was not giving enough to the course. The fathers were very generous with me and I did not undergo any pressures from them, I guess we fathers can be a little bit of an abyss when it comes to our children. There was constant reassurance to the fathers that the facilitators are not experts, but somehow they still thought we knew better; therefore a stream of questions were always channelled my way.

Overall I felt a satisfaction once the course was complete. I can truly say that I and the fathers had benefited. It has given us an opportunity to open our minds, to adopt various methods when we deal with our children, to be able to pass on those rich values that our previous generations have passed on; and the new values the varied cultures that we live amongst have provided us.

the key elements needed to help our children grow in a positive way within a plural and culturally diverse society. The course was divided into different sessions that allowed us to gradually build up our knowledge on the main areas of development. They were also practically based with follow-up activities, including the attention chart that has enabled me to use day-to-day monitoring strategies to assess temperament.

The key terms were clearly highlighted and diagrammatic representations of the key ideas such as the 'Building Blocks of Success', 'rites of passage', 'Circles of Support' and 'Nature of Humans' was easy to understand. The invitation of a speaker was an excellent idea that has helped to diversify the training strategy.

I would advise many other parents to take advantage of this course as it has been a very worthwhile experience. I hope to continue implementing the ideas with my own children. The biggest challenge for myself would be to maintain the knowledge from the course and to implement and teach what I have learnt from the course to others.

Kashim Uddin

Training dates 2005

We have established training dates for 2005 for the SFSC five day facilitator training course delivered by Marilyn Steele. They are:

February 21-26, 2005	London
April 18-22, 2005	London
June 6-10, 2005	London
September 12-16, 2005	London
November 7-11, 2005	London

It is likely that more dates will be added at a later stage, including dates of trainings out of London. In addition we are planning another 'Group work and Facilitation Skills

Training' for SFSC facilitators. This is a five day training course run one day per week over five weeks which aims to support your development as a facilitator. So far we have only been able to offer this course in London, however, we now have plans to deliver this course in Sheffield during the Spring of 2005. This will enable some of the SFSC facilitators based in the North of the country to better access this training opportunity

If you are interested in receiving further information about these courses or to register, please contact Janette Bryan on janette@reunet.demon.co.uk or 020 7619 6223.

Parenting Project – *You and Your Baby 0 - 1*



CHANGE is a national organisation which campaigns for equal rights for people with learning disabilities especially equal rights for people who have learning disabilities who are deaf or blind.

My name is Frances Affleck I am a woman with learning disabilities and I have a visual impairment. I am the Parenting Project Worker at CHANGE



I have written a book for parents with learning disabilities, parents whose first language is not English and parents who find reading and writing hard.



The "You and Your Baby" book has easy words and pictures and covers the first year of your baby's life from birth to one year.



The "You and Your Baby" book will support you to look after your baby. It will help you with ideas about how to feed your baby, what to do if your baby is poorly and how to keep your baby safe and well.

There are many other chapters including how to look after yourself and useful addresses.



The book is FREE to parents with learning disabilities. You will need to get the book from your Health Visitor or Midwife.



CHANGE has got more funding to write another book for parents who have got children 1 - 4 years. This book will also be accessible with easy words and pictures.

I am looking for parents with learning disabilities to join a Steering Group who have children between 1- 4 years or have had experience of bringing up children.



For more information please contact Frances Affleck or Philipa Bradman, CHANGE, Unity Business Centre, Units 19/20, 26 Roundhay Road, Leeds LS7 1AB. Tel 0113 243 0202. Email changepeople@btconnect.com. Website www.changepeople.co.uk



SFSC Conference 2004

July 8th 2004 saw the Second Annual SFSC conference take place in London. It was attended by around 200 people from across the UK and included a number of parents who had been participants on SFSC programmes as well as facilitators, and other working in the field of parenting.

Marilyn Steele, author of the programme, was the keynote speaker and talked about "What Children Want". This was followed by a number of panels that allowed for presentations on particular subject areas and discussions with the audience. Prior to Lunch, the panel on Engaging Fathers took place. Melvyn Davis from the Boys 2 Men Project spoke about the work of his project alongside a number of young fathers who attend this project talking about their experiences of engaging with services and being young fathers.

In the afternoon, two panels took place, the first on Supporting Young Parents had Robert Drake from the Government Teenage Pregnancy Unit talking about the work of this unit and the policy framework. This was complemented by a presentation by Jade Briant and Helen Hughes, themselves young mothers and facilitators of an SFSC programme for Young Mums in Bristol.

The last panel of the day was titled Working with Disabled Parents and was opened by Michelle Waites from the Disabled Parents Network and followed by Paramjit Dheensa from Wolverhampton VSC who presented her work on supporting families with disabled children and working with faith groups.

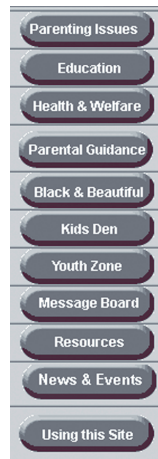
All the panels were followed by questions from the audience and lively discussions. It was especially good to see so much participation from the conference delegates, and lively debate carried on outside of the main auditorium during the breaks.

In addition, a large exhibition space was provided with a number of organisations exhibiting including some of the large national organisation such as Parent Education Support Forum and Parentline Plus, local groups such as the Southwark Young Refugee Project, and representatives from the black voluntary sector such as KJ Academy and The Black Parent Network.

Feedback from the day was overwhelmingly positive. Whether referring to the organisation of the day, the quality of the venue and catering or the programme, participants were complimentary. It was felt that the day had been particularly useful in terms of information exchange and networking.

So now plans for next year's event is underway. It will take place on 11th July in London. Further information will be sent to all facilitators nearer the time.

Parent website launched



This summer saw the launch of the Black Parent Network and website.

The Black Parent Network is an online information and support service for black parents, aiming to provide parents with practical information and support across a broad spectrum of issues and areas of concern.

It also aims to provide sign-posting to available resources and services with links to key agencies where assistance can be found about a range of relevant issues. Where ever possible agencies have been selected because their

services are designed to be sensitive to the needs of black families.

The website will also provide an online-messaging service for parents to enable them to communicate with each other and form a cyber-community to give each other mutual support and exchange information, news and views.

One of the areas that the website looks at is parenting issues, and the Strengthening Families Programme has been chosen as a model of good practice for black parents and is showcased on the site. It is hoped that many parents who previously were unaware of SFSC may now have the opportunity to find out more about the programme and how they can participate. For those parents who may have already completed a programme, hopefully the site will be a source of support and information.

The Black Parent Network is designed primarily to support parents and carers of African and Caribbean origin but people of all backgrounds are welcome as long as you are interested in the care and nurturing of children of colour. For further information go to www.blackparentnetwork.com

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.