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ABSTRACT

This paper delineates a family literacy symposium in which the five participants discussed their different perspectives which reflected their particular viewpoints and pathways through family literacy in the past 10-20 years. Peter Hannon's contribution concerned the development of family literacy practice and research in England, in which he suggested that family literacy practice had stemmed from two sources: early childhood education and adult and community education. Angela Jackson, who leads the Partnership Education Service in Rochdale Education Authority, addressed bilingualism and creativity in family literacy, describing the context for family literacy teaching in Rochdale, an industrial town in the northwest of England which has a significant ethnic minority population, mainly from Pakistan and Bangladesh. Carol Taylor, director of "Read On--Write Away," a country-wide literacy initiative in Derbyshire and Derby City, spoke about family literacy in the context of community college. Greg Brooks, from the University of Sheffield and Associate Director of the National Research Development for Adult Literacy and Numeracy in England, addressed the implications of findings from national evaluations--he has directed several national evaluations of family literacy programs in England and Wales for the Basic Skills Agency. Viv Bird, a member of the Family Literacy Trust, provides an overview of family literacy and identifies some key issues facing policymakers, including what the dominant model for family literacy should be, how family literacy could be part of a holistic parenting program, and achieving greater coherence in the funding for family literacy. (NKA)

UK Perspectives on Family Literacy: Past, Present, Future. The Edinburgh Family Literacy Symposium

Viv Bird

July 2002

THE EDINBURGH FAMILY LITERACY SYMPOSIUM

PSTR 0029

In July 2002, the International Reading Association World Congress, held in Edinburgh, included a symposium on **UK PERSPECTIVES ON FAMILY LITERACY: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE.** As the issues addressed in that symposium are of interest to many who could not be present, this report has been provided by Viv Bird, partnerships development manager at the National Literacy Trust.

There were five contributors to the symposium.

Peter Hannon (Convenor), Professor, University of Sheffield School of Education

Angela Jackson, Partnership Education Service, Rochdale LEA

Carol Taylor, Director of *Read On Write Away!*, Derbyshire

Greg Brooks, Professorial Research Fellow, University of Sheffield School of Education

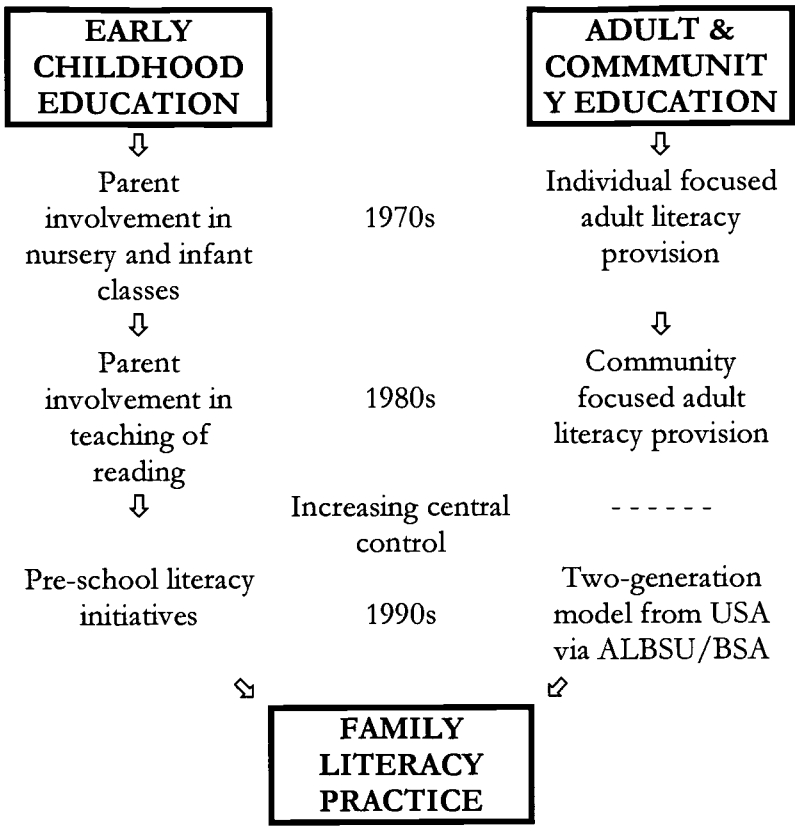
Viv Bird, Partnerships Development Manager and Editor of *Literacy Today* at the National Literacy Trust, London

Peter Hannon introduced the symposium by explaining that the contributors' perspectives reflected their particular viewpoints and pathways through family literacy in the past 10-20 years. They recognised they could not speak for the whole of the UK (all were from England) but they had been encouraged to offer personal views on family literacy in the UK – its achievements, dilemmas, questions and growth points.

Peter Hannon's own contribution concerned **The Development of Family Literacy Practice and Research in England**. Peter suggested that family literacy *practice* had stemmed from two sources: early childhood education and adult and community education. Each had fed into current family literacy practice in the manner shown in Figure 1. The current situation was difficult to map but might be represented by Figure 2. Research had been undertaken in four main areas: (1) families' literacy practices (from the 1970s to the present), initially focused on practices related to children's school reading but now with a broader concept of literacy; (2) parental involvement in the teaching of reading (mainly in the 1980s) focusing on quasi-experimental evaluations of open and prescriptive approaches to hearing children read; (3) pre-school literacy programmes involving parents (late 1980s to the present) focusing on qualitative and quasi-experimental evaluations with one RCT in progress; (4) national family literacy programmes (mind 1990s to present), to be covered later in Greg Brooks' presentation.

Peter argued that the achievements of parental involvement research had been to show that several approaches were feasible, that despite early scepticism there was virtually no evidence of negative effects, that involvement was welcomed by parents, and that most approaches had been shown to raise reading test performance in some circumstances. Issues still to be researched included: comparisons of different approaches and combinations of approaches; few studies of programmes that valued and built upon families' pre-existing literacy; reliance on quasi-experimental rather than RCT designs; the neglect of take-up (a serious research problem in that low take-up meant over-representation of 'keen' families in programme groups as compared to controls); few studies combining qualitative and quantitative methods; and often a rather narrow, monolingual concept of literacy.

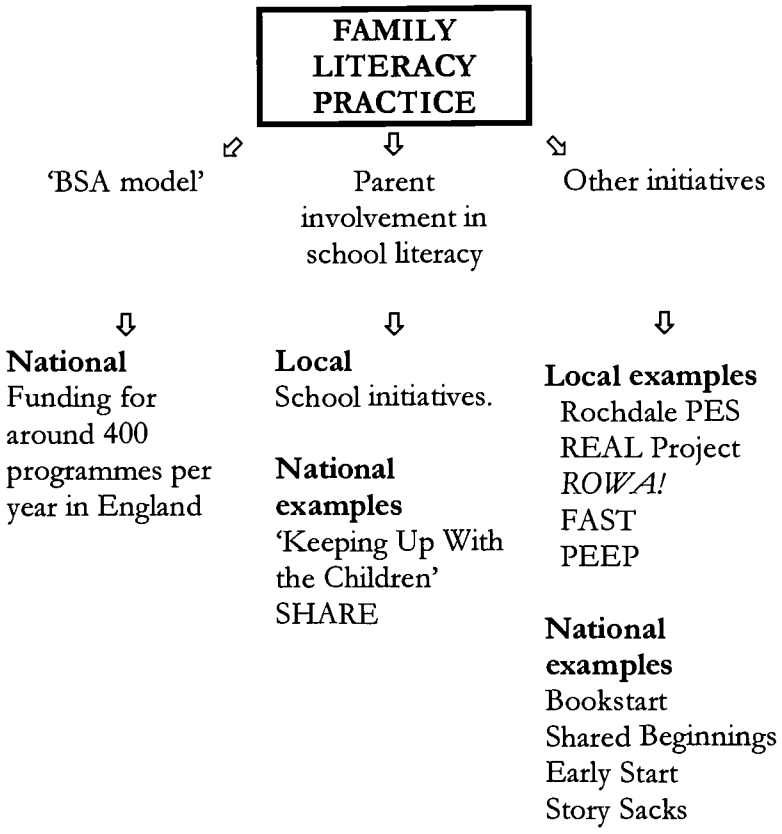
Figure 1. Development of practice



One example of current research that attempted to address some of these gaps and weaknesses was that being carried out by Peter in the REAL (Raising Early Achievement in Literacy) Project in Sheffield with Cathy Nutbrown. He outlined how the project focused on pre-school literacy development, worked with parents to support children's literacy broadly defined and provided optional learning opportunities for parents. The programme developed and evaluated in the project, was intended to be responsive to parents' values and aspirations and was based on the *ORIM* framework. It was a 'long duration, low intensity' 20-month programme offered to families chosen at random from disadvantaged areas of Sheffield. Evaluation was qualitative and quantitative (by an RCT). Emerging findings concerning take-up, participation, families' views, teachers' views, and impact on measures of children's literacy development were very encouraging.

Peter concluded by claiming that there had been considerable development in family literacy practice and research over the past two decades but for it to continue – and to have some chance of benefiting families – four conditions were necessary. There had to be trust in practitioners to innovate, continuity and reliability in funding, adaptation of programmes to different contexts, and research had to be integrated into practice.

Figure 2. The current situation



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Angela Jackson addresses Bilingualism and Creativity in Family Literacy

Angela Jackson leads the Partnership Education Service in Rochdale Education Authority. She has been involved with family literacy since the 1980s, beginning with the Belfield Reading Project and subsequently developing programmes to suit particular contexts and communities in Rochdale. Despite external constraints the Partnership Education Service has retained an essential vision of enabling parents and children, separately and together, to celebrate their talents and enjoy learning. Angela discusses how current family literacy programmes, set within primary schools and Sure Start centres, enable parents to contribute and learn in their first language, Bengali, Urdu or Punjabi, as well as in English and to gain recognised accreditation. A key part of the Service is to encourage creative and practical learning and enjoyment through using different environments and projects with artists.

Angela Jackson described the context for family literacy teaching in Rochdale, an industrial town in the northwest of England which has a significant ethnic minority population, mainly from Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Funding comes from a variety of sources – mainstream education, the Single Regeneration Budget, Sure Start, the Learning and Skills Council, the Basic Skills Agency, National Lotteries Charity Board, the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and other smaller grants. The funding enables Angela to run a team

of eight part-time multilingual workers, based in 13 primary and nursery schools. They promote home-school liaison and develop family learning courses in these and other schools, as well as early learning programmes in Sure Start projects for 0-4 year olds and their parents.

Family literacy with a difference

Angela explained that over the last few years they have developed their own family literacy programme where parents spend time looking at how children learn and then try out practical activities with their own child. Some of the sessions take place outside the school. There is an oracy trail in the local park, an environmental print walk in the community and a day trip to an interactive museum or aquarium. Three sessions are working with an artist.

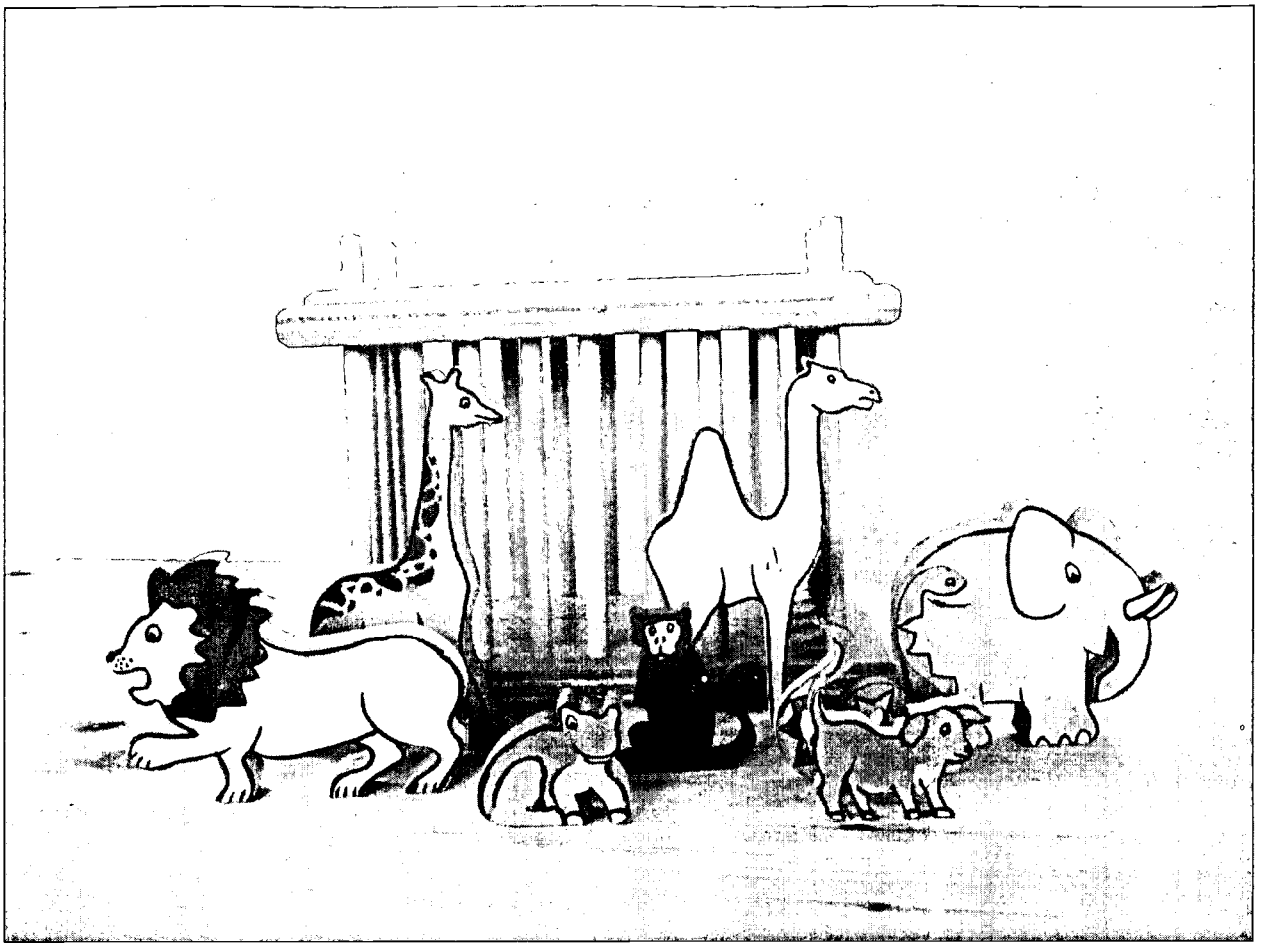
The course is taught, where appropriate, by multi-lingual tutors who speak community languages and materials are produced in Urdu and Bengali as well as in English.

All courses take place once a week in the primary school, supported by a creche. They are spread over the school year so that parents can be involved longer-term in the life of the school and take part in many other types of courses set up in response to parents' needs. These include craft workshops, learning English, making story sacks, using computers, and passing the written driving test.

Over three years, Angela and her team have collected evaluations from parents, carers, children, tutors, teachers and headteachers. They have also kept records of take up, participation, accreditation and gains for parents and children. Evaluations from parents show that the creative sessions are the most popular and increase their self-esteem as well as giving them the confidence to contribute to their children's learning. They particularly liked taking home their specially made games and toys to encourage their children's play and learning.

Angela then explained how the Creative Family Literacy programme developed.

A joint bid for Lottery funding with Cartwheel Community Arts meant that she was able to employ an artist for three sessions in each programme. Various types of artists have been involved. A puppeteer and play writer worked with parents to put on a show based on Heer Ranjha, a traditional tale from Jhang, now part of Pakistan. A musician created music for rhymes. A multi-media artist worked around the theme of 'Ourselves', and another enabled parents to make wooden toys and games or create their own memory boxes.



An external evaluation report concludes that using an arts organisation like Cartwheel adds to the learning experience:

- Using the arts gets people thinking and expressing themselves
- Enabling mothers to learn new skills raises their confidence and pride
- Husbands' attitudes to wives changed as a result of the women's new self-esteem, improved English and certificates

There are also many examples of how working creatively led to literacy experiences, for example through reading instructions, using books as starting points and writing captions.

Bi-lingualism

Another important element of the programme is the chance for mothers to learn about their child's development in their own first language so more difficult concepts can be shared and put in a cultural context.

Alongside this there is the opportunity to learn English as this is an expressed aim of most mothers. It is also a chance to tell stories and rhymes bilingually and to encourage children to develop and value their first language. The role model of multi-lingual teachers gives a powerful message to families whose experience of schooling is mainly about the importance of teaching their young children English and of sadness that communication breaks down among relatives and even mothers who speak only in their first language.

Another positive event is the multi-cultural celebration at the end of the year where children and parents perform and contribute to visual displays and workshops in front of large audiences of children, teachers and parents.

Angela went on to look at current issues in family literacy. She believes there are two trends in England that are working against many of the core beliefs of family literacy in its many forms.

One is the trend to give short-term funding which makes long term planning very difficult. Parents often thanked tutors by name in their evaluations and it is this kind of relationship and trust that is crucial in family learning. Workers deserve permanent posts and time to develop the programmes.

The other recent development is the need to justify family learning in terms of adult basic skills and the ability to pass written tests. Parents often say how difficult it was to come back to school but how they now enjoy learning and even making a portfolio of their work. Funding for family literacy is being linked to gaining accreditation that includes testing more to satisfy Government that their targets are being met rather than to meet the needs of students. The shortcomings of the prescribed models are covered by the other presenters.

On a more positive note, family learning workers now have a lot of experience of enabling parents to be involved in their children's learning and parents have gained confidence in themselves and their role. Schools increasingly recognise that other adults as well as teachers contribute in the classroom and at home. Creativity is again in the curriculum, especially in the Foundation Stage and through Artists in Schools and the recommendations of the DFEE report *All Our Futures* and the practices in Reggio Emilia schools.

The benefits of bi-lingualism are being actively acknowledged in Rochdale by partnerships with the energetic language support team for schools and there are new discussions about the value of other languages and cultures since asylum seeking families have enriched the language and culture of Rochdale.

Finally, Angela reported that many mothers who started in family literacy programmes in Rochdale are now employed or have gone on to do college courses. Some have become family literacy tutors. In September, funding for new posts for family learning, in all its diversity, are available to local authorities, providing the opportunity for family literacy provision to be driven by those who really know what learning is about in their own families and communities.

Angela Jackson can be contacted at nan.jackson@rochdale.gov.uk

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Carol Taylor spoke about Family Literacy in the context of Community Change

Carol Taylor is Director of *Read On - Write Away!*, a county-wide literacy initiative in Derbyshire and Derby City. Following work in adult and community education she became involved in family literacy practice in 1994, managing one of the first pilot projects funded by the Basic Skills Agency as part of its Demonstration Programmes. In 1995 she became Advisor for Family Literacy for Derbyshire, developing programmes in primary schools. In 1997, *Read On - Write Away!* was launched and Carol became Director, giving family and community learning an even higher profile within the county.

Introduction

Built on the premise that everyone wants to help their child, it soon became obvious to Carol Taylor what a powerful way of working family literacy was. Her evaluations over several years of running family literacy programmes revealed a number of things; the confidence and self-esteem of parents and children improved; parents with more than one child appreciated the quality time they spent with one child in the joint sessions; and parents reported spending more time on literacy and learning activities in the home. The national evaluations, described by Greg Brooks, showed that family literacy raised the skills of both adults and children.

A community-focused literacy initiative

The launch of Read On-Write Away! in 1997 by a range of partner organisations – including the local education authority, the library service and those representing employers - was an attempt to join up literacy activity in the county and develop a strategic approach to work which had previously taken

place in isolation: for example, early years, adults in the workplace, out-of-school activity and community involvement in schools. Within the new organisation, family literacy went from 12 independent school-based programmes of activity, based on the one model (the BSA model), benefiting about 100 adults and children a year, to being seen as part of a strategic whole.

Carol described what this meant in practice. Firstly, the organisation was freed from funding constraints. With funding from a number of sources, the organisation was able to seriously consider the existing BSA model, with a view to looking at possible alternatives. For some time many people had felt that, successful as this model had been proved to be, it was not necessarily the best way of engaging and working with everyone. For example, those on shift work, people in rural areas, where schools often have no facilities for this sort of work, and the challenges set by speakers of other languages, or Travellers.

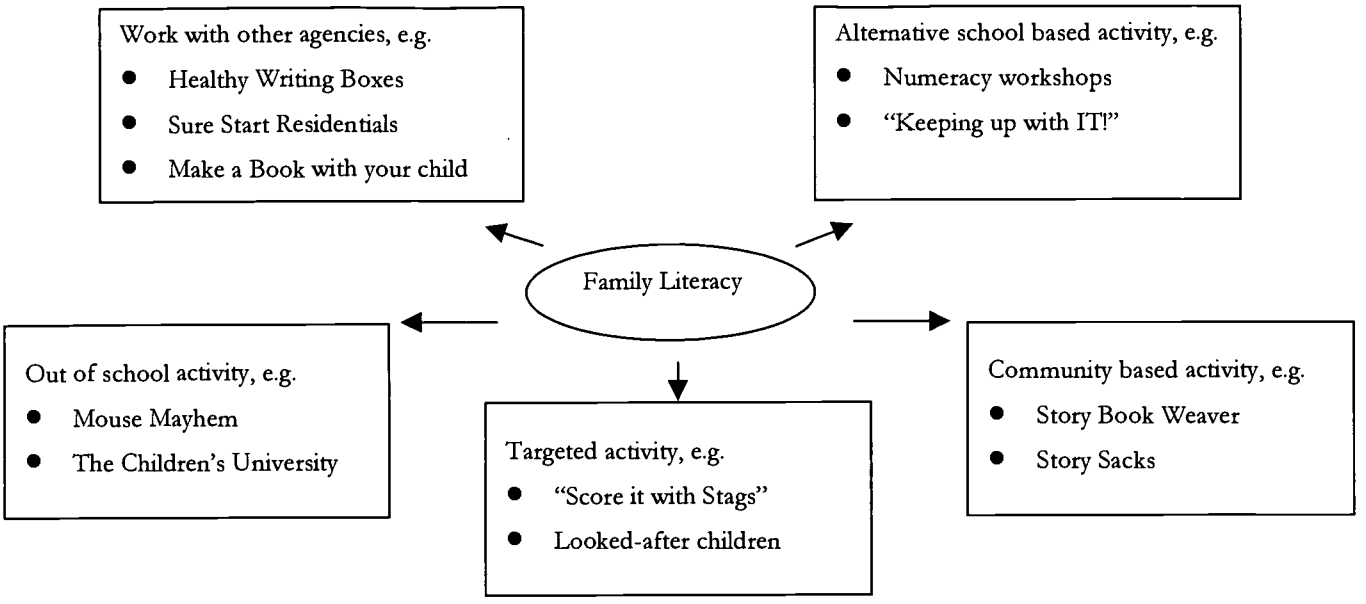
The benefits of more flexible funding

Access to different sources of funding meant that the local co-ordinators, those ROWA staff working with communities, could begin to develop other ways of developing families' literacy skills which reflected what communities wanted. They could respond to schools which felt unable to attract parents to a 20-week course but felt that they could invite parents in, for example, to an afternoon session on computers with their children. They could also begin to make links between the range of existing literacy activities and see where activity could be joined-up to better benefit the community.

They were also able to respond to other agencies which were beginning to see that a strategic approach to literacy might bring benefits to them. Library services began to think about their role in family literacy; the voluntary sector began to discuss how they could develop family literacy activity; health authorities began to see the link between literacy and health.

Carol was also developing a strategy that enabled families who had become involved to stay involved. In other words, parents did not have to leave when the 12 (or 20) week course finished, as often happens with short-term funding. A menu of literacy activities was developed for parents and schools to choose from. Schools that were engaged in exciting and beneficial projects, encouraging parents to become involved in literacy activities with their children at home, were given support by ROWA! to continue and develop their work further.

Development of family literacy



Gradually, other ROWA! activities were developed to enhance their family and community literacy focus:

Bookstart projects, which were initially devised to encourage parents and carers to share books with their babies, now began the process of engaging adults in family learning. This in turn lead parents to consider improving their own skills, all within a community setting.

The work which was being developed with **young people in public care** – often called 'looked after children' - began to address the role of the corporate parent and the family. Developing the skills and confidence of the young person was key but so too was getting the involvement of the corporate parent in that child's learning, and persuading these sorts of families to take part in family literacy and community literacy activity.

The Children's University - Saturday morning provision for children who would not consider the idea of university as something to aspire to, began to interest families way beyond the age group it was aimed at. Parents wanted to get involved, younger siblings felt left out. Before long, Read On - Write Away! was running a range of activity, loosely based around the family literacy concept.

Mansfield Town Football Club, keen to get families involved in watching the team, is now running a family literacy group after school on 5 days a week, as well as homework clubs and activity aimed at engaging men in working with their children.

Volunteers from all walks of life - firemen, Tesco (supermarket) cashiers, older children, care leavers and the retired - all play their part in the ROWA! model of family and community-focussed literacy provision.

Putting the community and learner first

In summarising how family literacy has developed in Derbyshire, Carol stressed the importance of putting the community and the learner first, and at the heart of what is happening. ROWA! focuses on responding to what people ask for and making the learning fit the learner, rather than the other way around. Carol concluded that what family literacy does is to enable people to develop the skills needed to impact on decisions being made about their lives. Everyone in the community has to be engaged.

Functional approach	Situated literacy
• A deficit model – blame	• A surplus model – celebration
• A set of skills that will improve people	• Skills to enable people
• The learner fits the curriculum	• The curriculum fits the learner
• 'One model fits all' approach	• A contextualised approach

The ROWA! website is www.rowa.co.uk

Greg Brooks addressed the **Implications of Findings from National Evaluations.**

Greg Brooks is Professorial Research Fellow at the University of Sheffield and Associate Director of the National Research Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy in England. He has 25 years experience in educational research, 20 of them at the National Foundation for Educational Research(1981-2000) and has directed over 30 research projects. Apart from the family literacy evaluations described below, Greg has conducted a study of progress in adult literacy and also a review of research on adult basic skills. He is directing a seven year evaluation of the Peers Early Education Partnership (PEEP), an early intervention programme in Oxford), and leads for Sheffield in the work of the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy.

Evaluation of the Basic Skills Agency Family Literacy Model
Greg has directed several national evaluations of family literacy programmes in England and Wales for the Basic Skills Agency (BSA), namely:

- the Family Literacy Demonstration Programmes, 1994-5
- the follow-up of the Demonstration Programmes, 1997
- Family Literacy for New Groups, 1997-8

1. Keeping Up with the Children, 2001 (England only)

In introducing these evaluations, Greg stressed that each one was based on substantial samples. The Demonstration Programmes were for families with a child aged between 3 and 6, and both parent and child had to attend. Courses lasted eight hours a week for 12 weeks. For two sessions of three hours the parents worked on their own literacy and on how to help their children, while the children received high-quality early years provision, separately; in the remaining two-hour joint session parents tried out with their children something they had learnt about in the separate sessions. This approach formed the basis of the 'BSA' or 'Standards Fund' model, which was much discussed in the symposium. It was rolled out nationally in 1996-97, and is in use in virtually every local education authority in England and Wales; central government finance is provided through a specific budget line, and each LEA has an allocation based on population and an index of need. Because of this, the BSA model has been the predominant form of family literacy provision in England and Wales for several years.

Evaluation of the adapted BSA model
Greg went on to discuss both findings on the diversity and effectiveness of the BSA model, and pressures for change. The BSA itself extended the model to linguistic minority families with a child aged 3-6, and to families with a child aged 8/9 or 11/12 (Years 4 and 7; approximately Grades 3 and 6 – but in Britain Year 7 is the first year of secondary school). The evaluations appeared to show that the approach was effective for:

- children aged 3-6
- children aged 8/9
- their parents, both in terms of their own skills and their ability to help their children

- boys and girls, equally
- monolingual English-speaking families
- families for whom English is an additional language.

Also, the children in the Demonstration Programmes had maintained their gains three years later, while their parents had gone from strength to strength – many had gained employment and attributed this to the family literacy courses, and 70% had completed at least one further course of study. They were also twice as likely as parents of a comparison group to be involved with their children's schools.

However, the courses for families with a child aged 11/12 were not successful. Attendance by parents was poor (about 50%), and neither the parents who did attend nor the children appeared to make progress. The failure may have been due simply to attempting to use the early years model with secondary pupils; certainly, the BSA has since piloted very different approaches to improving secondary pupils' basic skills, not involving parents.

Pressures for change

When the Demonstration Programmes began there was little other formal family literacy activity; by 1997 the BSA model was in use throughout England and Wales. But that was before the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy (introduced into 98% of primary schools in England in 1998), which (it is claimed) is improving standards of literacy attainment and has definitely altered the situation in which family literacy programmes operate. An early indication that the BSA itself recognises the changing context was its development of the **Keeping Up with the Children** programme of 'parents-only' courses, designed to inform parents about the NLS, especially the daily 'literacy hour'. In addition to the changing context, practitioners increasingly want to adapt the BSA model or devise approaches of their own, and have found other funding streams to do so, as other speakers at the symposium showed.

In these circumstances, it is significant that the Learning and Skills Council has recently commissioned a survey of family programmes, including family literacy, in England. Part of the remit of the evaluators is to make recommendations for future developments.

But, as a participant at the symposium pointed out, a successful family literacy model should not be abandoned when parts of the context change – it needs to be retained for use where it is the most suitable approach. Rather, there need to be renewed opportunities to develop and test alternatives, in order to see where and for whom they in turn will work best.

Greg Brooks can be contacted at g.brooks@sheffield.ac.uk

Viv Bird provides **an Overview of Family Literacy** and identifies some **Key Issues** facing Policy Makers

Viv Bird joined the National Literacy Trust eight years ago after many years' experience in adult and family literacy teaching. Her experiences as a family literacy practitioner in community settings have been documented [Bird,V & Pahl,K. (1994) Parent literacy in a community setting. RaPAL Bulletin, No.24 (Summer 1994), 6-15]. The National Literacy Trust is a UK charity set up in 1994 to work with others to raise literacy standards in the UK. Viv was responsible, along with Kate Pahl, for setting up a UK-wide database of literacy initiatives, including work with parents, and launching *Literacy Today* magazine, which she still edits.

The Trust conducted surveys among local education authorities, adult basic skills practitioners and libraries, and established links with a wide range of researchers and practitioners. Significant activity was disseminated through *Literacy Today* including family literacy approaches in the UK as well as some international contributors.

The National Literacy Trust has always emphasised the important role of parents in building a literate nation, both in supporting their children's developing literacy and by motivating them to improve their own skills.

In this context, Viv referred to two key Trust activities. **The National Year of Reading** (1998/99), run by the Trust on behalf of the Department for Education and Employment (now the DfES), supported much innovative work with families that encouraged greater participation and enjoyment in reading. National Year of Reading activity also highlighted the huge potential of partners outside education to break down barriers to getting parents, especially fathers, involved in reading activities with their children. **Shared Beginnings** is a RIF,UK initiative that works with partners in housing organisations and local libraries to provide informal courses for parents in their own communities. This 11-week course encourages parents to develop their babies' and toddlers' language skills through play, books and conversation, with the bonus of three new books to choose and keep, a feature of all RIF,UK programmes.

These experiences led Viv to identify some significant developments in family literacy work. Firstly, that family literacy practice is wider than the 'dominant model' successfully evaluated by the NFER and described by Greg Brooks in his presentation (now called the BSA 'intensive family literacy programme'). Trust surveys, the most recent in 1998, showed that family literacy was even then taking place in all sorts of settings, often in a school but also in baby clinics, family centres, day nurseries, libraries, after-school study clubs, playgroups, churches and housing schemes. Programmes varied considerably in terms of length and focus and were funded by a range of funding streams, supported by a range of partners. Activities included making books, puppets and storysacks, sharing stories or storytelling, using creative artists (described by Angela Jackson in her presentation) and visiting the library.

Through this information base as well as her partnerships development work with a number of community-based literacy organisations, such as Read On - Write Away! and the London Language and Literacy Unit, led Viv to see family literacy not as a single programme but fitting within a wider model of community engagement (see Carol Taylor's presentation).

Secondly, there are widespread concerns about funding: these include the complexity of funding arrangements for planners, the myriad of funding sources all with their own criteria for funding and evaluation, as well as difficulties in finding funding for follow-up courses once the family literacy programme has finished.

Viv went on to describe the current policy context for family literacy. She acknowledged the very real achievements of the (internationally) recognised Basic Skills Agency family literacy model which, with the election of the Labour Government in 1997, ensured that family literacy was given a high national priority as part of the drive to raise educational standards. The Skills for Life national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy, launched in 2001, identified work with parents as key, leading to a rapid expansion in family literacy activity with more programmes becoming government-funded. (Keeping Up With the Children and Early Start are two examples.) In addition, the local Learning and Skills Councils, responsible for all post 16 education and training in England, have increased their funding for lifelong learning and family learning. Their priorities include tackling disadvantage; reaching a broad range of family groups and extended families; and promoting partnership arrangements. Their survey in the autumn (2002), already mentioned by Greg Brooks, will provide an up-to-date picture of current family literacy activity.

Viv then described literacy developments in schools. As a result of the National Literacy Strategy, primary schools now deliver not just daily literacy and numeracy hours but also additional support for children whose literacy skills are falling behind. As well as the well-established Reading Recovery method, support programmes include Early Literacy Support (for five year-olds), Additional Literacy Support (for seven year-olds), Year 6 Booster Units (for 11 year-olds) and, from September 2002, Further Literacy Support (for ten year-olds). Secondary school pupils receive support through Year 7

catch up classes. These programmes inevitably leave less time in the school day to fit in family literacy sessions as well as a reluctance, on the part of some schools, to withdraw children for these sessions when in many cases they are already getting additional in-class support from classroom assistants.

Finally, the national focus on tackling social exclusion has resulted in a number of Government-funded initiatives including Sure Start, New Deal for Communities, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and Excellence in Cities. Work with parents to encourage them to improve their educational attainment and therefore their employability, as well as help them to support their children's learning, is a feature of many of these initiatives.

In the light of these developments, Viv raised a number of challenges for family literacy in the future.

1. The family literacy model

1. Should the dominant model (the intensive 72-96 hours) remain the only officially funded model for family literacy work?
2. Should family literacy programmes always involve children (in terms of the joint sessions)?
3. What is the best way to involve dads in family literacy work?
4. Should we be looking for a model (or models) that enable greater flexibility in order to maximise participation, achievement and progression?
5. Is there a case for saying that future research on family literacy should be linked to existing longitudinal studies involving parents, rather than researched as a stand-alone programme?

2. Family literacy as part of a holistic parenting programme

Family literacy work would add value to a range of policy initiatives by involving parents in relevant, real-life reading and writing activities that lead to improvements in their literacy levels and, either directly or indirectly, those of their children.

In running family literacy programmes, the greatest challenge is recruiting the parents. Why not open up the options for parents by covering other issues around parenting? Modules might include how to manage children's behaviour (a growing problem in many schools), healthy eating, social inclusion issues (such as coping with drug misuse, truancy or crime) and active citizenship (e.g. being a school governor, becoming a reading volunteer).

Topics already covered by many existing family literacy and learning programmes would remain: early language development, how literacy is taught in schools, choosing books, library visits and making storysacks or other artefacts.

Opportunities for reading and writing would be available in any element. Participants would be assessed for basic skills needs and offered appropriate support where needed, with opportunities for accreditation and testing.

3. Funding for family literacy

Achieving greater coherence in the funding for family literacy activity is a key priority. The changing policy context means it would be possible to take a more holistic approach to working with parents that would reflect their wider interests, individual circumstances as well as their learning needs. While this may be a challenge, funding streams already exist, for example, in health education and community regeneration that could be accessed to support a broader approach to working with parents, alongside mainstream LSC funding for basic skills and early parenting work.

Viv concluded by saying she would welcome any comments or suggestions about these proposals. She can be contacted at viv.bird@literacytrust.org.uk

This paper and additional information on family literacy are available on the National Literacy Trust website at www.literacytrust.org.uk

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