

National Assembly for Wales

Children and Young People Committee

EO 18

Inquiry into Educational Outcomes for Children from Low Income Households

Evidence from : People and Work Unit

School Focused Communities 2009-2015 – a summary

This project works with 44 young people and their families, following them as they progress through secondary school and make the transition to adulthood. The project objectives were to improve attendance and behaviour in schools, attainment and promote family involvement in learning. The first group of young people completed compulsory education in June 2013, and the second group will complete compulsory education in June 2014. With continuing support from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, the objectives have developed to encourage continued involvement in learning and an effective transition to post-16 education and employment. An annual survey, begun in 2008, is following the cohort and their peers to measure changes in attitudes to learning and behaviour as they progress through education. Key outcomes of the project to date are summarised below.

Behaviour in school

School behaviour has improved. There have been no permanent exclusions amongst the young people in the cohort and although the survey shows that pupils from Glyncoch are still more likely to self report that they get into trouble in school than their peers, the school now report there are far fewer incidents of poor behaviour. Both the school and the Communities First cluster have adopted some of the project's methodology when dealing with areas beyond Glyncoch, including employing a community based school-family liaison worker.

Attendance at school

When the project started school attendance levels of pupils from Glyncoch were a cause for concern. Termly attendance across both the year groups the project is working with is now almost exactly the same level as the full year group each term. In addition to required attendance, there has been an excellent take up of revision support both in the school and at additional sessions arranged by the project in Glyncoch. Many of the young people re-sat their maths GCSE three times during this academic year, demonstrating high resilience and improved ability to cope with disappointment (not evident from previous year groups).

Family involvement in learning

The Project Leader has text or Facebook contact with over two thirds of the parents/carers and uses such contact to remind families about parents' evenings, exams, results and revision sessions. This has created a much stronger awareness of what needs to happen and has developed support for learning. Many informal conversations have demonstrated an increased support for educational progress (e.g. one mother who was nervous about her son attending a local solicitor's for work experience wrote a very positive letter of thanks following the placement). Six young people from the Year 12 group are in sixth form (none were there when the Unit arrived in 2007), 13 are in further education college (being supported by the Project Leaders of SFC and Build It Together – a construction skills project). Six of the current Year 12 group of young people have expressed a clear desire to attend university (there were none at the school looking to attend university from this area when the Unit started work in Glyncoch in 2008), indicating a broader acceptance in families of the idea of continuing in learning past compulsory school age.

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