



# It's Your Child's Life

It's Your Life is a well-established, highly successful charity, with a proven reputation working with disadvantaged families to create a society where everyone, regardless of background, is encouraged to strive for, and is supported in achieving, educational excellence. As part of their work, the charity developed 'It's Your Child's Life' programme (IYCL) to help children get the best start in life by improving the quality of parenting and consequently their home life.

## The issue...

Every parent we've worked with wants the very best for their child. They all want to give their children the very best start in life by supporting them in their learning journey, both at home and at school. The issue is that not all parents have the knowledge, attitudes, skills and habits required to do it well. Some parents lack the confidence to help their children when it comes to school work whilst others are confident about being able to support their child but don't always know the best way to go about it.

The IYCL programme gives parents a real insight into what their child is learning at school and how they are being taught. Through intensive support, parents are given guidance, advice, tips and tools they need to become actively involved in their child's learning helping them to strive for and achieve great things.

## What the research says about how to develop the KASH of parents...

The design of the programme is underpinned by research into what works in terms of helping parents develop their knowledge, attitudes, skills and habits.

In particular, 'What Works in Parenting Support? A Review of the International Evidence' (Patricia Moran, Deborah Ghate and Amelia van der Merwe) **highlights the importance of creating opportunities for parents to discuss the issues in a 'public' format where parents can benefit from the social aspect of working in groups of peers.** They also highlight **the value of interventions that address both behavioural as well as cognitive needs. The behavioural support will help with needs such as specific parenting skills and practical 'take home tips' for changing to more complex parenting behaviours and impacting on child behaviours. Cognitive support focused on changing unhelpful beliefs, attitudes and self-perceptions about parenting.**

There is extensive literature evidencing the importance of the content of the programme for children's attainment. For example, Sutton, C., Utting, D., and Farrington, D., (Eds), (2004), Support from the Start – Working with young children and their families to reduce the risks of crime and anti-social behaviour. London DfES highlight the importance of warm, authoritative and responsive parenting in developing good behaviour and preventing children developing behaviour problems.

Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj, Blatchford and Taggart (2008) in 'Effective Pre-school and Primary Education 3-11 Project Report from the Primary Phase: Pre-school, School and Family Influences on Children's Development during Key Stage 2 (Age 7- 11) DCSF Research Report pinpoints **'the home learning environment has a greater influence on a child's intellectual and social development than parental occupation, education, or income. What parents do is more important than who they are,**

**and a home learning environment that is supportive of learning can counteract the effects of disadvantage in the early years.'**

### **The Programme**

The programme in Liverpool usually runs for 12 weeks and is delivered in two phases. Phase 1 runs over 6 weeks and relates to the 17 early learning goals and parents are given a plethora of tips, tools, resources and activities to do with their children at home. Schools have told us that this has made a significant impact on children's performance in the classroom. Children whose parents are actively involved in their child's learning are more likely to demonstrate a good level of development across all early learning goals in EYFS.

Phase 2 of the course runs over the next 6 weeks where bespoke, personalised support for individual families is given. Working closely with SENCOs, reception and nursery teachers, we work on specific areas that need closer support which have been identified by school. For example, a child with communication difficulties, literacy difficulties or personal, social and emotional development would be given tailor made support by working closely to the families. We understand that some barriers to learning go beyond the classroom and that parents themselves may need extra support to overcome the obstacles they face for example DV, racism or housing issues. The relational trust parents have built with us over the last six weeks usually makes them open to advice given. Our close links with many outside agencies mean we are able to get parents in touch with the right support in a timely fashion.

For some schools, 6 weeks working with parents on ways they can help their children demonstrate a good level of development across the early learning goals is all they need. Parents learn how to become teachers and confident in developing skills within their child. They are given a plethora of resources, tools, skills and activities. During that time, we work closely with school to see if there are any specific areas children may need further support through providing extra practice materials.

Parents are continually supported even when the course is over. Through our Facebook page and WhatsApp groups, parents around the city continue to share ideas and good practice in the best ways to support their child's learning.

### **Phase 1 – Building parents' KASH and demystifying ways parents can help support their children's learning at home through different areas of learning.**

This phase takes a modular structure. Each module lasts 1 and a half hours long and is delivered in school, starting straight after children arrive for the beginning of the school day. Each session focuses on a particular skill relating to the 17 early learning goals. Parents leave with greater clarity on the importance of that ingredient to ensuring success for their child in school as well as activities and games to play at home. It may be to take away a storybook with no words to talk through with their children, a board game, a number line or some confidence building activity. The aim is that parents have practical tools to help them help their children to reach a good level of development in different areas which extends their child's learning beyond the classroom.

### **The modules cover the following areas:**

- **Development of communication and language skills.**
- **Routines, diet and exercise with a focus on the development of fine motor skills.**
- **Building self-esteem, managing behaviour, empathy and relationships.**
- **Reading and writing**
- **Maths**
- **The world around us and school readiness.**

## **Phase 2 – Reflection and personalised support**

During this phase, the parents reflect on ways they can ensure their children can be successful at school. This process helps parents to identify areas they are doing well or improving, as well those they need more support in order to support their child's progress at school. For example, a parent may have housing/medical/domestic issues that they need advice on where to go for help. The timescale of support will vary depending upon need. However all parents are offered further individual support sessions, and long-term support where necessary. It is during this phase that course leaders meet again with the designated school link person to provide feedback and gain from school any information about specific areas to focus on with individual families. This could be areas of attendance, punctuality or relationships for example.

## **Phase 3 – Evaluation and Next steps**

Parents will complete a qualitative evaluation at the end of the programme to reflect on what they've started and stopped doing as a result of their learning. We also seek to measure the quantitative impact on children's attainment at the end of the school year. We have built a tracking system to record the targets of participants' children, and then at the end of the school year, compare their attainment with the attainment of other children, in the same class, whose parents did not participate. We provide school with an evidence of impact folder showing schools the areas we've covered with parents in phase 1 and 2. The folder also contains evidence of parents working at home and many photographs of work completed, activities played and 'wow' moments.

The quantitative and qualitative feedback will be collated into a summary report for the school upon completion of the programme.

## **Quality Assurance and Evaluation of impact**

The IYCL course leaders are fully trained, insured and hold current DBS clearance. They are both experienced and Ofsted graded 'Outstanding' teachers. Both have worked for many years in schools in deprived parts of Liverpool and are passionate about children having the best start in life and how a great education can help transform their life chances. They are skilled at building strong relationships with parents. IYCL have a network of contacts in social services, housing, law advice etc where families need further specialist support and advice.

## **Testimonials From Liverpool Headteachers, Deputy Headteachers and Sencos**

'I was stopped by parents who wanted to share how much they have enjoyed the course. They were full of praise as to how much it has helped them help their children and how much it has inspired them. This is making such a difference to our pupils and families and is worth every penny'.

**Andrew Tremarco, Headteacher, St Teresa's.**

'I strongly recommend this programme as it supports all parents in so many different aspects as their role as a carer and a teacher. It was wonderful to see how parents grew in confidence in supporting their child's learning which impacted positively on the way they performed in the classroom. The portfolio of work produced was an excellent way to demonstrate and celebrate success'.

**Dennis Hardiman, Headteacher, St Cuthbert's and St Sebastian's.**

'I am amazed at the success of the programme and I think this has been the most successful of all ventures we have undertaken as the outcomes are firmly rooted in next steps and individual development. It's great to see the outcomes for parents and pupils alike'.

**Karen McBride, Headteacher, Croxteth Primary.**

'Having run the programme, I can honestly say we have seen such a significant impact for our children and families. The course is unique in both content and the way it is delivered. It empowers parents which in turn has a significant impact on their children. This course has been the golden ticket to strong links between home and school'.

**Jo Costello, Senco, Leamington and Faith Primary.**

'Parents have commented on how valuable they feel the course was and have grown in confidence and feel less isolated having formed bonds with other parents. The programme has had a huge impact on our children and families'

**Natalie Boyd, Senco, Leamington.**

'Our Reception teacher commented that feedback from our reception parents has been phenomenal. It's brilliant to see the activities Kerry and Andre are doing with the parents. Without a doubt, it's having a huge impact on the children and their achievements'

**Matt White, Headteacher, Much Woolton.**

'It was great news to hear how successful the programme was. We are getting really positive feedback from the parents. They have told me how much they valued the support they got but above all how much they enjoyed all aspects of the course'.

**Ann Charters, Deputy Headteacher, Beacon C of E Primary.**

'When are you coming back?!'

**Roy Morgan, Headteacher, Northcote Primary School.**

'Thank you both for running the programme in our school. The evidence of impact folder was a lovely way of demonstrating impact at home which cascaded into the classroom'.

**Jane Maloney, Headteacher, Millbrook Primary School.**

'I can see how much our parents have grown in confidence and how proud of themselves and their children they are. They light up when talking about the ways in which the course has helped them support their children's needs. A great recommendation for other parents too'.

**Jo Clegg, Early Years Lead, St Anne's Catholic Primary School.**

**What Liverpool/Knowsley parents say afterwards....**

"My child now sees me as a really good teacher"

"I feel this course has helped me really bond with my daughter"

"My behaviour has changed and as a result of that, my son's behaviour as changed too"

"I feel confident enough to help my child with their learning"

"My son's teacher said she'd noticed a massive improvement in his phonics work since I've been practising and playing phonics games at home"

"My daughter's teacher said her ability to write sentences has really improved"

"I've noticed a massive improvement in my son's handwriting since we have been playing games which help improve fine motor skills"

"I've realised that there are learning opportunities other than just sitting in front of a book"

