

# Pembrokeshire

## Families Together Groups

### 2018 / 2019



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**PLANT DEWI**

*Lle mae Teuluoedd yn Bwysig*  
*Where Families Matter*



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A community development project of the St Davids Diocesan Council for Social Responsibility

# **FAMILIES TOGETHER GROUPS PEMBROKESHIRE**

## **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 our Diocese 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 25. 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.

In July 2018 we piloted two Families Together groups in the county of Pembrokeshire.

One is located in the Plant Dewi Hub, Pembroke Dock

This session runs from 9am – 11.00 am on a Wednesday.

The other group is located in the Community Centre on the Mount Estate, Milford Haven

This session runs from 12.30pm – 3pm on a Wednesday

## **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

- Over the past eight months, to date 64 individuals have accessed the service. including 38 children who also 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.
- Parents embrace the activities offered and have enjoyed practical sessions including cookery and crafts.
- Parents engaged well in the Numeracy and Literacy courses which enhanced their skills in other practical sessions.
- Local Police Officers call into the groups on a regular basis to the sessions
- Parents and children welcomed Bishop Joanna on her visit to the groups and the families were able to show case their culinary talents.
- New members are welcomed into the group by existing members and friendships are formed.
- The Mothers Union Away From It All Holidays financed a coach enabling the families to visit St Fagans Museum of Welsh Life, during October half term.



Various upskilling opportunities have been provided

Christians Against Poverty	10 Families
Adult Learning	8 Families
Cooking on a Budget	12 Families
Craft sessions	14 Families
Universal Credit Workshops	11 Families
Sewing Workshops	14 Families



## HOW WELL HAVE WE DONE?

64 individuals attend the 2 groups regularly.

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

- 100 % have improved social support
- 87.5% 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
- 45% could call on members for support outside of the group
- 100% had gained new skills
- 52% increased their confidence in seeking independent advice or services
- 87.5% have improved life skills
- 100% have seen an improvement in their children's behaviour.
- 87.5% have improved coping skills

## WHAT DO MEMBERS TELL US ABOUT THE GROUPS?

'Can we go again, please'



## WHAT HAVE BEEN THE CHALLENGES?

- Raising awareness of the service to other professional agencies
- Getting other agencies to appreciate and value the worth of the service
- Managing group dynamics and challenges
- Creating an environment based on trust

## SERVICE USER PROFILES

Over the past eight months 26 women have attended the 2 groups on a regular basis. **10** members were under 25, **7** over 40, **9** between-25 -35 years. The groups reach **38** children of which **15** were 0-4 years.

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

- 37.5% are in private accommodation
- 50% are in social housing
- 87.5% live in unemployed households
- 45% are on sickness benefit
- 25% are separated from their husbands/wives/partners
- 50% are lone parents
- 25% have been through the care system
- 100% have experienced isolation
- 75% have experienced a poor relationship in the home and the wider community
- 100% have had issues dealing with professional agencies

- 75% have never volunteered or joined in community events
- 87.5% have feared trips outside the community
- 100% are concerned about finances
- 75% have experienced domestic abuse
- 50% have been on antidepressants
- 100% have experienced low confidence and self esteem
- 87.5% have experienced 2 or more ACE's
- 100% find their children's behaviour challenging
- 75% 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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