

Evaluation Report – ELF Babies 2005. Early Learning in Families

Evaluation Report 2005 -Summary.

What is Early Learning in Families?

Early Learning in Families (ELF) is an approach promoting the parent's role as first educator of their child. The programmes use a collaborative approach between parent, child and ELF worker to encourage and enable the parent to have involvement in their child's early learning and development. The approach is based on the principle that the relationship between parents and child from birth is fundamental to the development of the child as a happy and effective learner.

ELF is primarily a preventative approach, aimed at positive outcomes for the parent and the child and is based on developmental and psychological research associated with parental involvement, learning, development and attachment. The principles and aims of ELF are embedded within the "Every Child Matters" documents.

The programmes were conceived and developed by Educational Psychologists (Helen Paton and Debbie Shannon). Early Years trained staff, speech therapists and health visitors have contributed to the development of materials. On-going development, training and evaluation are provided by the Educational Psychologist. The programmes are delivered by four outreach workers in three Sure Start areas in Blackpool.

The ELF Babies and ELF Toddlers programmes offer a home-based, universal service. Group "parent and child together" sessions and "Transition to school" programmes are also available.

Evaluation of ELF Babies programme (2004-2005)

ELF Babies (Core programme)

A universal, home-based service with 12 sessions completed over the babies first year (3 months to 12 months). Materials cover "Conversations", "Songs and Rhymes" and "Books with Baby".

This small-scale evaluation is based on statistical information provided by eighteen parent evaluation questionnaires and outreach worker "end of programme evaluation questionnaires" between September 2004-5.

Facts and Figures

- Take up of programme between September 2004-5– 37

- Completed programme between September 2004-5 – 18
- Programme on-going – 19

ELF Babies is a universal programme, however characteristics of families choosing to complete the programme emerged from evaluation,

- 44% Teenage or young parents.
- 22% Parents with mental health, medical or SEN.
- 17% New to the area
- 56% First child
- 6% children were premature.,
- 62.5% of the “other” (44%)children were under two years.
- 37.5% of parents had concerns or were aware of concerns from other sources about the “other” child/ren.

Child outcomes

“(Child’s name) has become a happier and more confident baby and has learned to play with other babies”. (Parent Quote)

- 94% of parents said that the ELF Babies programme “had made a difference” to how they behaved with their baby.
- 95% of parents said that they had learned “a lot “or “something” from the programme.

ELF worker noted the most frequent changes over the year associated with child outcomes were,

- Increased level of interaction and communication between parent and child.
- Increased involvement of parent in activities with child.
- Increased reading between parent and child.
- Increased evidence of knowledge and appropriate expectations regarding child’s development shown by parent.

On completion of the programme 49% of children began attendance within more “formal” childcare via Sure Start. (childminder or nursery).

Parent comments

“The ELF worker came round to my house and showed me how singing and reading to my baby will help his development”.

“I really enjoyed not only the ELF sessions, but continuing to use the tips and advice the ELF worker gave us in our daily lives, especially the songs and rhymes”.

“...it was nice watching (child’s name) responding with a smile and actions”.

“If the ELF worker hadn’t told me to sing and read books with my baby, I probably wouldn’t have done it while he was so young”.

“...it gave me an understanding on how to stimulate my child and make him listen and communicate with me and other people”.

“I soon started to see the difference in my two children. When I had my first child I worked a lot. He never got much interaction. I used to sit him in front of the telly or in his pram. I sometimes sat him in the middle of his toys and left him to play...My second child is the opposite – he is confident, can repeat most words said to him. He can notice his surrounding, he can point to where his family live. He is a lot more aware of things than what my first was at his age. This is all down to ELF Babies. The ELF worker has shown me a lot in the months I saw them.”

“Doing ELF has helped me a lot with (child’s name)...I now feel a lot more comfortable playing and interacting with (child’s name).”

“...learned more ways to communicate with baby and was able to raise concerns with the ELF worker about the baby and toddler”.

Parent Outcomes

- 39% of parents said they “felt supported”.
- 44% of parents said they had been “encouraged to learn more”.
- 28% of parents said they had “increased confidence”.

Access to Sure Start services.

- 70% of parents went on to engage in other Sure Start programmes, services or groups following engagement in the ELF programme.
- At the start of the programme, parents accessed 0.6 Sure Start programmes. By completion of the ELF Babies programme parent’s accessed on average 2 groups/training each.
- 62.5% of parents went on to go into Full-time or part-time employment or training following completion of the programme. Training courses were nationally accredited courses in areas such as,

- Childcare
- Foundation in Social Care
- Nursing Foundation course
- Teaching assistant
- Business administration
- Sociology

ELF worker noted the most frequent changes over the year associated with parental outcomes were,

- Improvement of support network around parent.
- Increase in confidence of parent.
- Increased access to Sure Start groups and services.

Parent comments

“I felt that having someone come to my house was good because I don’t like going to groups”.

“After a few sessions I became more confident with my baby”.

“The ELF worker has been very supportive with concerns I was having with (child’s name) and my life too she has been there to listen and has encouraged me to become a lot more confident and independent and because of that I have gone into groups and made friends...”

“It encouraged me to go into Sure Start more and join other groups”. (Parent Quote)

“If it wasn’t for Sure Start I probably wouldn’t have gone to college” (Parent Quote)

written by,
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