

Strengthening Families – Strengthening Communities

The Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities (SFSC) parent education programme is a community based programme specifically designed to promote some of the protective factors associated with 'good parenting' (developing close and warm relationships between parents and children; using methods of discipline that support self-discipline in children; fostering self-esteem of children; developing strategies to deal with risky situations; managing anger). At the same time **SFSC** deals with the factors in parenting that are associated with increased risk (inconsistent parenting; harsh discipline in an overly critical environment; limited supervision; isolation and lack of knowledge of community resources). Importantly, the **SFSC** approach emphasises that parenting is impacted by the local environment (for example the availability of good schools) and that parents should play an active role in shaping this environment by engaging with community resources.

The **SFSC** parent programme is based on a strengths based 'facilitative model' which aims to raise the consciousness of parents. In addition, the curriculum aims to help families develop or promote: strong ethnic and cultural roots; positive parent-child relationships; a range of life skills; self esteem, self discipline and social competence; and an ability to access community resources.

SFSC achieves its aims through a range of methods which include:

- providing parents with information to empower them;
- developing anger management and positive discipline techniques;
- providing a cultural framework to validate the historical and family experiences of different ethnic groups;
- decreasing isolation by helping parents to connect to community resources.

SFSC is structured into 12 three hour sessions (plus an information session) taught in consecutive weeks. It is run with between 8 and 15 parents. The **SFSC** programme is now an accredited programme through the Open College Network. This enables those facilitators who want to, to support parents in developing a portfolio and gaining qualifications and credits for participating in the programme. The credits may be used by parents in returning to formal education or applying for jobs.

The programme has been shown to have been useful in a range of settings and with a range of different populations. This has included:

- both urban and rural settings;
- with men as well as women;
- with teenage parents;
- with a range of ethnic groups

SFSC programmes have been run through a range of different agencies. These include Coram Parent Centre, Dalston Youth Project, Newham African, Caribbean and Asian Advocacy Project, Worldwide Mission Fellowship, Barnardos Parenting Matters, Working Group Against Racism in Children's Resources, Single Parent Action Network and Holloway Parents Centre. The programme has been run through Social Services and Education Departments, Youth Offending Teams, Sure Start and On Track projects, Schools and Family Centres. Programmes have run throughout London and in many parts of the UK including Birmingham, Bradford, Brighton, Bristol, Derby, Exeter, Liverpool, Plymouth, Sheffield, Newcastle, and Manchester.

Facilitator training

In order to deliver the programme, facilitators have to undergo substantial training lasting five days. Please contact:

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Web link for further information:

<http://www.raceequalityfoundation.org.uk/our-work/strengthening-families-strengthening-communities>