



## Learning Services Worcestershire

Shortlisted for Family Learning to Support Health and Wellbeing

**Learning Services Worcestershire is the ESFA-funded post-16 education team within Worcestershire County Council. In 2021, family learning as a concept was added to their core offer, making it highly visible at a strategic level. Family learning is one of their targeted programmes, now discussed across the education and care sector disciplines and meetings, alongside teams that support the community with a variety of needs, mainly run in partnership with Worcestershire's schools.**

The overall purpose of the work is to support families where there are any parental requirements for learning more essential skills, where the family is new to the region or country, or where there are other significant reasons for extra family support. Core aims are to: allow positive, encouraging experiences of learning through successes, paint pictures of new and different opportunities or possibilities that haven't been thought of, and have learners grow in self-sufficiency, social connection and make positive links within their community.

### Family learning provision

After the Covid-19 pandemic, Learning Services Worcestershire could see that learning resilience and engagement with schools was needed for parents before they could engage with essential skills programmes. A set of interventions focused on wellbeing was developed to bridge the gap and encourage regular school attendance, where poor mental health had been said to contribute to low school attendance.

Several courses have been running:

- Marvelous Me – raising awareness of mental health, emotional needs, and the importance of self-care in building resilience to support the wellbeing of children and families
- Rainbows and Recipes – promotes healthy eating
- Books Together – promotes reading within good sleep routines
- Worms & Wellies – enjoying the outdoors

Activities include:

- Identifying self (clay and dough)
- Feeling emotions and giving praise (making praise jars)
- Comforting own wellbeing (applying for Blue Peter Kindness badge)
- Identifying support (SENCo/Thrive team)
- Being physically active (nature hunt boards for walks)
- Connecting to others (volunteering in school/community)
- Giving to others (making things for school/community)
- Paying attention (brain tracing/collage breathing craft)



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A story is also read at every session to build a love of reading, and each parent creates a scrapbook of learning to celebrate success at home.

Judges at Campaign for Learning found the range of activities creative and said the link to wellbeing was really exciting.

### Impact and next steps

By taking family learning directly into schools, the service has enabled easy access for isolated, vulnerable, and lonely parents. During the first hour of each session, parents can offload, get to know others, and learn how to support their health and wellbeing using creative and sensory activities. Through carefully sequenced sessions which include exploring the NHS '5 Ways to Wellbeing', learners work with tips and tricks to support their family at home.

Harnessing 'Pester Power' for good, children support engagement by encouraging parents to attend each session. During the precious in-school time together, the child joins each week and parents practice what they have been taught earlier, to embed what they have learned.

Feedback shows more than three quarters of parents (and in some cases, nearly all) felt the work had helped them to socialise and communicate better, to actively participate in community, to stay physically and mentally well, and to develop new interests and hobbies:

"I used to have a fantastic social life and speak to everyone, until I had a massive mental breakdown postpartum. Since coming to group, I've felt more comfortable up the school and doing the school run, as I haven't done it in almost 2 years ... I feel like [the course] is helping me along the way!"

"A parent with very low confidence and self-esteem has recently started a Teaching Assistant apprenticeship. Another is now a qualified swimming teacher. Both are adamant that they have the family learning course to thank for their success."

Upcoming improvements include work to better explain the link between these courses and supporting children's learning as a family.