**Family learning for parents/carers with English as a second language**

Family learning has at its roots a social and humanistic approach to learning. This means that the lessons incorporate lots of different aspects to help develop the parent and child’s overall mental and physical wellbeing. All lessons also have a focus on shared and active learning. The teacher is very much a facilitator, encouraging the parent as an educator.

Family learning in the U.K. consists of two main strands: Family Language, Literacy, and Numeracy which aims to develop knowledge and skills in each of these areas for both the parent and child; and Wider Family Learning which incorporates a variety of creative and confidence-building courses. Classes vary greatly and are delivered in lots of different places such as schools, children’s centres, and other community venues. The parent and child may be together for the whole session, part of it, or some courses are run solely with parents.

As most family learning courses are currently provided in the adult education sector, they are subject to the same government funding criteria as ESOL classes, which means that people cannot attend for the first 6 months of living in the U.K. This makes the voluntary educational sector even more crucial in the lives of families at a time when they may be in most need of support. These families may have specific support needs due to their situations. Some examples include: children who cannot attend school whilst the family awaits their asylum decision; families moving around a lot which can be disruptive and socially isolating; family members having suffered trauma.

Family learning for refugee, asylum and other families from an ESOL background could incorporate a wide variety of aspects: songs; stories (in any language, with or without words); phonics; word and number games; art and craft; play activities; or simply a time to chat together with shared support from other parents and the teacher. The main emphasis is on a collaborative and enjoyable learning experience for all.

Please contact maryroseputtick@gmail.com if you would like to connect with other family learning teachers in the voluntary sector or to share experiences.