



## **Parents Early Years and Learning – Involving parents in their children’s learning**

The Early Childhood Unit (ECU) of the National Children’s Bureau (NCB) is leading on The Parents, Early Years and Learning (PEAL) national project to help parents engage with their children’s learning.

Originally, the project was funded by the then DfES for the period between April 2005 to March 2007. This was following the pre-budget report of Chancellor, Gordon Brown in which he stated that “parents should be able to receive support long before compulsory schooling begins”. The aim of the project was to develop and deliver a national training for early years practitioners at children’s centres, to support increased parental involvement in their children’s learning. Over 700 centres participated in the pilot where practitioners received a training pack and a one-day session on creating good relationships with parents of under-threes.

The project has now been granted an additional £3m and has been extended until March 2008. The funding comes from the Workforce Development strand of the DCSF Early Learning Partnerships programme, enabling PEAL to begin its second phase of training to early year practitioners from children’s centres and other early years settings between June 2007 and March 2008. The project has a particular focus on working with parents in disadvantaged areas. PEAL has also distributed this grant to its cross-sector partners, Parenting UK, National Childminding Association, National Day Nurseries Associations and Pre-school Learning Alliance.

Sue Owen, Director of ECU, said: ‘Parents are a child’s first, and most enduring, educators and by supporting the parental contribution to children’s learning we can make a real difference to children’s educational and social outcomes. How children feel about themselves, how they view the world, how well they relate to others, how well they do at school and how well adjusted they are, can all be linked to the quality of the relationship with their parents, particularly in the early years of life’.

The Research and Evaluation Department of the NCB conducted a postal survey of a random selection of participants who attended the first eight PEAL training events for children’s centres between September 2006 and January 2007 and the feedback received was very positive. These are some of the quotes from the evaluation forms:

*‘This is the first course I have been on all year that really gave me food for thought, provided quality materials, helpful pre-course materials, great materials for following up back at the centre too. Thanks!! PS. This would be good for all Primary Schools and Nursery Providers.’*

*‘I found the training very informative and enjoyable. It has reassured me that it doesn’t have to be difficult when encouraging home learning’*

*'An inspirational training that has encouraged thoughts to improve and develop relationships with parents. Lots of fruitful ideas to take back to my setting.'*

With its partner organisations PEAL has now recruited and prepared 40 trainers for rolling out the training to practitioners. Over 108 events have been booked around the country and bookings are now being taken. Preparations are well underway for additional materials, which will be used, such as a newly produced version of the DVD, with newly shot sequences based on the original filmed project examples. Also, significant progress has been made towards accrediting PEAL as a level 3 unit of the Working With Parents Award.

A new redesigned PEAL website ([www.peal.org.uk](http://www.peal.org.uk)) was also launched in September. The PEAL website has been developed over a number of months to provide information not only about the PEAL project itself, but to host many more features that support early years practitioners in working with parents to improve every child's outcomes, through and beyond the training days offered. Some of these features include:

- links to the research that informed the project
- information on other training programmes that support early years practitioners working with parents
- a platform for an online community to develop, uniting practitioners across the country by sharing good practice ideas and invaluable experience beyond the skills gained from attending PEAL training
- up to date news and developments in relevant research

To book a place on a training event or for more information about the PEAL project, visit [www.peal.org.uk](http://www.peal.org.uk), email [pealinfo@ncb.org.uk](mailto:pealinfo@ncb.org.uk) or call 020 7843 6100.