

Practice profile:

Holly Milne, Development Manager of [BusinessLab](#), talks about supporting families to increase pupil attendance and reduce exclusion.

How does your day begin? Full breakfast or coffee on the run?

Always breakfast...shortly followed by coffee on the run!

What does BusinessLab do?

BusinessLab is a research company who specialise in family and community engagement - working with a range of organisations such as local authorities, prisons and the third sector. One aspect of our work involves creating tools to support practitioners working with families. The Family Learning Signature is one such tool, designed to support families to identify their key strengths, opportunities and challenges in relation to family learning. The Signature process increases a family's overall learning capacity and helps schools and other support organisations to engage with them and develop collaborative solutions.

What is unique or particularly good about the work your organisation does?

The Family Learning Signature really puts families in control of identifying their learning needs and challenges. The process is fun, non-threatening and engaging for the whole family, which means practitioners using the tool can start to build really positive relationships and an understanding of the family and their needs.



We are about to embark on an exciting new project in the North East of Scotland working with Aberdeen Foyer, a prominent local charity working to prevent and alleviate youth homelessness and unemployment. The Foyer are using the Family Learning Signature as part of their early intervention strategy, working with young people and their families across Aberdeen City and Shire.

Tell us a story from your front-line work.

One of our longest running projects, now in its fourth year, has been with schools in Hull. Recently we have been focussing on reducing absenteeism and exclusion with some of the harder to reach families in the city. In Sydney Smith School, the Family Learning Signature has become an integral part of the transition from primary to secondary school and all new pupils' families are offered a Signature session.

Among one group of families where children were attending school less than 80% of the time (some only 20 or 30%), the Signature offered a way of engaging the families and finding out what their challenges and barriers were. The school used this information to develop bespoke family learning days focussing on issues such as motivation and collaboration. In addition the families were also able to identify steps they could take themselves to improve their capacity for working and learning together. Working with these families on their identified needs has seen both an increase in attendance and a reduction in school exclusions.

Website and further information

Go to <http://www.businesslab.co.uk/>
or contact Holly Milne at hmilne@businesslab.co.uk

Nov 2009