

Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities

Final Report

Introduction:

NLDC funding enabled ROWA! to deliver to 55 learners in six wards in Derbyshire and Derby city. The project outputs were also to improve learner's basic skills and progress learners towards achieving the national test.

Erewash SureStart- Cotmanhay

11 people joined the course at Erewash SureStart, but due to the family circumstances of one of the students, 10 completed. The 10 then went onto complete the Number Sacks course, however only 8 received the Number Sacks accreditation, as 2 had already completed a Story Sacks course. Recruitment for the course was done through SureStart and it was felt that with Diane Webb being in post and working with her drop in group, meant that there was a more efficient target of learners. Participants have stayed with the group and are planning for what they want next and to provide play sessions for their children during the summer holidays.

In SureStart's view, one learner in particular has blossomed, she is taking part in more SureStart activities and is showing a much more positive approach to life, is asserting herself with her family. Also, the folders that the students completed are being used for a display for Adult Learning Week in Erewash open event.

Gamesley- Gamesley Early Excellence Centre

9 people joined the Number Fun course in Gamesley. Of these, 3 went onto to do the Story Sacks course, 1 went onto the Nail Art pilot course, as she had already done the Story Sacks course, and 3 took the National Test. Along with these participants, the other remaining 2 have all made enquiries

with Lifelong Learning as to what other courses they can take part in, such as computer courses.

Recruitment was done through the Early Excellence Centre, with Lynn the centre manager; targeting parents that she considered to be in greatest need. All the people that attended the Number Fun course were seen as people that would not have attended a more formal type of course.

The tutor on the course, Kay Best, said that the one outstanding thing about these students was that they kept on coming back. When they first started the course, she really didn't think they would continue due to a range of factors such as lack of self-esteem and confidence and prior low academic achievement.

Chesterfield- Brampton SureStart

5 learners enrolled on this course and all completed and are now interested in going on to complete a Story Sacks course when present activities within Sure Start are completed. Recruitment was done through SureStart and they initially recruited 12 parents, but due to family commitments, and commitments to other SureStart courses, only 5 finally enrolled and completed the course.

SureStart was extremely happy with this course and on the evaluation sheets that the students completed; they all rated the course as 5, excellent. In one case, Grandmother and Mother of a young child attended the course, both eager to learn how to help the young child with numeracy.

Aldercar - Amber Valley SureStart

This course is still on-going. Due to a variety of reasons, such as family commitments, the timing of the course, and the location, only 4 parents are now attending, but they are attending regularly and enjoying the course. The course is being run at Heanor Leisure Centre. The parents have expressed an interest in doing further courses when this one is completed.

Mackworth - Derby City

4 people attended and completed the initial Number Fun course and now one of those participants is taking part in the Story Sacks course, along with 6

others, and they are all thoroughly enjoying the course, all of them now involved with making 2 Story Sacks each. We have now enrolled another 8 learners on a Number Fun taster/Number Fun course. This SureStart is very happy to be working in partnership with Read On Write Away! and has a list of things they want to do in the future.

Peartree- Rosehill SureStart, Derby City

After a lot of perseverance, on the part of SureStart and Read On Write Away!, we had 9 people attending the course. Not all of them made it to the end, as we had 2 babies born during the time of the course, but not actually in the room! Some of the group are now going on to do Number Sacks, with a request from one of the participants for a Story Sacks course to be run in conjunction with her mother and toddler group, the Arzoo group, run in a local school.

This group became a very tight knit group and would discuss various child development issues with each other, which was seen as a development by SureStart as they were initially a quiet group.

On the evaluation sheets completed by the participants, the comments ranged from things such as "it has helped me to understand my children, how to help them and not bore them", to "it was very relaxed and informal so you were able to express your views" and " I felt very happy and welcomed, the tutors were brilliant".

Additionally they have offered a ROWA! desk in the Rosehill Sure Start offices on Peartree Rd seeing that the relationship between Sure Start and ROWA! as being beneficial to helping meet joint objectives.

Final Numbers

Erewash	- 10
Chesterfield	- 5
Peartree	- 9
Amber Valley	- 4
Mackworth 1	- 10
Mackworth 2	- 8
Gamesley	- 9
Total =	55

Successes

Each course attracted learners that would not necessarily access "traditional courses". Learners were particularly pleased with the ROWA! certificates as this marked a significant achievement for some of them. End of course evaluations were very positive and the following summaries some of the comments:

- "I liked the whole philosophy of how to introduce numbers to children and how to learn through play."
- "I wanted to help my children with their school work and this course certainly helped me."
- "It is a nice and relaxing way of learning about numbers."

In all courses we recruited hard to reach learners with low academic achievement. This has meant that they had, in most cases, very low levels of literacy ability and they considered that learning was not for them.

Barriers had to be overcome, such as

- Ramadan - this prevented participation in Rosehill SureStart.
- Personal difficulties of learners, e.g. significant domestic and family issues.
- Changes in SureStart staff, causing organisational problems.

The learners have been motivated into further learning, shown by the progression onto Number Sacks and Story Sacks courses.

Attitudes towards learning have changed, some of the learners were reluctant to attend a "numeracy" course as they felt that it was their weak point, but as they were there to help their children, they began to enjoy learning themselves.

All the participants enjoyed using the resources and commented on how it encouraged their children to share whilst playing with the resources at home.

Stronger links have been made with the SureStarts that we have been working with.

ISSUES

Initial recruitment proved to be difficult in some areas. In areas such as Cotmanhay where a ROWA! /SureStart worker is involved with the community all the time, recruitment was not a problem. In Amber Valley on the other hand, where a locality link worker was relatively new to the post, recruitment was more difficult, and involved both SureStart and ROWA! visiting groups to encourage people to attend.

Location also played an important part in attendance on the course. In Peartree, the course was initially to be held in a school but parents were reluctant to attend, once the course was moved to the SureStart building, parents were much happier to attend. The SureStart parents seem to be happier to participate in courses when held in the relative comfort of SureStart buildings. The Amber Valley course is being held in Heanor Leisure Centre and transport has had to be arranged, which again has caused a few difficulties to be overcome.

Tutors also played a very important part in the success of the courses. Using tutors who have an empathy with the learners has proved more successful than using tutors who have either not worked in the area before or who are not relaxed and at ease with the learners.

The outcome of the project is that we have successfully recruited and delivered to 55 learners who have had a positive learning experience, but due to the level of their literacy are unable to take the national test. This was not foreseen at the time of writing the application. If we pass the learners on to Derbyshire Adult Education as previously planned, we feel that the learners will drop out of the system and not progress.

Alternatively we would like to offer other suitable ROWA! courses that will address their literacy and numeracy needs with the objective of progressing them towards the national test.

Conclusion

After all the hard work done by ROWA! project co-ordinators working in the communities involved and the SureStarts involved with the project, the last comment has to be from a young mum from Peartree who wrote a report for the SureStart Rosehill AGM, entitled SureStart and Me.

"My name is Serena Annya Hussain, I am 22 and married with a little boy who is two years old..... The course I am doing now is Number Fun, this is a relaxing and fun course, which will inspire you to teach your child without any hard work included".

Denise Anderson, Read On Write Away!
24th May 2004