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Chris Kirk  
ACL Strategic Manager - Family Learning  
Adult and Community Learning  
Essex County Council  
PO Box 47  
County Hall  
Chelmsford  
Essex, CM2 6WN

Dear Chris

Ofsted Good Practice Survey Programme 2008/09

An evaluation of the benefits of family learning for individuals, families and communities

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February 2009. I am particularly grateful to you and all your staff for the hard work involved in preparing for the visit and for giving up a great deal of time during the visit to meet with me. Please pass on my thanks to all those concerned.

The visit provided much useful evidence, which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting for the family learning survey. I was especially pleased to see the early years/foundation session in Northwick Park Children's Centre. Parents showed good development of skills and understanding in communicating with their children and engaging them in a range of creative activities. Outcomes for parents and children were clearly articulated and achieved. Parents effectively supported their children to develop fine and gross motor skills and early learning concepts such as colour, shape and position. I was also interested to see the pilot arrangements to record children's attendance and progress.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made on this one day visit included: interviews with staff, partners and learners; scrutiny of the examples of good practice provided including a visit to a family learning activity. A range of documents, case studies and data were reviewed.

Overall, the family learning provision I sampled during my one-day visit at Essex County Council is good. I agreed to provide a summary of the good practice seen and to identify some areas for development, and I outline the main findings as bulleted points below.

The main strengths are:

- Good development of parenting and learning skills
- High retention and achievement of learning goals at well over 90%
- Very effective teaching that models successful ways to support children's learning and development
- Responsive and flexible provision to meet the needs of targeted groups
- Good partnership working to support recruitment and programme delivery

Areas for further development

- More effective use of individual learning plans to record personalised learning
- The continued work to engage a higher proportion of men
- The development of impact measures to monitor progress and progression for children and adults

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop your Family Learning provision. If there are any points or aspects of the visit you wish to discuss, please contact me. As we will be evaluating the survey, you may be contacted in the future to find out your views. I hope you will contribute to this evaluation.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted Website.

Yours sincerely

Susan Bain  
Her Majesty's Inspector