



Buckinghamshire Family Learning

Shortlisted for the Family Learning to Support Early Years Award

About Buckinghamshire Family Learning

[Family Learning](#), part of Buckinghamshire Council's Children's Services, is dedicated to building the confidence and skills of local parents, carers and their children. Offering a comprehensive programme of workshops and courses, Family Learning supports parents of children from birth up to the end of Key Stage 4, with a particular focus on early literacy, language development and emotional wellbeing.

Through collaborative partnerships with schools, family centres, health visitors and community groups, Buckinghamshire Family Learning prioritises accessibility by delivering both face-to-face and online provision. Chromebook lending schemes and Google Classroom integration further reduce digital barriers and extend learning beyond the classroom.

Family Learning Early Years: Wonderful Ones

The Wonderful Ones programme is a tailored, long-term initiative designed for families with children aged one to two years. Developed in response to post-pandemic concerns, including a rise in speech delay and diminished parental confidence, the programme focuses on empowering parents to support their child's communication, physical, and emotional development during this critical early stage.

The programme consists of 5-week courses such as 'Helping Your Toddler to Communicate' and 'Understanding Me', alongside themed one-off workshops like 'Nursery Rhymes' and 'Storytime'. Each session blends theory with interactive, sensory-based play, from cereal-filled farmyards for animal sound exploration to nursery rhyme props made from household items.

Sessions begin with reflective sharing among parents, encouraging peer-to-peer learning and community connection. Parents were empowered to critically reflect on their child's communication patterns, often resulting in what one parent described as "a light bulb moment" regarding the difference between communication, speech, and language.

A central feature of the approach is its replicability at home, encouraging continuous learning between sessions. Learning activities were intentionally designed using everyday, recycled, or low-cost household materials to support environmental sustainability. Campaigns like 'Buy Nothing Day' promote meaningful family interaction through homemade decorations and gratitude-focused activities.



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Impact and next steps

The programme has helped to build stronger family relationships and smoother transitions into nursery and school by giving children the foundational tools to express themselves. Over 90.9% of participants reported feeling more confident in supporting their child's development, while 99% enjoyed the course, and 98% made measurable progress. Parents described how they extended class activities at home, shared strategies with partners, and began to see noticeable improvements in their child's communication skills.

The success of Wonderful Ones has resulted in a wider rollout strategy across Buckinghamshire, expanding from trial workshops to a countywide programme. Feedback loops including reflective activities, learning plans, and surveys continue to shape delivery. Future developments include outdoor sessions for families without access to green space and a focus on further areas of concern within speech development.

This approach has earned national recognition, with Buckinghamshire Family Learning contributing to the FE Commissioner's Powerful Pedagogy paper and being praised in a recent Ofsted report where Adult Learning was graded 'Outstanding'. Inspectors noted:

"Family Learning courses work closely with local schools... tutors use this information well to help learners develop strategies to support their children with education."