

Skills for Londoners – Community Outreach Programme

Belina GROW

Showing how developing the confidence and motivation of parents in small groups can help them feel able to ask for the kind of courses that they need and the benefits of partnership working sharing how when the college were aware of what parents wanted, they made sure that both the hours were the best ones and that childcare was available for the course.

Belina GROW CIC engaged 13 women onto the Grow confidence of motivation programme - held once a week for two hours over four weeks - at Sheringham Children's Centre: in school hours, and with a creche.

The program is delivered in the community, through group sessions and a behavioural insight programme to give women the confidence to think about what they want to do, and how they're going to take their Next Steps. At the last session Grow invited a Newham College to attend to promote their multiply course. Initially the college said that the course would be held for five weeks one day a week for five hours on that day, the mothers said to the representatives that this wouldn't work for them as they had young children, many of whom were only at school in the mornings and some of whom would require a creche.

In response the college changed the programme to 2 sessions a week at a local community venue with a creche provided. 10 women attended the course.

Background - Bridge Project

The Bridge Project is focused on supporting mothers in community settings into training and courses (including Multiply), volunteering or employment. The majority of the mothers don't have English as a first language and have either never worked or never worked in this country. Liz Sewell, Belina Grow CIC Director developed the Grow Programme and is one of the project tutors. Liz was pleased that there was such a good attendance on the project and the high number of mothers who moved onto the Multiply course. She is keen to highlight a number of reasons for this success and the broader learning from the approach.

Adapting the Multiply Course

In terms of the Multiply course Liz spoke about barriers to learning not just being about the individual. There are also institutional barriers for mothers attending courses and these also need to be addressed in order for them to engage on courses.

"It is not about individual people's barriers it is often the institutional barriers that these women face. It is about organisations better designing things with mothers in mind."

This was also expressed by one of the mothers on the project who highlighted how the Multiply course needed to be delivered differently.

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*“It was also good that after our group of mothers spoke up that the original timing of the course (Multiply) was not great that they listened and changed the timings so more mothers with young children like me could go (over two mornings rather than one longer day).”
(Maria one of the mothers on the Project)*

Liz also worked with Newham college and the Multiply Lead in Newham to make sure that the course was delivered close to where mothers lived in a community setting and ensured that there was a creche for those mothers with the youngest children.

*“We also changed the site where the course was, so it was nearer to where the parents live and it had a creche. It was about accommodating the practical needs of the parents.”
(Danielle Multiply Lead in Newham)*

Liz thinks that the initial work with mothers in children’s centres was also needed before they could feel confident enough to move onto the Multiply course.

“There is a great tutor on the Multiply course who is good with the women. But those women would not be on the Multiply course if it was not for the support that we had offered and the confidence of those women to say what they needed in order to attend. Some of the mothers are going on to do the teaching assistant course so that is a big step for women who were at home and had not worked many years. We are the hub between the different organisations. Working as a group also helped the women to move onto taking the next step.”

Engaging with Newham College

Liz stressed the importance of engaging and working with the local college in the design and delivery of the Multiply course and indeed as a vehicle of encourage mothers to move onto other courses. In terms of the latter Liz talked about the positive relationship with Newham college. The mothers who had completed the project were given a ‘graduation style’ celebration event held at the college on the 30th of November and this was deliberately scheduled to coincide with the college open day where mothers could learn about other courses.

Danielle talked to the mothers at the celebration event and encouraged people who were who had not already signed up to the Multiply course to do so (including the friends of the mothers who were attending the celebration event). In her interview Danielle also talked about the success of the mothers on the Bridge Project attending the Multiply course and how she had worked with Liz Sewell and the mothers to better design the course for their needs.

“We work with Grow and that is being amazing. The Multiply learners are really building their confidence. Helping with money management and budgeting. Where it is different from functional skills there is not the test at the end. With disadvantaged mothers it is about the practical application and changing the course for them. The tutor really adapted for the mothers needs and went through the practical examples that they highlighted to him. The teacher drove the lesson, but the learners also inputted in the direction.”

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Steppingstone to other Courses

Danielle also stressed the importance of the Multiply course being a steppingstone for other maths courses.

“With the Grow mothers the feedback was that it gave them confidence and encouraged them to do maths in their everyday life and to help their children. It has helped the mothers know how to support their children with their homework. The Multiply course also gives learners more confidence in maths so that they can then feel more able to move onto a level 2 in maths.”

Holding the celebration event at the college on the course open day was also an opportunity for mothers to hear about other courses at the college. Jan spoke to the mothers at the event about the range of courses. She talked about Newham being a community college and them changing their focus year on year to reflect the needs of the community. Jan also spoke about the advice that the college can offer to people including the next steps that mothers might want to make ranging from entry level functional skills through to degree level studying or how someone might apply qualifications from a different country. The open day was an opportunity for the mothers to meet course tutors and to find out about free courses as well as student finance.