

Saturday Sessions – sharing observations with video

Clifton Children's Centre, Hull, observe children as they play and learn and record their 'learning journeys'. They note each child's interests, repeated play patterns and how they develop new skills and understandings.

Many parents who visit the centre during the week are already quite familiar with the 'learning journeys' and share their own observations from home.

Some parents say that learning about patterns of play (schemas) helps them to understand things their children do – including some things they had previously not thought of as 'learning', but rather as 'odd' or 'naughty' (such as cutting up or drawing on unexpected things). Sharing observations has also encouraged adults to let their children join in with different home tasks and activities.

However, some families find it difficult to find time during the week to come in and share observations. In response to this, the centre staff set up a series of Saturday sessions to help some families get more involved.

Planning the Saturday sessions

The centre invited a small group of three families, so that they could focus on building a stronger relationship with each one. They targeted fathers and parents who work during the week. Siblings were welcome to attend too. Children helped to write invitations to their families, because this kind of 'personal touch' is known to be effective. Each family was invited to attend one session a week for three weeks.

Introducing families to ways of recording and sharing observations

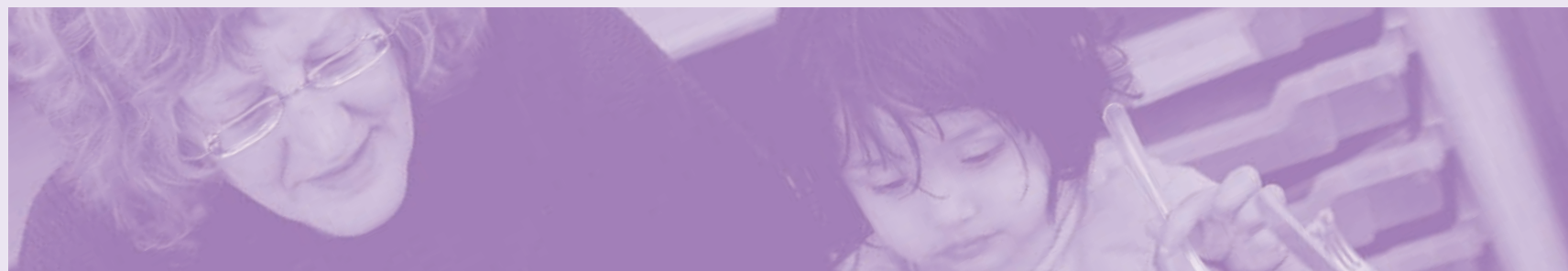
Each family watched a short video extract of their child involved in play, which had been edited using Windows Movie Maker so that it



included written slides explaining the child's level of involvement, well-being and schemas as appropriate. Parents were introduced to the video cameras and how they work, and then took the cameras home to make their own videos.

Sharing observations and discussing children's learning

The families returned the following week with lots of footage of the children playing at home. They looked at the videos with a practitioner,



discussed the footage and asked questions. Some also edited their videos and added their own explanatory slides. This process was repeated in a third session. After more families have experienced the Saturday session, the centre plans to hold a larger event later in the year to bring together lots of families who have attended the sessions and celebrate everyone's achievements.

Impact

Through the use of videos, parents have been able to see at first hand, and understand more about, what goes on in the centre, and staff have been able to see the children interacting with their parents and siblings, and learning at home.

The first Saturday sessions made an immediate difference to relationships. Staff worked with two fathers they had never met before and confidence in talking to parents increased.

'I feel a lot more confident communicating with parents. They don't seem as anxious when I approach them.'

'Being able to show that we can learn together has really helped. Saying I am not totally confident using the computer seems to have opened up relationships with some of the parents.'

Staff also report that daily conversations with parents about children are now much more focused on the children's learning.

The parents feel more confident about supporting their children's learning at home; some report doing new things with their children.

Future plans

The sessions will be repeated with a new group of parents, and the centre hopes to embed the practice of parents being closely involved in recording their children's learning at home into centre practice.

This centre has accessed training at the Pen Green Centre – Parents Involvement in their Children's Learning (PICL).

For more information about Pen Green visit www.pengreen.org

“I have been decorating at home. Before, I would never have let my child join in, but now I have. She goes up and down with the roller – that's a trajectory schema.”

