



Families Together Groups

2018 / 2019



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PLANT DEWI

*Lle mae Teuluoedd yn Bwysig
Where Families Matter*



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FAMILIES TOGETHER GROUPS

ANNUAL REPORT

2018/19

BACKGROUND

Families Together groups were first established in London under the umbrella of Social Services. The groups played an active part in changing the circumstances of isolated families or individuals. Families were supported to participate in their local communities in order to improve their quality of life. The provision, preventative in nature, offered support to parents and carers in the community by breaking down social, cultural and geographical barriers. Those at risk of emotional or mental health problems due to isolation, stress, low self-esteem, bereavement or loneliness were provided with a local support network within the group.

The model was then adapted to suit the rural nature of Carmarthenshire and the needs of its families. The aim was to establish Families Together groups as a locally based, low cost, support service for hard-to-reach families in rural locations, within a frame work of universal service. Those who would benefit would be vulnerable families who experience isolation, poverty, and for whatever reason, find it difficult to engage and access support.

It was felt that the Family Together groups' model would be able to respond to a catalogue of life and family stresses. The Families Together groups' model provides coping strategies for families that can be transferred into the wider community and have an impact on social and economic issues.

The groups are open access and provide support for all families within the targeted area who have children between the ages of 0 and 11. Parents/carers can attend with or without their children.

The sessions run for 2 hours a week throughout the year offering family support. These low cost groups provide an essential service that is available in areas of the county that have traditionally lacked family support.

There are now two Families Together groups in the county of Carmarthenshire. Unfortunately, due to financial restraints, Brynamman closed its doors in June 2018.

The groups are facilitated from 9 am – 11.00 am and they are located in:

- Llandeilo - Llandeilo CP School, Llandeilo, SA19 6LU
- Newcastle Emlyn - Holy Trinity Community Church Hall, Church Lane, Newcastle Emlyn, SA38 9AB

WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

- To work in partnership with parents to improve their communication with their children, enhance their parenting skills, thus strengthening the family bond
- To help parents to improve their basic skills thereby allowing them to support their children's education
- To promote positive lifestyles
- To give families positive experiences that creates lasting memories
- To promote and actively encourage equality of opportunity within society
- To promote a sense of belonging for all families and the acceptance of difference as well as engendering a sense of extended family within the community
- To develop parents' strengths, increasing confidence, self-esteem and motivation that may be transferred to their children thereby enhancing their development
- To reduce stress within families by improving their coping and problem solving skills, empowering families to solve their own difficulties
- To ensure parents have access to appropriate information and advice

WHAT ACTIVITIES HAPPEN IN THE GROUP?

The groups are open access and offer a supportive non-judgmental, relaxed environment. New parents are welcomed into the groups and are encouraged to take part in discussions and activities. A range of activities are provided that support parents experiencing exclusion when bringing up a family. A programme of activities including multi agency work can address specific issues. General activities include friendship forming, confidence gaining, improved communication skills and acquisition of new skills.

Fundamental parenting skills are introduced immediately in order to set standards. Socially acceptable behaviour is promoted both by example and through discussion, ensuring that parents and children are prepared for school life. A range of courses informal and formal (including parenting) are offered and a programme of social activities, which bring together members of different Families Together groups.

As the groups develop, staff are able to identify issues that families are having and specific sessions are planned that address the needs of these families. Sessions have been held on debt management, bereavement, basic skills, parenting and substance misuse. Parents are also consulted to establish their needs in order to plan future activities and events.

As the sessions progress the activities will also progress, while still focusing on realistically achievable goals they will seek to increase self-confidence and the acquisition of new skills. Eventually, accredited courses are introduced enabling participants to develop pride in their achievements; these have been used by parents as a stepping stone to return to education or employment.

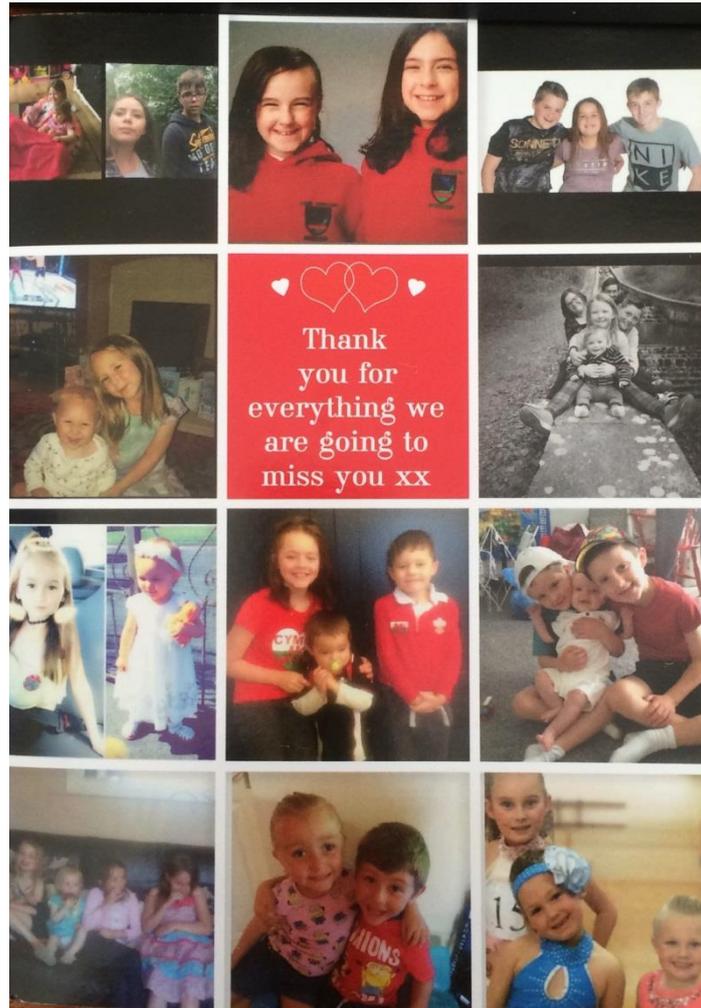
HIGHLIGHTS

- **187** individuals have accessed the service. This consists of **73** parents which includes **7** Dads and **114** children have benefitted from the provision.
- 100% of parents report that being part of the group has made them feel better about themselves and has increased their confidence.
- To date **6** families have benefitted from the Team Around The Family approach and **4** families have had their cases closed with a successful outcome.
- Families in Newcastle Emlyn took part in a Parenting and Play consultation delivered by Arts 4 Wellbeing.
- Dads continue to be involved in the activities and outings provided.
- An outing to St Fagans Museum of Welsh Life, during October half term, saw groups from across the Diocese come together.
- Parents and children welcomed Bishop Joanna on her visit to the groups which was an opportunity for families to show case their talents.



WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING IN BRYNAMAN?

- June 2018 saw the closure of the Brynaman group after 15 years of service to the community.
- Over this period more than a hundred families have been supported and as many as three hundred children have happy, lasting memories of the Families Together Groups provision.
- Parents were guided, and encourage to use other services in the area.
- As a result of the friendships made in the group, families agreed to continue to meet regularly. This was a happy ending to what we had set out to achieve.



WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING IN LLANDEILO?

- The Llandeilo group has supported **16** families, which includes 2 dads and **18** children.
- Parents because of increased confidence, have shown an eagerness to learn new skills. Whole group participation is the norm within the activities delivered. 100% of parents report that being part of the Group has improved their life skills.
- The service has become an integral part of the day to day running of the school. Families, staff and professional agencies continue to co-work effectively. Evaluation show that 100% of parents feel that they are more confident in addressing their children's needs through accessing the support network.

Various upskilling opportunities have been provided

Healthy Relationships	10 Families
Mindfulness Course	8 Families
Tenancy Support	12 Families
Resilience Course	10 Families
Digital Security and Fraud Scam Awareness	11 Families
Pottery Workshop	7 Families
Food Nutrition Course	12 Families



WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING IN NEWCASTLE EMYLN?

- The Newcastle Emlyn group has supported **37** families which includes **3** dads and **56** children.
- The local clergy visit regularly and members of the local parish donated a variety of fruit to tempt children's taste buds.
- Families worked together and took control of a Family Fun day. Parents shared their creative skills which proved to be a huge success with the children.
- Story sessions delivered through the medium of Welsh have increased parents confidence in communicating with their children through the Welsh language.

Families have participated in

Suffragettes Workshop	12 Families
Language And Play	14 Families
Stop It Now Workshop	11 Families
Christians Against Poverty	12 Families
Family Fun Days and Outings	37 Families
Messy Play	29 families
Really Pro	14 Families
Arts 4 Wellbeing – Parent and Play Consultation	12 Families



HOW WELL HAVE WE DONE?

73 parents attended the 3 groups regularly including 7 Dads

50 completed a life style survey from being part of the Family Group

- 100 % have improved social support
- 100% feel more able to deal with their problems
- 100% felt better about themselves
- 100% had raised their confidence and self-esteem
- 100% reported making a difference to their and their children's lives better
- 100% reported less isolation and increased friendships
- 60% could call on members for support outside of the group
- 83% had gained new skills
- 94% increased their confidence in seeking independent advice or services
- 94% have improved life skills
- 83% have seen an improvement in their children's behaviour.
- 100% have improved coping skills

Partner agencies

Agencies thought that Plant Dewi was very successful in reaching its target audience for the Families Together Groups i.e. the excluded, vulnerable groups and the most disadvantaged and that the approach of working jointly with service users using an empowerment model was particularly important:

“It promotes empowerment and independence by increasing service users' self-esteem. I feel that this contributes to better outcomes for service users “

WHAT DO MEMBERS TELL US ABOUT THE GROUPS?

‘You always get a warm, friendly welcome. I feel safe coming here. The continued support makes me feel happy and I know that I can ask them anything and I will be supported.’

‘I really enjoy coming to the group because I meet new friends, chat and speak to the staff about my problems. I have a son who has special needs and I find it very challenging, don't know what I'd do without the staff listening to me offload my problems’

‘The group gets me out of the house, meet different people and there's always someone to talk to. I feel happy when I go to the group’

‘This group is my lifeline, it gets me out of the house. I have confidence coming to the group, knowing that I can chat to everyone, makes me feel happy and comfortable in myself’

‘ I was so lonely, when my daughter suggested I went to the group I was really nervous. I haven't looked back! There is always someone there to help and support me’

WHAT HAVE BEEN THE CHALLENGES?

- Providing a quality service on a limited budget.
- Having limited resources to meet the family's needs.
- Due to financial constraints providing a crèche facility is not an option thus limiting opportunities for parents to participate in courses.
- Finding free courses for the families

SERVICE USER PROFILES

Last year 66 women and 7 men attended the 3 groups on a regular basis. 6 members were under 25, 15 over 40, 52 between-25 -35 years. The groups reach 114 children of which 56 were 0-4 years.

Data and questionnaires from a cross section of the groups have been collected. This snapshot information shows;-

- 35% are in private accommodation
- 30% are in social housing
- 77% live in unemployed households
- 48% are on sickness benefit
- 17% are separated from their husbands/wives/partners
- 35% are lone parents
- 12% have been through the care system
- 100% have experienced isolation
- 55% have experienced a poor relationship in the home and the wider community
- 100% have had issues dealing with professional agencies
- 76% have never volunteered or joined in community events
- 78% have feared trips outside the community
- 98% are concerned about finances
- 76% have experienced domestic abuse
- 42% have been on antidepressants
- 100% have experienced low confidence and self esteem
- 86% have experienced 2 or more ACE's
- 75% find their children's behaviour challenging
- 48% have underlying health issues

TO THE FUTURE

To continue to provide isolated families with access to a local family support service

To increase families resilience by improved resources of family and friends providing them with emotional support, practical support, informational support

To increase parents' coping strategies to manage stress and to be able to function well when faced with challenges, adversity and trauma

To enable families to have improved lifestyles through the acquisition of confidence, self-esteem, knowledge, skills and motivation, empowering them to move on when ready.

To develop families' sense of belonging to their community as a result of the friendships made in the groups.

To create opportunities, motivating families to bring about a positive change in their lives

Samantha Duggan & Kerri Peregrine-Lewis
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