

East Renfrewshire  
Educational Psychology  
Service

**How does our partnership working secure positive outcomes for East Renfrewshire's most vulnerable families through early intervention parenting interventions and how can we improve?**

**Theme Two: Partnership Working**

**Activity Descriptor: Parenting Interventions Focus Group**

**Date: Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> February**

**Time: 10.30am – 12.30pm**

**Venue: Civic Room 2, 211 Main Street, Barrhead, G78 1SY**



**VSE Briefing Paper**

## Theme Two Key Question

**How effective is our partnership working at the Early Level in securing positive outcomes for children and families through prevention and early intervention and how can we improve?**

### Background

#### **What information, knowledge and data do we have?**

The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) places a strong emphasis on working effectively with parents, both directly and indirectly, through partnership working and as such are involved in a number of parenting interventions across East Renfrewshire.

The EPS has been integral to the development of approaches to prevention and early intervention, such as Let's Play and Family First, which build capacity in the workforce and focus on engaging and supporting vulnerable parents and families. Ongoing evaluations of Let's Play and Family First are demonstrating positive impact on children and families. However, the EPS has identified that we need to evaluate the impact of our contribution to these developments to ensure our partnership working is making a difference to outcomes and to inform further improvement. This VSE activity will therefore consider how well our partnership working builds capacity in others to effectively engage and support parents.

#### Let's Play

The EPS has a pivotal role, in partnership with the Early Years Prevention Officer and other agencies, in the development, implementation and ongoing evaluation of the Let's Play programme. Let's Play was established as a test of change through the Early Years Collaborative. It is a collaborative parent-centred programme which aims to develop parent/carers' skills. It highlights the importance of positive play experiences for children and encourages opportunities for quality interactive play between children and parents/carers. Research indicates that parental engagement is encouraged when they feel like true partners with professionals. Let's Play adopts a respectful approach which recognises that parents and professionals can learn from each other. Parents were fully consulted in the initial stages of development and their views have informed the project design and the content of the workshops. On-going evaluation is built into the programme's continuous development as it is scaled up to different communities and delivered by different practitioners, working alongside parents.

'Let's Play' is currently operating across three family centres and will be introduced to all family centres by 2018. Parents who participated report increased confidence in supporting their child's development through play and increased knowledge of how interactive play promotes their child's development. Within this VSE activity, we will explore the unique contribution of the EPS and use this information to inform future practice in relation to the development of Let's Play and other parenting interventions.

#### Family First

The Early Years Collaborative Discovery Team carried out research between October 2013

and January 2014 into how families and communities interacted with services in the Auchenback and Dunterlie areas of Barrhead. This research led to the development of the Family First initiative which was piloted in Barrhead from January 2015. The aim was to establish Family First workers who would build sustained positive relationships with families and actively engage them with services, communities and 3rd sector partners with the intended outcomes of:

- A decreased number of families involved with formal assessments or referrals to social work
- An increased number of families reporting that they have achieved their own outcomes and aspirations
- An increased number of children meeting developmental milestones
- An increased number of parents confident and able to support their families
- A decreased number of missed appointments
- An increase in participation in community based supports and services

So far, over 80 families have benefited from the flexible model of support that Family First workers offer. Parents are helped to identify and solve their own problems, building their capacity and guiding them until they can independently achieve their aspirations. Families have been supported to engage with a range of services which has had a positive impact on family life. The complement of Family First workers has increased from two to five and their reach has extended across the wider authority from the initial test in Barrhead.

The EPS is intrinsic to the development, support and evaluation of Family First through consultation, training and research. This VSE activity aims to explore the impact of the EPS contribution to Family First and to consider how this can be improved.

#### Activity Outline, Rationale and Outcomes

##### What are we doing?

A focus group methodology will be utilised during this activity. Initially, the group of participants will be split into two smaller groups to discuss The Let's Play and Family First interventions. The following questions will be considered:

1. *What was the educational psychology service (EPS) unique contribution to the development and implementation of Family First/Let's Play?*
2. *What was the impact of the EPS involvement?*
3. *How could this be improved/developed?*
4. *What are the barriers/challenges?*

The two groups will then come back together and provide feedback from their discussions. A full group discussion will then consider the following questions:

- *What is working well?*
- *What could the EPS do better?*
- *What are the implications for the EPS contribution to the development and implementation of future parenting interventions?*

### Why have we chosen this activity?

A focus group methodology has been chosen for this activity as it is a flexible approach which allows participants to share their views and opinions in a relaxed way. The ideas shared can then be developed through further discussion to construct a shared understanding of the impact of the EPS and ideas for improvement.

### What is the evidence base for this type of activity?

Focus groups are commonly used within research as they allow a wide range of views to be gathered during a short time and generate high 'face validity' data (Krueger, 1994). A working paper by Freitas et al (1998) summarises the evidence base of the focus group methodology.

### What key questions do we intend to answer in this activity?

- How does our partnership working secure positive outcomes for East Renfrewshire's most vulnerable families through early intervention parenting interventions and how can we improve?
  - What is the educational psychology service (EPS) unique contribution to the development and implementation of Family First and Let's Play?
  - What are the strengths of our approach?
  - What weaknesses and barriers are there and how will we address and overcome these to improve?
  - What opportunities are there to improve our performance? (What could/should we be doing differently?)
  - What can we learn from our role in Family First and Let's Play to inform the development of our contribution to other parenting interventions?

### Activity Facilitators

Name	Role
Heather Layton	Community Learning and Development Manager
Eilidh Lanzani	Educational Psychologist, ERC Education
Carolynne McKendry	Health and Wellbeing Development Officer, ERC Education

Participants	
Name	Role
Gillian Thorburn	Educational Psychologist
Janet Walker	Child Development Officer
Barbara Ann Wilson	Community Nursery Nurse
Julie Armstrong	Depute Head of Centre, Madras Family Centre
Jennifer Nicol	Senior Adult Learning Manager
Janice Weir	Learning Services Manager
Louisa Quick	Depute Head of Centre, Carlibar Family Centre
Vicky Flores	Educational Psychologist
Roslyn Graham	Family First Worker
June Walls	Early years Prevention Officer
Neil Lennon	Social Worker
Lindsey McLeod	Clinical Psychologist and Parent
Shona Taylor	Family First Worker
May Blair	Family First Worker
Ann McMillan	Data Analyst
Yvonne Coyle	Educational Psychologist

References
FREITAS, H; OLIVEIRA, M; JENKINS, M; and POPJOY, O. February 1998 <b>The Focus Group, a qualitative research method.</b> ISRC, Merrick School of Business, University of Baltimore.
KRUEGER, R. A.; 1994; <b>Focus groups: the practical guide goes applied research.</b> Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2nd. Ed.

Thank you for participating in this focus group.