



Family Learning and Integration Project (FLIP)

Supporting a culture of **learning** and **resilience** with Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic families in South Belfast





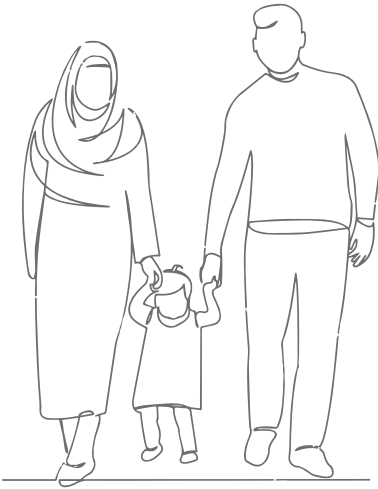
“ This programme has been really helpful and has improved my knowledge. ”

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Introduction

Barnardo's Northern Ireland's **Family Learning and Integration Project (FLIP)** began in 2015, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund.



FLIP was the evolution of a previous Barnardo's NI service 'Tuar Ceatha' (1993-2015), and FLIP builds on that learning to focus on supporting a culture of learning and resilience with Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) families in South Belfast. FLIP uses holistic approaches to build the capacity of BAME families to gain skills and become more confident members of their communities, whilst celebrating their own language and cultural heritage.

FLIP is made up of a number of different capacity building programmes:

- Parent and Infant Programme (PIP)
- Parent Active Learning programme (PAL)
- Language Made Fun (LMF) and Language Together (LT)
- Drop-in Service
- English Classes
- Individual Support
- Men's Work
- Volunteering Support

FLIP supports BAME parents with children who are aged 0-11 years old, attending, or intending to attend, Holy Rosary Primary School or Fane Street Primary School in South Belfast. The overall long-term outcomes of the FLIP interventions are **confident**

families actively engaging with their local communities, and better educational opportunities for BAME children. We want to highlight how FLIP, through each unique intervention, has developed and adapted to challenges faced in its first three years.

How FLIP works

Parents are introduced to FLIP through Open Days in both primary schools, where they indicate which programmes they would like to be involved in through expression of interest forms and questionnaires; Project Workers follow up with a phone call or meeting. FLIP receives referrals from the partner schools, and holds drop-in sessions once a week at each school for families who may have missed the Open Days. The project is supported by both schools and makes use of the school's internal communication systems to engage with parents.

FLIP is reviewed three times a year by the Project Board which has representatives from Barnardo's NI, both schools, and Ulster University. The Project Board meetings give each partner an opportunity to contribute to the development of the service, to reflect on what works well and what may need to be changed.

This booklet will give an overview of each intervention and explore



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the programme's implementation. Rather than examining the results of questionnaires, we will highlight examples of adapting to change and best practice. Case studies and parent testimonials will showcase the real-life impact FLIP has made on the lives of families in Belfast. We have changed people's names throughout to protect their privacy.

Ultimately this report aims to highlight the lessons learned through implementing FLIP, and in particular those lessons which can be adapted and used by other services to improve the lives of children and families throughout Northern Ireland.

Barnardo's Parent and Infant Programme (PIP)

“ *This programme has been really helpful and has improved my knowledge about how important my interactions with my children are.* **”**

What is PIP?

Barnardo's Parent and Infant Programme (PIP) is a manualised, evidence informed programme, developed from a combination of Barnardo's NI experience, Attachment Theory, and principles from High Scope, Solihull and Five to Thrive (developed by KCA Training).

PIP is delivered over 10 weekly sessions, each lasting 2 hours. The programme helps parents understand their child's temperament, individual needs and stage of development, and includes practical play-based activities which parents can replicate at home. The programme also fosters peer support networks and shared learning. PIP gives parents opportunities for one-to-one time with their child, alongside time in small and large groups, and group time with other parents. The programme provides active learning experiences for both children and parents.

Implementation

PIP was part of the original bid submitted to The National Lottery Community Fund; it began in Year 1 of the project and has been delivered every year. There have been no significant changes to the programme delivery throughout Years 1-3 and it continues to be delivered as originally designed. The style and format of delivery is well structured, focuses on modelling behaviour, and prepares parents for their child starting nursery.

Over the first three years of PIP, a total of 60 participants have attended classes, with 30 attending in Year 2 alone. Our parent testimonials illustrate the success of PIP and the impact the classes have had.

Parent Testimonials

'The programme helped me to know about child development.'

'This programme has been really helpful and has improved my knowledge about how important my interactions with my children are.'

'It has really developed my knowledge and understanding of my child and also my ability to teach new things and a simple way.'



Short term outcomes of the programme:

- Increases parents' knowledge and understanding of their child's early learning and development needs.



Medium term outcomes of the programme:

- Parents are more confident in their role as parents.
- Parents have an improved ability to respond to their child's learning and development needs.



Over the first three years of PIP, a total of 60 participants have attended classes, with 30 attending in Year 2 alone.

Barnardo's Parent Active Learning programme (PAL)



What is PAL?

Barnardo's Parent Active Learning programme (PAL) responds to the specific issues that can arise for parents living in a new country. PAL is designed to support and equip BAME parents to build their capacity, gain the skills and confidence they need to support their children's learning and become more involved in the local community.

PAL uses:

- an evidence-based approach informed by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE);
- a needs assessment undertaken with the FLIP partner schools (with teachers and BAME parents);
- the Equality Commission report looking at inequalities for Newcomer children in primary school; and,
- Barnardo's NI research reflecting on the situation of Newcomer children in NI.

Over ten weekly, two hour sessions, PAL is delivered by two trained practitioners in the FLIP partner schools, or a venue in the local community that ensures the programme is fully accessible to all parents.

Sessions begin with parents being encouraged to feel proud of where they are from and what they are bringing to their new life in Northern Ireland. Further sessions help develop parents' knowledge and understanding about where they live now, such as providing information on health and housing. Parents are also encouraged to become more involved in their community by volunteering, and to further improve their English language skills. This element of the project, delivered by GEMS NI, Extern, and BURC (Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre), also helps parents develop learning and development plans, access training, and develops their skills.



Short term outcomes of the programme:

- BAME parents will know about local services and how to access them.
- BAME parents have support to navigate NI systems – education, housing, employment etc.
- More BAME parents will take part in social activities.



Medium term outcomes of the programme:

- More BAME parents will have accessed, and engaged with, local services and gain appropriate support.
- More BAME parents will have accessed volunteering and employment opportunities.
- BAME parents will report an increased knowledge and confidence of the local support system.
- BAME parents are more confident in using the English language in different situations.



Over the first three years of PAL, a total of 41 participants have attended classes, with 19 attending in Year 2 alone.

Implementation

PAL was part of the original bid submitted to The National Lottery Community Fund; it began in Year 1 of the project and has been delivered every year. While there are core sessions which are delivered every year, the flexible design of the PAL programme facilitates the delivery of certain sessions based on interest from parents. This gives parents a sense of ownership of the programme delivery and facilitates group working. A good balance is achieved between providing key information and responding to the needs of the parents; this allows flexibility within a consistent, structured approach.

Over the first three years of PAL, a total of 41 participants have attended classes, with 19 attending in Year 2 alone. The case study illustrates the positive impact the PAL programme can have by providing essential support to Newcomer parents.

“ Parents are also encouraged to become more *involved in their community* by volunteering, and to further improve their English language skills. ”



Case study

Maryam moved to Belfast with her husband in 2010. Both were highly qualified in the medical field, but only Maryam’s husband could transfer his medical qualifications; as a result, Maryam spent her time raising their two children. Although she is highly qualified and driven, Maryam described herself as quite isolated, missing her career and the life that she had in the Middle East. Maryam began attending PAL classes; in the first session she shared that the PAL class was the first thing she had done for herself since moving to Belfast. Upon completion of the programme, the FLIP team sign-posted Maryam to interpreting training. This qualification enabled Maryam to work as an interpreter for a range of services in Belfast, and as an Assistant Project Worker for the Barnardo’s NI Refugee Support Service. Subsequently, Maryam applied for a position in the YMCA in Bangor and was successfully appointed. Maryam is still with the YMCA, and has also become an interpreter for the local NHS – a workplace that is the closest to her passion for medicine. Recently Maryam joined a school Board of Governors in her local area and represented Barnardo’s NI on a Volunteer Forum in London.

Language Made Fun (LMF) & Language Together (LT)



What is LMF?

In 2013, Ulster Centre on Multilingualism (UCoM) collaborated with Barnardo's NI to establish *Language Made Fun (LMF)*. The programme is designed to support the language needs of multilingual Newcomer children in Northern Ireland, whilst promoting the maintenance of their home language.

Research has shown that Newcomer pupils are at risk of underachievement if not sufficiently supported with their second language. LMF is designed to assist the development of children's English through play. Through LMF, Newcomer children are paired with UCoM students who design bespoke language interventions for each child based on their linguistic needs. Each pair meets for an hour a week, for 16-18 weeks.

Research has shown that Newcomer pupils are at risk of underachievement if not sufficiently supported with their second language.



LMF has assisted more than 40 pupils and their families, including children that have never been to school before.



Short term outcomes of the programme:

- BAME children will have learned more English language.



Medium term outcomes of the programme:

- BAME children are more confident using the English language in different situations.

Implementation

LMF was part of the original bid submitted to The National Lottery Community Fund; it began in Year 1 of the project and has been delivered every year. The roll-out of LMF as part of FLIP was altered from the 2013 design, as student volunteers were not familiar with the families or homes that they would be attending, which presented challenges. It also became clear that some communities were continually identified as most in need of language interventions, but were typically not completing the LMF programme.

In 2017, UCoM and Barnardo's NI piloted **Language Together** (LT) where play-based language assistance was delivered in a

group setting at school, and not individually as in LMF. Six children, mostly from the Roma community, took part in the pilot of LT in Year 3. These changes have seen an improvement in attendance and participation from those pupils who were not previously engaged. As the LT course is less intensive, due to the group setting, the results are not as extensive as those seen in LMF; however the results that are achieved are notable.

LMF has assisted more than 40 pupils and their families, including children that have never been to school before. The first languages of the children range from Sudanese and Syrian Arabic, Romani and Hungarian, to Polish, Mandarin Chinese, Mexican Spanish and Farsi. Below is a testimonial from a father whose son attended LMF, and he describes the significant changes he saw, both in his son's English language skills, and his confidence.

Parent Testimonials

"When my son came here he knew basic English, and his lack of language and nervousness speaking meant it was hard for him to make friends, and he found schoolwork difficult. Now he has so much confidence. Before he didn't want to speak to anyone, now when we go out he wants to speak to the bus conductor and the cashiers. He is also reading in English and correcting me on my language and tenses."



Drop-in Service

The drop-in service operates once a week in each school to answer questions that parents may have, and help them with any issues that arise as part of learning about, and adapting to, a new community and environment. The drop-in service also provides an opportunity to identify and promote other services, programmes and information that may be useful to BAME families. The drop-in service functions as a community navigator through signposting and helping guide families through the systems specific to Northern Ireland.



Short term outcomes of the programme:

- BAME parents will know about local services and how to access them.
- BAME parents have support to navigate NI systems – education, housing, employment etc.
- More BAME parents will take part in social activities.



Medium term outcomes of the programme:

- Improvement in BAME parents' employment opportunities.
- Parents have improved relationship with the school and are more confident attending school events.
- More BAME parents will access, and engage with, local services and gain appropriate support.
- More BAME parents attending multiple FLIP interventions.

Implementation

The drop-in service was not part of the original bid submitted to The National Lottery Community Fund. While delivering the programmes rolled out in Year 1, Project Workers identified a clear need among BAME families for ad-hoc support with questions or issues that arose as families settled into a new community and environment. The drop-in service began in Year 2 and continued in Year 3. The resource requirements are very low and anecdotal feedback indicates that parents find it very useful. Furthermore, the drop-in service often provides a pathway to other FLIP interventions. Feedback from the school principals indicates that the drop-in service has facilitated engagement with BAME parents on the school's strategic plan, and feedback on consultations from the Education Authority.

The drop-in service is operational every week, regardless of whether or not parents avail of it. Demand for this service peaks at certain times, for example when parents need to apply for nursery or school places. Over 50 parents have availed of the drop-in service during the 2 years it has been running and this is the only FLIP intervention which is run throughout all terms in the school year.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding an open book. The person is wearing a dark blue or black suit jacket. The book is open, showing white pages with some faint text and a small illustration. The background is out of focus, showing other people in a crowd, suggesting a public event or a library. The lighting is soft and natural, highlighting the texture of the paper and the person's hands.

English Classes

Throughout Years 1 and 2, it became clear that there were a number of parents attending one session of PIP or PAL, but dropping out as they did not have the level of English needed to participate.

Holy Rosary Primary School already provided English classes to BAME parents; however, they found that many parents were not attending due to a lack of childcare. As a result, a crèche was funded by The National Lottery Community Fund at the end of Year 2, allowing parents to attend the classes. Although this is a resource intensive service, by creating the opportunity for parents to attend English classes, it becomes a pathway to availing of other FLIP interventions.

The English classes are provided weekly by a qualified EAL/ESOL teacher at Holy Rosary. To enable BAME parents to avail of this service, a crèche is provided for those with children aged 0-3 years. Having classes in the school premises encourages parents to feel more familiar and confident with the school environment.

Approximately four to eight participants attend English Classes each week, with 16 people regularly attending over the 2 years it has been running.



Short term outcomes of the programme:

- BAME parents will have learned more English language.



Medium term outcomes of the programme:

- BAME parents are more confident in using the English language in different situations.
- More BAME parents will access, and engage with, local services and gain appropriate support.
- More BAME parents attending multiple FLIP interventions.



Approximately four to eight participants attend English Classes each week, with 16 people regularly attending over the 2 years it has been running.



Individual Support

This capacity building service allows project workers to: provide support that cannot be delivered in a group setting; support parents to avail of other FLIP interventions; and, improve their overall quality of life. This support includes signposting to other services, parenting and behaviour information, helping the person become more confident in their new environment and encouraging them to access other FLIP interventions.

Individual Support is designed to provide one-to-one sessions, with the following components: needs assessment, support strategy-action plan, delivery, and liaison with relevant support agencies.



Short term outcomes of the programme:

- BAME parents will know about local services and how to access them.
- BAME parents have support to navigate NI systems – education, housing, employment etc.
- Parents will be more confident.



Medium term outcomes of the programme:

- More BAME parents will access, and engage with, local services and gain appropriate support.
- BAME parents will report an increased knowledge and confidence of the local support system.
- More BAME parents attending multiple FLIP interventions.

Implementation

Individual Support was not part of the original bid submitted to The National Lottery Community Fund but a clear need was identified by Project Workers throughout Year 1. In Year 2, Individual Support was established and continued in Year 3. Participants can be referred by the schools, via the Drop-in Service or other FLIP interventions. In addition, the project can also receive referrals from health professionals, The Family Support Hub, Social Services and other voluntary sector agencies. Demand for this support fluctuates and it is resource intensive to deliver. When referrals are low the team re-advertises the service with the schools and organisations. Feedback from Project Workers and service users indicates that the service is highly valued by those who avail of it. Going forward the project will consider ways to streamline the current broad scope of this service so that all partners and organisations are aware of the outcomes.

A total of 30 FLIP participants have availed of Individual Support after it was officially established in Year 2. In Year 1, three participants were supported through Individual Support and this contributed to identifying the broader need from BAME families in general.



A total of 30 FLIP participants have availed of Individual Support after it was officially established in Year 2.

Men's Work

“ Since participating in the Men's Work programme, Nasif has started an interpreting course and hopes to work in this area. ”

The main aim of Men's Work is capacity building of fathers in BAME families through targeted Individual Support, and the development of a 'men's group' who can support each other.

The Men's Work programme aims to address the isolation of men in BAME families and the issues faced by participants includes: job seeking, integration, volunteering opportunities, housing and benefits, communication with the school, and child development. Referrals to Men's Work comes through other FLIP programmes and the schools.



A total of 22 men have participated in the Men's Work programme, with each receiving support tailored to their needs.



Short term outcomes of the programme:

- BAME men will know about local services and how to access them.
- BAME men have support to navigate NI systems – education, housing, volunteering, employment.
- More BAME men will take part in social activities.



Medium term outcomes of the programme:

- More BAME men will access, and engage with, local services and gain appropriate support
- BAME men will report an increased knowledge and confidence of the local support system.

Implementation

Although Men's Work was part of the original bid submitted to The National Lottery Community Fund, it did not begin until Year 2. The Individual Support aspect of Men's Work was delivered in Years 2 and 3, however the men's group did not naturally form and this has proven difficult to bring about. The FLIP team has learned that Project Workers need to take a more proactive, co-ordinating role in relation to setting up the men's group. Needs assessments are already carried out in relation to other FLIP programmes (e.g. PAL) and these could be adapted and used to inform the shape of the men's group. Continuous evaluation would be central in identifying what ongoing support is required.

A total of 22 men have participated in the Men's Work programme, with each receiving support tailored to their needs. The aim for Year 4 is to co-ordinate the meeting of the men's group to allow BAME fathers to share and learn from their experiences.



Case study

Nasif came to Belfast as a young man from Sudan. He became aware of FLIP through his younger sister who was taking part in the Language Made Fun programme (see above). After hearing what the FLIP service offered, *Nasif* expressed an interest in volunteering.

Nasif began working with the Men's Worker and they identified opportunities for *Nasif* to use his strong English skills and IT qualifications. As a result, *Nasif* began volunteering for three days a week in the Barnardo's NI Regional Office, gaining experience for his CV and making friends with colleagues. Feedback on his work has been very positive. In addition, due to his strong English skills, FLIP asked him to volunteer as an interpreter to facilitate meetings with parents. Following this experience, *Nasif* has started an interpreting course and hopes to work in this area once he is allowed to work in Northern Ireland.

Volunteering



Raising awareness of volunteering, and engaging FLIP participants in volunteering opportunities with Barnardo's NI and other third sector organisations, is a key target in each FLIP intervention.

The aim of promoting volunteering is to raise awareness among BAME families, and explain how volunteering can be a springboard to employment.

The Volunteer Co-ordinator reaches families in a number of ways:

- conversations at FLIP partner schools through the drop-in services;
- delivering a unit of the PAL programme on volunteering and asking for Expressions of Interest. These are followed up with a meeting to see what parents would like to do, either in Barnardo's or another organisation;
- organising a group activity with a volunteering organisation;
- encouraging referrals from staff for FLIP participants who want an opportunity to improve skills, try something new, or make new connections;
- keeping the FLIP team informed of volunteering activities in other Barnardo's NI projects that may be of interest.

A number of FLIP participants have engaged in a volunteering role through their relationship with the FLIP team however, it has become clear that there are significant barriers to volunteering. In particular, many organisations require references and an AccessNI check; these can be difficult to obtain or take a lengthy period of time to complete as many FLIP parents do not have a history of residence or employment in Northern Ireland.

FLIP is looking at ways to tackle these barriers creatively and build on the successes already seen; for example, supporting parents to become 'community champions' within the school environment and encouraging other BAME parents to be more involved in school life. FLIP is also looking at increasing the number of volunteer information sessions, and ways to direct potential volunteers to more accessible options (by location and application process), which would provide a base that can be built upon once a history of residence and relationships has been established.

The following case study shows how one parent went on the FLIP journey from programme participant, to volunteering, to employment.



Case study

Anna came to Belfast from Poland and had two children born in Northern Ireland; however, she found that language was a big barrier to integrating into the local community. When Anna's eldest child began primary school, she was introduced to PIP. Through PIP, Anna felt safe and encouraged to learn, and as a result she became more confident and more involved in school life. Anna subsequently attended the PAL programme for two years and significantly improved her English skills. Anna began volunteering with FLIP, helping the team recruit parents to FLIP programmes and events in the school. Anna also received Individual Support which helped her navigate the job market in Belfast. Anna began working in a local shop where she was quickly promoted to supervisor, and she has since opened her own business. Before meeting the FLIP team, Anna was planning on moving back to Poland, however Anna now feels that Belfast is her home and has bought a house where she has made friends with her neighbours and her children play outside with their new friends.

Partnerships & collaboration



The success FLIP is in part due to the strength of the close working relationships that have been developed between Barnardo's NI and other community and voluntary organisations, either through formal partnerships or informal collaboration.

Each year organisations including GEMS NI, EXTERN NI, BURC, Volunteer Now, Advice NI, Parenting NI, Housing Rights, and the Chinese Welfare Association make time to attend a PAL session. This is a great opportunity for parents to enrol for the services or avail of additional support provided by each organisation.

Through information sessions, a number of parents have completed training with participating organisations, for example:

- GEMS: Childcare Level I (7 parents), Childcare Level II (3 parents), and Health and Social Care (2 parents);
- BURC: Community Leadership Training (4 parents)

In terms of employment opportunities, one parent is now working in a partner school as a Classroom Assistant, two have started working in Belfast Nursing Homes, two have set up their own business, and one has become an interpreter for the NHS.

Conclusion

By the end of Year 3, FLIP has become well established and integral in the partner schools, with parents and teachers aware of the support FLIP can offer.

For the remainder of the current funding, the programmes and interventions will continue to support BAME families in those schools. Going into Years 4 and 5 there are gaps that have been identified, such as the need for homework support which we hope to address through a parent and child afterschool club and continuing to develop and enhance the Men's Work programme.

The evidence from the first three years shows that once families engage with FLIP, they are likely to avail of multiple interventions, and parents will often come back to the project at the end of an intervention if they need further support. This highlights that BAME parents need help and support to be available in a place that is accessible to them, on an ongoing basis. Years 1 to 3 have shown which elements of the project ran without much change to the original bid, and what needed to be added or changed to support these

elements such as the addition of the drop-in service.

The case studies and parent testimonials show the impact the different FLIP programmes can have on BAME families and help them integrate into their new community and environment. Given the growing population of Newcomer families in Northern Ireland, these programmes are essential to ensuring BAME families feel equipped and empowered to integrate with and contribute to their local community.

Some aspects of this project could be easily transferred to other schools or settings where there are high proportions of BAME families, for example PIP and PAL. There would also be a need for engagement activities such as the drop-in service and presence at the school Open Days.

In order to actively engage parents with their communities, families need access to a range of services, and it can take time for parents to feel confident in asking for help or joining a programme. This highlights the need for the multi-layered approach which FLIP has adopted with proven positive outcomes for BAME children, parents and their community.

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