

# Case study one: Using Adult Learning in the Community sessions to support family engagement

## Background

Prior to launching Team Teulu in the 2023 summer term, our team of Family Engagement Officers conducted qualitative baseline consultation with parents and family members across all schools within the Llangatwg cluster. The consultation covered a range of different topics and themes, including parental anxiety around the transition to nursery. Parents expressed concern about leaving their child at school, and many expressed that nursery would be the first time for their child to be separated from family; “I’m worried about leaving them [at school] for a long time” (Pre-school parent, Dulais Valley); “Having only visited the school once, when my child was a baby, it was daunting. I handed my child over to teachers I didn’t know, with a class full of children I didn’t know, whose parents I didn’t know” (Nursery parent, Neath Valley); “When my eldest started school, we were able to take them into the classroom, so if they were feeling anxious, you were able to calm them down and distract them with the toys and books. My youngest started after COVID so he had to be dropped off by the gate and a teacher bring him into class” (Parent of two children, Neath Valley). One parent shared; “I just want to make sure that my kids are safe and happy in school” (Pre-school parent, Dulais Valley).

- 90% of the parents who shared their views said they wanted to have opportunities to support their children with their learning.
- 74% of parents wanted to learn new skills to support their children with homework.



# Case study one: Using Adult Learning in the Community sessions to support family engagement

## Structure and set-up

During the 2023 summer term, Team Teulu Family Engagement Officers met with Learning and Engagement Officers working at Adult Learning in the Community to discuss ways to support each other to engage with families, to identify opportunities for parents to develop skills to help their children at school, and to offer support to parents experiencing anxiety around the transition to nursery.

In the autumn term, Blaendulais Primary School offered to pilot an Adult Learning in the Community programme, forming a partnership between the school nursery staff, ACL tutors, and Team Teulu family engagement officers. The team launched a series of Storysack play sessions based on the story, *The Runaway Pea* (Poskitt, 2020). The aim of the sessions was to engage with children and families due to start at nursery within the term. Sessions were promoted through the nursery teacher to all families who registered to start in nursery, and were facilitated by the schools' family engagement officer.

The nursery teacher, family engagement officer and community tutor have met on a regular basis to shape the sessions in line with the foundation learning curriculum. Activities and learning objectives are aligned to ensure consistency for children, and provides the opportunity to model the structure of the nursery session.

“Little things that we do [during the session] are already having an impact when they start nursery. Things like working together, sitting down on the carpet, helping to tidy up, snack time, it's all building their routine for when they start. The other day, [the nursery teacher] read *The Runaway Pea* to her class as part of story time. The ones who've attended our sessions knew it word for word, and they were telling the older children what would happen next. They've really grown in confidence” (Tutor).

- 9 families have attended the sessions, with an average attendance of 5 families each week
- 6 parents will submit portfolios for certification and accreditation
- 8 children have successfully settled into their new nursery class since sessions began

# Case study one: Using Adult Learning in the Community sessions to support family engagement

## Outcomes

Parents attending the session shared numerous positive outcomes for their children, including developments in their social skills, and an increase in their confidence; “You can see him, he’s a lot more confident and wanting to join in with things a lot more” (Parent of five children); “Since we started, you can see now he likes to have a play with kids his own age. And I’d come to something like this every day if I could” (Parent of one child). This has also been recognised by professionals facilitating the sessions; “I’ve really seen a difference in some of the children, one has gone from being quite introvert, quite shy and keeping [themselves to themselves]. To see [them] now, it’s like a different child” (Family Engagement Officer); “Children coming through [ACL] are far more confident to participate in group activities when they move to nursery. Before, they may have been a bit hesitant, they’re now having a go. Before, I’d have to give a lot more direction” (Nursery teacher); “This group has done [certain children] the world of good for their social skills and interaction” (Nursery teacher).

In addition, the sessions have allowed parents with larger families the opportunity to have quality one-to-one time with their child; “I’m due in February. It’s lovely to have that one-to-one time with [him]. It’s really helping” (Parent of five children).

Many parents also shared personal outcomes of attending the sessions, including an increase in their own confidence; “I didn’t have any confidence, I didn’t take them to any baby groups, nothing like that, but coming here, it’s really helped. I know I’ll go to anything that [my Family Engagement Officer] runs now” (Parent of five children).

Additionally, professionals have observed an increase in parent confidence in their own abilities, and connection with other parents; “One of our parents said she’d like to be a teaching assistant once her children are in school. Something like this, they’re inadvertently learning through playing with their own children, these units are perfect” (Tutor). “It’s nice to have a chat with [other parents] here, and just connect really. It’s time. Having the time” (Parent of two children); “What’s nice is the peer-to-peer support, there’s not the reliance on [the nursery teacher] to answer every question, it’s just a conversation with other nursery parents” (Family engagement officer).

# Case study one: Using Adult Learning in the Community sessions to support family engagement

“It’s been brilliant. For lots of our parents, this is the first time they’ve taken the children places. We’re able to start our relationships with them early, they definitely get the chance to learn about what happens at school before they start, they know they can pop in, have a chat. It’s reduced the need for structured opportunities to meet us. The first week [of ACL], I did a pre-nursery chat with the parents, they had booklets and little starter packs, I popped in at the end of the session to have a little chat with them. It’s not an official visit for them, or something formal to feel nervous about, I just popped in” (Nursery teacher);



## Future opportunities

Sessions are scheduled to continue for the 2024 spring term, and will be planned in partnership between the ACL tutor, nursery teacher and family engagement officer.; “The next block will be the importance of play. We’re looking at movement. We’re looking at reading in the foundation phase, but we’ll be working on that together [with the teacher] so it’s appropriate for the learning that the children will have in school” (Tutor). The Spring sessions will look to utilise community facilities, including the mobile library.

*With thanks to our partners at Adult Learning in the Community, and the wonderful staff at Blaendulais Primary School.*