



5 BE PRACTICAL AND PURPOSEFUL

"Results? Why, man, I have gotten lots of results! If I find 10,000 ways something won't work, I haven't failed. I am not discouraged, because every wrong attempt discarded is often a step forward."

Thomas Edison

Making and building on small gains is often at the heart of the work the voluntary sector is engaged in with children and families. Whilst expectations must be high, progress may be slow, and the experience of success needs to be embedded in day to day living.

Voluntary sector agencies have been engaging in the Early Years Collaborative and Raising Attainment for All programmes. Engagement with the improvement methodology at the heart of these programmes means that practitioners can turn ideas into action, and connect action to learning, so that small step changes can be developed and spread to maximise improvement.

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PEN PICTURE: Stepping Stones and Circle Father's group

All parents are different as are all children; this means that our approach as workers who support families requires being adaptable to individual needs. At Stepping Stones North Edinburgh we try to fit to the needs of the family and address the issues they feel are present and concerning to them. To achieve this we offer a variety of services such as home visits to initially build a relationship with parents, further down the line we may then be able to provide or engage these parents in group work, following this our role would be to look at the wider community resources that can provide ongoing and holistic support for the family.

In collaboration with PrePare and Circle Scotland we have been running a fathers group called Becoming Dad. The group work looks at the emotional regulation of fathers, their ability to prioritise and manage emotions as well looking at making positive choices. A key to the success of this work - and any other work with families - is effective collaboration between projects. This requires joining resources and experience to best support the family. Although we have received hugely positive feedback, running a group is never easy and the main issue a worker faces is simply getting men through the door! We have identified potential barriers such as anxiety, transport and timing. As professionals it is key to be mindful of these barriers and we have found the key to breaking these is the father building a positive relationship with a worker who they then feel confident in attending a group with.

The group has been evaluated within the work of the Early Years Collaborative. This encouraged us as professionals to follow a Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) style of practice. This involved piloting the group and the work that the men carried out, evaluating the process by gathering feedback and then running the group again with small changes made based upon our previous experience. This has been the case for each of the groups we have run, making changes such as the day of the group, timing of the group and some of the activities.

With all work with families you have to plan the smaller steps and the bigger goals will follow on. It can be frustrating as a worker when it takes a long time for changes to occur, but in the face of the chaos that some families face, it's important to remember that these small steps all count.