



**Creative Families (Enterprise) Programme
Easter 2012**

1. THE PROGRAMME

The Creative Families (Enterprise) Easter 2012 Programme in Birkby was funded by Birkby Nursery and Infant School, Birkby Junior School and the Children and Young People's Service of Kirklees Council; it was managed in partnership with CapeUK. The primary partners were the two schools and the Annie Smith Children's Centre.

The need to focus on enterprise was initially identified by the head teacher of the Nursery and Infant School as a means of providing a progression route for families that they had been supported for some time. Both the Nursery and Infant School and the Children's Centre were also conscious of the impact on families of changes to the benefit system. The transfer from Income Support to Job Seekers Allowance means that parents will need to engage more with the world of work.

30 families were identified by the primary partners as likely to benefit from the scheme. The reasons for their selection were varied; several had dual care orders and some parents were dealing with social, emotional or health difficulties. The selected families were invited to participate and then encouraged to commit to doing so over a period of several weeks. 'Getting to know you' sessions were held in the schools in the week prior to the main programme; these were well attended in one school but not the other.

The main programme ran for four consecutive days from Monday 2nd April to Thursday 5th April. It was located at Birkby and Fartown Community Centre which is adjacent to the Junior School, a short walk from the Children's Centre and about a mile from the Nursery and Infants School. During the first three days, families moved between a range of craft, cooking (indoors and outdoors) and drumming activities focusing increasingly on producing the stock for, and organising, a 'Family Festival' on the fourth day. The Family Festival attracted 250 visitors and generated £219. The participating families received a certificate recognising their contribution and a 'goody-bag' of materials to enable them to continue some of the activities at home.



The Family Festival on the final day was attended by 250 people

CapeUK designed the programme, recruited the creative practitioners, made the practical arrangements and conducted the evaluation. The two schools and the Children's Centre were responsible for the recruitment of families, encouraging attendance and for pre and post-programme support.

The staff team comprised a co-ordinator and five creative practitioners from CapeUK, a lead member of staff from each school and a total of five teaching assistants/support workers from the schools and the children's centre; the programme also benefited from an excellent volunteer. In addition, the head teachers of both schools and the manager of the Children's Centre visited regularly and provided additional support.

The base budget for the scheme was £15,000 which was provided by the Nursery and Infant School (£5,000), Junior School (£2,000) and Kirklees Council (£8,000). In addition, CapeUK contributed £1000 to support the evaluation. The two schools, the Children Centre and CapeUK all made significant further in-kind contributions of staff time.

The programme was an unqualified success in terms of providing a positive and enjoyable experience for **all** involved . This was evident from the attendance pattern and the very positive feedback from participants both during and after the programme as well as the comments of staff.

“Loved the week even though was exhausted afterwards.....Was so great to try out different things, making books, screen printing – the fire pit was great fun. The community centre was a great place for it with so many rooms to do different things....The festival day went so well. Loads turned up and it was a great atmosphere. Really enjoyed myself and I wanted to do it again. My chronic fatigue syndrome won't hold me back from such an enjoyable event. It also gave us a chance to buy things back that we and my daughter's friends and parents had made – to treasure!! The certificate we got was wonderful too.”

Parent: Post-programme questionnaire.



Participating families were awarded certificates just before the Family Festival opened

“It has been an amazing week watching all the families come together and work as one big team. This was even more evident today when the Family Festival was up and running, what superstars they all were... the atmosphere was brilliant all around the rooms with so much positivity going around. I was proud to be part of the team that helped to achieve this.”

Support Worker

2. ATTENDANCE

26 families, with a total of 79 family members, attended the scheme. Almost all of these were the 30 targeted families. A few families did arrive uninvited; decisions about whether they could stay were made by the school/children’s centre staff using their knowledge of the family’s circumstances. Those who were not invited to stay were encouraged to return for the Family Festival on the final day.

It was agreed by all partners that the level of attendance was a real achievement, particularly given the challenges faced by some of the families. Had the partner organisations not committed a great deal of time and energy to encouraging the families beforehand and physically collecting those that didn’t appear on the first day, the situation would have been very different.

Once there, families were well motivated to stay. 85% of the 26 families attended on two or more days; 25% attended on all four days - and most weren’t even deterred by a heavy downfall of snow on the Wednesday!

3. ADDRESSING THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME

The aim of the programmes was to enhance the life opportunities and prospects of targeted families

Objectives - By the end of the programme...

3.1 Families will:

- 3.1.1 Have greater recognition of their own skills
- 3.1.2 Feel more confident and motivated
- 3.1.3 Be more aware of wider social networks and new opportunities
- 3.1.4 Have increased autonomy

3.2 The schools and children’s centre will:

- 3.2.1 Have closer working relationships with each other and other local organisations

3.3 CapeUK will:

- 3.3.1 Have developed its knowledge of working with targeted families
- 3.3.2 Gained experience of developing a programme that addresses an employability and social enterprise agenda

The following forms of evidence were collected

- Attendance records
- Pre and Post Programme questionnaires completed by some parents
- verbal comments made by family members
- Photographs and video recordings
- Discussions with each of the partner organisations
- Structured reflection session with all the creative practitioners

3.1. Objectives for families

3.1.1. Families have greater recognition of their skills

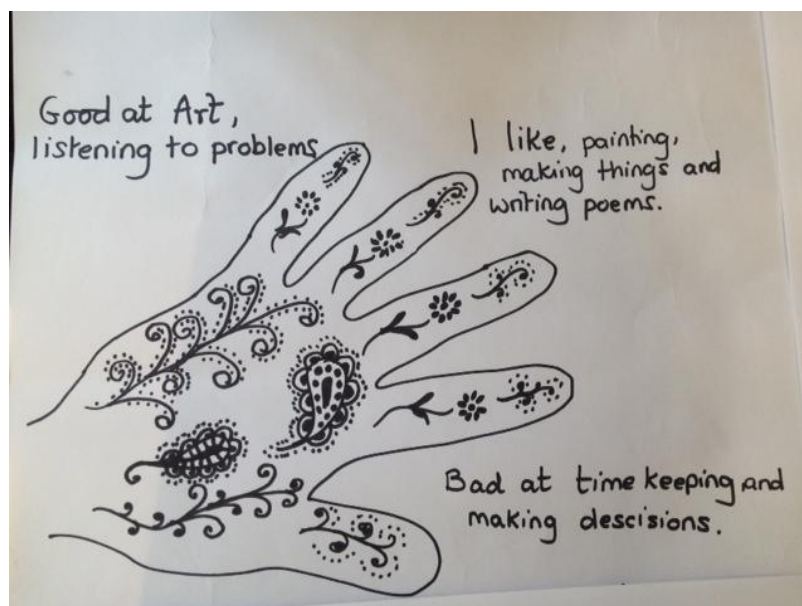
The programme was not designed to directly teach skills that might help the adults involved get a job or start their own business but rather to enable parents and children to recognise and value their own and each others' skills. Children's achievement and life chances will be affected by their parents' level of resourcefulness and by the extent to which those parents recognise and encourage their children's skills development. Conversely, children can play an important role in encouraging and supporting their parents. This spirit was captured in the opening activity of the programme. Each family was given a large piece of paper and asked to drawing round their hands and answer the following questions:

- What are we good at as a family?
- What do we like?
- What are we not so good at?

"We are bad at cooking, sewing and singing.

We are good at playing together, sharing laughter, passing on smiles, talking dancing and helping each other.

I feel proud when I read books and when I am listening."



With hindsight, it was felt that the activity would have been more effective had it been undertaken with each family individually rather than as a whole group. Some families were quite daunted by the start of the programme and would have benefited from a more personalised explanation of the plans for the next few days. It was also suggested, with hindsight, that families could have been encouraged to add to their response over the course of the programme and that this could have captured their growing confidence and increasing recognition of their own skills

The staff team was delighted by the level of skill that did emerge – in design, photography, cookery – and particularly in sewing; several commented that they had initially underestimated the skills in the group. It was absolutely critical to the success of the programme that the skills of making and selling were applied to a real life situation – preparing for, and then running the Family Festival.

Team work is an essential skill in many, if not most, types of employment. Three activities in particular encouraged team work – cooking, drumming and the screen printing which was used to produce ‘Made in Birkby’ tea towels, price tags and the bags in which customers took away their purchases. . The value of team working was recognised unprompted by participants.

“Me and my daughter have learnt how to work in a group”

Parent: Post-programme questionnaire



Screen printing bags for the Family Festival

The programme’s focus on encouraging parents to recognise and value their children’s achievements is one part of a much broader and longer term objective to promote quality interaction between parents and their children. This is addressed by the primary partner organisations through support for individual families and more structured provision such as courses and family learning opportunities. However, the Creative Family programme was different in terms of the stretches of time - up to 5 hours - in which parents and children were supported to collaborate and value each others’ contributions. There was evidence of interactions within families growing. In some cases it was just a matter of demonstrating to

parents how they could do an activity together as this was an unfamiliar concept. For example, at the outset one father was learning how to do an activity by himself and then doing it for/with his children; towards the end of the scheme he and his children were learning alongside each other.

'The kids would have spend this week watching TV from 9am onwards, this has been great as they have had something to do and we could do it together'

Parent: verbal comment

Many parents asked about how they could repeat the activities at home. The focus on using recycled materials made the activities very affordable and accessible.

'I learnt a lot of things, like making bangles, books – I will never throw a Pringles carton away again.'

Parent:verbal comment

"Lots of parents asked how to make playdough for back home. Both parents and children got a lot out of this".

Support Worker

Staff observed that a few parents didn't seem to have the language to praise their children and that this needed to be modelled. One mother almost seemed to seek permission to praise her child who revealed a real talent for drumming (and was given a drum to take home at the end of the scheme.)

These are small steps on a very long journey, getting parents to work with their children takes a very long time.

Teacher

Much consideration has been given in CapeUK's Creative Family programmes to whether or not to provide a crèche, given that the intention is to encourage all members of a family to work together. We seem to be working towards the conclusion that there is a case for crèche provision as sometimes parents need to give attention to one or some rather than all of their children – and sometimes parents need to have some time to work alone. The area intended for families with young children did operate as a crèche a time, thanks to the sensitivity and flexibility of the person staffing it; it was also well used by children of all ages. Simple activities such as home-made playdough and a large sheet of drawing paper attached to the floor proved hugely popular. It was suggested that a mix of time for parents to work with and without their children might have enhanced the programme and this should certainly be considered as a possibility in the future.



3.1.2 Families feel more confident and motivated.

The staff team noticed confidence growing as families became more familiar with the environment, the staff and each other.

“One family was very nervous at the beginning of the week and no eye contact was made with the practitioners; by the end of the week the mum was chatting to them happily”.

Creative practitioner

Towards the end of the week – some of the parents started to fill in their own registration forms as they came in, because they felt relaxed and comfortable

Co-ordinator

“Four women removed their headscarves and then dressed up for the photography studio. That shows real confidence!”

Creative practitioner

I’ve noticed how confident they’ve got over the week, mixing well with each other. It’s been a joint effort. Everyone was laughing and smiling and having a go”.

Support worker

“One mum had very little English. In the end she was controlling the fire, took over making the curry with its spices and said how much it reminded her of back home.”

Creative practitioner



The fire pit

Although there could be no guarantee that such gains in confidence would be sustained beyond the programme, the focus on recognising and then applying skills in a real life situation would seem to increase the likelihood of this.

“Two mums hadn’t realised just how good they were at doing these things. They are eager to do this kind of thing again. It really gave parents a lift. They’ve realised they can do it themselves

Support worker

“I’ve got one of these (sewing machines) in my cellar. I can’t remember the last time I used it. I’m going to get it out and start making things again.”

Parent: verbal comment

The parent who made this comment also brought in an example of her crochet work and showed one of the creative practitioners how to do it. They discussed how she could start a crochet group for parents at the school.

“Two mums reluctantly agreed to staff a stall at the Festival, but afterwards they said they’d really enjoyed it. One of them suggested reducing the photo frames 2 for 75p, she was already thinking how to sell more.”

Coordinator

The Family Festival included a stall of jewellery that wasn’t actually made during the programme but by parents attending a weekly session at the Nursery and Infant school.

Seeing that their jewellery was of the standard to sell at a public event was a huge confidence boost for those involved – with much more ‘weight’ than a stall within the school.

3.1.3 Families are more aware of wider social networks and opportunities

This framing of this objective reflected discussions about the need for some families to gain the confidence, and perhaps motivation, to travel outside the immediate area - for work for parents and to widen the experiences of children. A first step to this was seen to be providing information and support in a very accessible way by having a number of agencies (eg further education, employment) participating in the Festival. In the event only three of the several contacted attended on the day. Nonetheless a few parents did use this resource while others were prompted in other ways to think about next steps. .

“I lost my gardening job recently. It was a great job because I’m good with my hands and I like quiet time. Things at home can be hard. This week’s been great though because I’ve been able to get out and do stuff with the girls. I’ve quite enjoyed it too. I think I might ask the college about courses – it’ll give me something to do.”

Parent: Verbal comment

The objective also encompassed the idea of encouraging families to socialise. Some parents are quite isolated by health issues or cultural differences. Many parents commented on the social aspect of the scheme.

“ I very much enjoyed the whole experience and the ability to meet new people and explore and be engaged in activities I have never been involved in”

“It was one of the best sociable events that I have seen and had since my sons have been to school. Learning for my sons, new activities for them.

’ Parents: Post- programme questionnaires

Some increase in socialising since the scheme was described in the post programme meetings with the schools/children’s centre. For example, children have been invited to each others’ parties and parents who didn’t previously do so, are speaking to each other when dropping off and collecting their children.

A networking opportunity that was not perhaps anticipated was that provided by the creative practitioners themselves.

“I have thoroughly enjoyed this experience and the people I have been introduced to have been important for me. I now feel I will be better informed to approach creative people. The people I have met I would not have had the opportunity to meet and their valuable advice made me want to source work in my field of design and follow up on a more creative and productive level. As a result of this I am now trying to set up a studio space at home to produce my design work. I have been in touch with the printmaking tutor about workshops she holds which I am interested in”

Parent: Post-programme questionnaire.

3.1.4 Families are more autonomous

This objective reflects the Nursery and Infant School's aspiration for some of the families that they've supported to become more self sufficient. The location of the programme outside the school and the participation of families they might not know were important to the achievement of this.

Families were observed to take increasing ownership of the activities as the programme progressed. It was recognised that some of the activities could have been structured in a way that better supported this.

"I could have arranged the tables for the notebook making activity in a way that allowed it to be carried on when I wasn't there. . Once I'd shown the families how to make the notebooks, if all the materials had been set out in order, they would have been able to carry on themselves."

Creative practitioner

When it came to the Family Festival, some families were initially reluctant to manage their stalls and sell their goods. A local mum encouraged them and this peer support made all the difference. They were very professional, with parents and children setting their own prices, handling money, encouraging people to buy and chatting about what they had made. The staff stepped further and further back as the families took ownership.

"The soup wasn't selling that well so one mum suggested adding lentils to it and calling it dhal - it sold out."

"We left the parents in charge of the stalls and they didn't ask for any help and took responsibility and ownership for their area"

"One mum became more and more involved in the running of the project as the week developed and was suggesting ideas, recommending people to staff the stall at the Festival and suggesting the layout such as having the book marks next to the books."

Co-ordinator

During the preparation days families prepared to run a photography studio in which visitors could dress up in a range of costumes and have their photographs taken. This proved a great success at the Festival.

"Tim, the creative practitioner who devised the idea of the photography studio observed that once families had learnt how to use a camera, set up a shot and download it onto the computer, they actually took control of the studio and he was just facilitating this process"

Co-ordinator



Working in the photography studio



And one of the products

The programme certainly generated an enthusiasm to 'do this again'. The two schools are thinking about both how they might run a similar programme in the future or, on a smaller scale, introduce family run stalls and activities into other events.

"We've been thinking about doing this kind of thing for a while. We've learned a lot. We've made some new links with people and got lots of good ideas".

School staff

"We've all got lots of good ideas for what we can do next time. Some parents want to do the catering and I want to do mehndi. We want to run it ourselves."

Parent: verbal comment

The programme did prompt a truly entrepreneurial spirit in some cases.

“Two mums had a really enterprising idea. They came up with the idea of making and selling curries together to the public”.

Creative Practitioner

3.2.1 The schools and children’s centre will have closer working relationships with each other and other local organisations

In discussion with the three partner organisations after the programme it was a little unclear how/why this objective had been framed. The Children’s Centre manager commented that although she didn’t regularly work in partnership with the Nursery and Infant school they had good communication channels and worked together when they needed to. The Nursery & Infant Schools and the Junior School do a considerable amount of work together. It was originally envisaged that the Family Festival would be draw together many local organisations and this could have been a useful networking opportunity but as described above, only three attended.

The discussion about the objective nonetheless revealed an important issue – that the three partners were not equally engaged with the planning process for this programme. This was most clearly demonstrated at the post programme meetings with each partner; only one was familiar with the programme’s aims and objectives. These had been agreed with one partner and emailed to the others for comment but this clearly wasn’t an effective approach. Although there are real capacity issues in schools and Children’s Centres, it is essential for all the partners to meet together on at least one occasion to formally agree the aims and objectives and the implications of these for each of them.

The lack of a shared understanding did cause a few difficulties. For example, as discussed in 3.1.4, the use of an ‘off-site’ venue was key to the Nursery and Infant School’s approach. However, from the perspective of the Junior School, locating the programme in their own school building would have been a better and more economical option. With the Children’s Centre, a really valuable opportunity was missed to align the evaluation process with the Outcomes Based Accountability model that is used for all their work.

3.3.1 CapeUK have developed its knowledge with targeted families

CapeUK has managed six previous ‘Creative Family’ programme. Some of these have been entirely ‘open access’ and, in others, a number of families were particularly encouraged to attend and provided with discrete additional support. The Easter 2012 programme was CapeUK’s first experience of a ‘by invitation only’ programme that was aimed at families facing particular challenges.

The experience reinforced what had been anticipated, that such a scheme can only work as a partnership with individuals and organisations (in this case the schools and the Children’s Centre) that are known and trusted by the families. There are other types of Creative Family scheme that could be successfully ‘parachuted’ into a locality, but the success of this type of scheme is hugely dependent on the quality of such partnerships. CapeUK has a significant

history of working in Birkby and so the partnerships were already in place.. In other instances a preliminary phase would be needed to develop such partnerships and this would have financial implications for what is already a relatively expensive model.

It was also very helpful to CapeUK that most of the families had previous experience of being invited to participate in specific activities at the schools and/or Children's Centre. None of the families appeared to draw negative inferences from their selection. The contribution of the lead players from partner organisations and the value of employing support staff from those organisations cannot be overestimated. Family members were reassured by familiar faces as they built new relationships with the creative practitioners. The benefit was reciprocal. One of the partners described the programme as a valuable professional development opportunity for their support staff. Several of the support staff themselves commented on how much they'd enjoyed developing relationships with both parents and children in a very relaxed, enjoyable and 'equal' environment.

"Seeing mums having fun has been amazing. Especially for some of these mums".

Support Worker

An issue discussed at the Creative Practitioners meeting was whether the 'targeting' had made this programme different from others in which they'd be involved. The overwhelming response was 'no'. The practitioners commented that where parents had shared problems with them, they were of a similar nature and severity to those they come across in 'open access' schemes. There was perhaps a higher proportion of parents who needed some support in interacting with their children, but the over-riding impression that the creative practitioners took away was of the level of skill and enthusiasm that was released once initial anxieties had been overcome.

3.3.2 CapeUK will have gained experience of developing a programme that addresses an enterprise agenda

The focus on enterprise was very effectively communicated by the co-ordinator and informed both group planning and individual planning by creative practitioners from the outset. This might seem to be a 'given' but an agenda or focus of a programme can easily be overshadowed by other practicalities. What perhaps helped here was the unavoidable fact that a Family Festival would open its doors to the public on the fourth day and there needed to be things for people to do and to buy.

Early in the programme families were asked to make 'one item for themselves and one to sell' but as the Family Festival drew closer, families picked up on the need to create the stock and went into mass production mode.



Family production teams

There was a slight tension between the 'enterprise' focus and the 'family' focus in the sense that what children made needed to be of a quality that could be sold – and yet we were encouraging parents to both create **with** and not **for** their children and to value what their children produced. This was mitigated to a very large extent by the activities designed by the practitioners; these enabled adults and children to each work at their own level - and produce saleable products – such as notebooks, printed tea towels, food and family photographs.

On reflection, the co-ordinator and creative practitioners felt that the focus on creating items for sale had 'taken over' their thinking a little too much and that this had slightly overlooked ensuring that there was something for every participating family member. A few families commented that there hadn't been enough for boys to do and it was noted by the Children's Centre and others that very young children hadn't been as well catered for.

A real opportunity was missed in relation to drumming. Paul, the music practitioner was asked to provide some sessions but was not employed for the full length of the programme or involved in all the planning. Drumming was seen as a introductory and alternative activity rather than an integral part of the programme. Participants tended to drop in and out and, while there were a few occasions when Paul was able to build collaboration and make something of quality happen – -these occasions were the exceptions. Had he been fully involved in the programme he could have worked with a group of families to make a CD that could have been sold at the Family Festival.



Drumming session

Conclusion

The programme was hugely enjoyed by all participants – families and staff. There is clear evidence of confidence and motivation increasing during the programme and some evidence of it = being sustained. Families took on responsibilities and became more autonomous. As confidence grew, skills emerged – creative, practical and entrepreneurial.

The enterprise focus was effective and families truly rising to the challenge of staging a Family Festival in a very short time. There are many ways in which the partner organisation can build on what has been achieved. However, this may be more true for the two schools than for the Children's Centre.

The programme was a valuable learning experience for CapeUK, reinforcing the need to establish a shared understanding between the partners in a project and underlining the crucial importance of working with those who are known and trusted in a community – particularly in a programme designed for families that are facing challenges.