

# Saturday Safari

October-November 2006

## Interim evaluation report

A family learning environmental project run by the Libraries Service in partnership with the Arts Service of the London Borough of Richmond.



### Objectives

- Contribute to *Every Child Matters* outcomes, encouraging participants to 'make a positive contribution', 'be healthy' and 'enjoy and achieve'.
- Use Family Learning Week as an opportunity to raise awareness of the value of family learning and introduce new families to the network of opportunities across the borough.
- Use the 'Inspiring Learning For All' framework to deliver a successful partnership project which brings together our services' resources, skills and experience for the benefit of families living in disadvantaged areas of the borough, as a model for future cross-sector delivery.
- Encourage fathers in these areas to engage in positive learning activities with their children in libraries and out of doors.
- Develop our understanding of families' needs in order to improve our provision.
- Enable participants to achieve the learning goals listed below:

## **Group learning goals**

### **Knowledge and understanding:**

- Knowledge and understanding about conservation and sustainability issues, local environment and wildlife, and the groups who contribute to maintaining the local environment.
- Knowledge and understanding of local services and how to access them.

### **Skills**

- Being able to make effective use of the library service to access information (including using books, reference materials and ICT).
- Knowing how to carry out small-scale practical construction tasks and conservation work, and developing the physical skills to do so.
- Communication skills and social skills from working together within the family, with other families and with course facilitators.

### **Attitudes and Values**

- Increased motivation to make use of local services and wider local environment, particularly libraries and the Orleans House Gallery site.
- Increased motivation to care for local and global environment.
- Improved self-esteem through perception of own ability to make a positive contribution.
- Perception of library as venue for positive, enjoyable activity.

### **Enjoyment, inspiration, creativity**

- Having fun learning together as a family.
- Exploration, experimentation and making using recycled materials.
- Creativity using imaginative ways to communicate ideas.

### **Activity, behaviour, progression**

- Independent use of library to access information and as venue enjoyment and creativity as a family.
- Participation in future family activities offered by Libraries and Arts Service.
- Intention to act responsibly towards local environment and continue making a positive contribution.

## **Target audience**

The target audience was fathers and children, particularly boys, aged 8-13yrs living in the borough's deprived wards. Engaging fathers is one of the Council's key priorities for family learning provision. Although Richmond is regarded as an affluent borough there are discrete pockets of deprivation; this project aimed to provide services in these areas.

## **Theme**

The project took the local environment as its core theme, exploring local wildlife, plant life and habitats and encouraging participants to engage with and take an active role in conserving their surroundings. Participants explored the link between local biodiversity and a more global perspective on sustainability. We also wanted to show how local libraries could provide a starting point for active, outdoor activities, and hoped that fathers and sons who were not current library users might be attracted by the practical conservation element of the course.

## Activities

The project was launched in Family Learning week with two-hour sessions on Saturdays at four libraries across the borough, targeting branches in areas of relative deprivation. We then ran an extended course of 4 sessions at Whitton Library, drawing on local families and any participants from the taster days who wish to take part.

All the sessions included a range of multi-sensory activities catering for different learning styles e.g. trails, printing, consulting reference books, consulting library staff, computer research, team games, presentations. Activities were designed to introduce participants to all the different ways one can use a library. Parents and carers were encouraged to take an active role in the activities, which allowed them to achieve their own learning objectives as well as assisting their children in achieving theirs. This strengthened the bond within the family group; additionally families were encouraged to work together in teams, which contributed to a very positive group dynamic.

Activities included:

- A discovery quiz trail around the library
- Following a scientific key to identify river creatures
- Print-making
- Planting native trees to take home and grow over the winter
- Building bird boxes
- Making posters
- Playing a 'tree needs game'
- Making a tree of promises
- Playing a river game to learn about the history of the river



## **Engaging the target audience**

The theme encouraged above average participation by fathers (30%), while 71% of the children taking part were male. This was particularly welcome as we were keen to encourage boys in this age group into the libraries.

The theme was successful in engaging our target audience, with all families on the extended course coming to several sessions and even bringing friends to the final week.

## **Literacy, Language and Numeracy**

Many of the activities promoted literacy and language for both the adults and children. Tasks involved reading (including using indexes and reference books), writing (writing environmental pledges, completing enrolment forms and learner profiles, making posters, rearranging letters to complete word puzzles), and speaking and listening (giving presentations, listening to instructions, asking questions, listening and responding to a story).

Numeracy was developed through number-based tasks within some of the games, as well as during the construction of the bird boxes.

## **Promotion**

We used a number of methods to promote the project: information on our website, registration on the Family Learning Week site, posters and flyers in libraries. Alongside these more general channels we worked with schools local to each library by sending home information regarding the course to all year 5 and 6 students. Within the libraries, staff actively promoted the sessions to families, while colourful displays encouraged participants to sign up. All publicity, along with the project title 'Saturday Safari', emphasised the exciting wildlife theme, as well as emphasising that the sessions were free.

*Please see attached publicity material.*

## **Evaluation**

The sessions were planned using the Inspiring Learning For All framework to identify group learning goals from the outset; all sessions were devised to help participants achieve these goals. In addition, we identified clear objectives from the point of view of our services.

Evaluation was ongoing throughout the project, with short debriefing meetings after each session to discuss what had gone well and what might be improved. After the final session, the partnership team as well as the environmental educator met to discuss how far our objectives had been met and to examine feedback from families. This material provided us with four key areas of information.

- They completed monitoring forms, allowing us to assess the extent to which we had succeeded in engaging our target audience. As well as age, gender, ethnicity and disability monitoring, we were able to gather information about how participants used the library service, whether they had ever accessed Arts Service provision or taken part in Family Learning activities before.
- Families were asked to record their own learning through the completion of learner profiles, which required them to state their own expectations and learning objectives for the course and then assess how far these goals had been met, as well as identifying any unexpected learning outcomes. They were also asked to record their favoured learning styles.
- They were also asked to indicate their levels of satisfaction with the course, and given an opportunity to suggest improvements.
- They were asked to make suggestions for future Family Learning activities.

This information was gathered through learner profiles and enrolment forms, as well as through a plenary session at the end of the course to encourage both adults and children to contribute their responses. Information gathered will form the basis of a case study report investigating the use of the Inspiring Learning For All framework, and will inform future Family Learning projects devised by the Arts and Library Services in partnership or individually.

*Please see attached evaluation material.*

### **Signposting to Further Opportunities**

All participating families have been invited to 'Springtime Safari', a follow-up session in April in the grounds of Orleans House Gallery, in which families will see their bird-boxes finally *in situ* and have the opportunity to take part in practical conservation activities out-of-doors. It will also introduce the many families who have never visited Orleans House Gallery to the site and the wealth of programmes on offer.

As a partnership project delivered by the Arts Service and the Library Service, Saturday Safari provided an excellent opportunity for us to signpost participants to provision offered by both our services. Through accessing the course all families were immediately eligible to join the Arts Services' passport scheme and received an Orleans House Gallery Family Learning Passport (see enclosed), which encourages families to attend a range of free family learning events for which they receive a stamp – with 5 stamps they can receive arts materials or a ticket to an arts event. The aim of the passport scheme is to encourage the integration of the targeted families into the gallery's regular provision. Working in partnership with the libraries allowed the Arts Service to introduce the passport scheme to many families from across the borough who had never previously visited the gallery. We were also able to signpost families towards targeted family learning courses taking place in their local area later in the year, for example a family drama project.

In addition, we worked in partnership with local environmental sector partners to signpost families towards other environment-themed activities. Families were introduced to the Richmond Environment Network website which lists activities for families, and worked with an officer from local landscape management project *London's Arcadia* to create their bird boxes.

### **Further Learning**

Many participants expressed an interest in further opportunities for learning, actively seeking information about future activities. Suggestions on feedback form indicated a broad range of interest.

Some areas mentioned include:

- More about the computer
- How to find books in the library
- Environmental issues, art, current affairs and news, local and international
- Space, planets, stars
- Engineering
- Aeroplanes
- Energy, electricity
- Human body
- Robots – Cybernetic life forms
- Science – how things work (machines etc)
- The same and about nature and animals
- Drama family sessions
- Snails and butterflies
- Sport
- Computer skills
- Wildlife in back garden
- Great white sharks

### **Quotes from participants**

“Generally has been uplifting and built our awareness of nature.”

“We have all learned about the trees, rivers and thought about things more when we are out.”

“I would also like to learn to make my mum proud.” (objective stated on learner profile)