



Early Learning Initiative

National College of Ireland

***Parent Child Home
Programme (PCHP)***

Appendix A

Parent Child Home Programme (PCHP) – Background, the Children, the Parents and the Home Visitors, Outcomes and Comments

Background:

Originally from the US, the Parent Child Home Programme is an innovative, home-based literacy and parenting programme that strengthens families and prepared children to succeed academically. Over a two year period Home Visitors model oral language, reading and play in their twice weekly home visits. The families then continue the activities in their own time, thereby enabling the PCHP child and his/her siblings to develop their language, literacy and numeracy skills.

The Children:

PCHP is designed to ensure that children start school with the skills to succeed. That means they have all the preliteracy and prenumeracy concepts in place. For a young child that means understand that words having meaning, and that text is the key to unlocking the meaning. It is not learning how to read at this point, but laying a solid foundation for reading as the child makes its way through the school system. For prenumeracy it is understanding the meaning of numbers, not just recognising the symbols, but the concept of number is clear to the child – four apples and four oranges are different, but 4 is understood – it is an abstract concept of number that children must comprehend.

So how is this done: over two school years, starting with a child as young as 18 months, Home Visitors model for parents how to use books and toys (gifts to the family) on their twice weekly home visits. Each visits last ½ hour, but over two years that adds up to 90 – 100 visits. A targeted, intensive, intervention gently administered.

The Parents:

All parents want the best for their children – but many parents don't know how to do that. If a parent was never read to as a child, they are unlikely to read to their own children. Parents' participation in the programme is voluntary and their essential role is always emphasised. Parents are never told what to do, but Home Visitors model different ways of engaging children and over the course of two years, the parents adopt new and more effective strategies.

Parents are given two clear messages: they are their child's first and best teacher; and it is not what the Home Visitor does in two short ½ hours that makes the difference, it is what they parent does the rest of the time that has an impact on the child's learning.

Home Visitors:

Home Visitors for PCHP are local women from the community – many came to the job without any formal qualifications – and most were unemployed or had little work experience except in casual low paying jobs. The first cohorts who came on board showed tremendous courage, because they had to step out of their comfort zone and come into the National College of Ireland (NCI) for training. Over the course of the nine years the programme has been running, these early school leavers have achieved their QQI 5 (Fetac Level 5) in Early Childhood Care and Education, and many (11) are en route to an undergraduate degree in Early Education in NCI.

Potential Home Visitors were invited to come to the initial training (4 mornings in NCI) and after the training they could apply for the jobs. Interviews were held after that, but in reality, applicants had been on a four day interviews before they applied for the job, and that ensured that the right people were in place from the beginning.

Employing the local women has been key to the success of the programme. In their uniforms they are the visual ambassadors for the programme and are often stopped on the street by parents wanting to get a place for their child. All Home Visitors are employees of NCI.

The Outcomes/Impact

NCI are the partner site of PCHP in the US (www.parent-child.org), which is in the Social Impact 100 Index and has been in existence for fifty years. It has been named one of American's top-performing non-profit organisation on the first ever index of non-profits that have evidence of results and are ready to grow.

Children who are read to early and often have the vocabulary to succeed in school. Children who have had many chances to do puzzles, build with blocks have developed problem solving skills, have developed the beginnings of higher order critical thinking skills needed for later mathematical problems. Children who have learned to take turns playing games have learnt important social skills. None of this happens in a vacuum but all happens quite naturally when parents have the skills necessary to read, talk and play with their young children. Parents who understand the developmental stages their children are going through are more in tune with their children and there is less conflict.

PCHP is described as a school readiness programme but it is so much more than that. It models for parents ways to talk to their children so the children can learn. It is parenting programme, when parents are encouraging to articulate how their child might be feeling, to explain the rationale behind certain instructions and to notice, and comment to the child when the children are behaving well.

When parents and children are able to have a conversation, think ahead and plan a task, are cooperative with each other, the seeds of social emotional competence have been sown.

That is what PCHP does!

Huge savings are made when children go to school ready to learn and while some children will need extra help, most will not, as they have been given the tools needed to be successful from the beginning. The US estimates that for every \$1 invested in the early years, \$11 is saved on services later on, while the UK estimates are more conservative with £1 invested saves £6 down the road. Regardless of the figures, early investment is more cost effective and more dignified for all involved.

Research carried out in 2011 (Share et al) highlighted the importance of the programme to the Home Visitors themselves, while a pilot longitudinal up research showed that the children are doing

well in school and are, in many cases, reading to their younger children using their PCHP books. Parents said that PCHP helped them bond with their children and taught them a different, more positive and supportive, way of interaction with their children.

PCHP has made a difference to the Home Visitors themselves, their children, and the parents and children of the families they serve. This is the essence of a community development project, as the Home Visitors are all local, so the learning is now embedded in the community.

Comments:

Parents: (what the parents get from the programme)

It's a winner. He takes out them books. The wife would read to him most nights. I have seen the improvement.

I now spend more time reading and interacting with my children, I never read to my older child, but my PCHP child loves his books.

Watching my child reading and exploring colours, shapes, looking so happy, she wants us to read more to her. I never had that as a child. I have learnt myself from the books.

Home Visitors: (what the Home Visitors get from the programme)

Modelling how to use books and toys and seeing the parents and children grow in confidence, learning new skills little by little and see it all add up at the end of two years.

The child and parents enjoy their time together and learn from each other and you can see the joy in their faces

The lovely books and toys we bring and bring and see the child grow to love books.

2007 – Visiting 15 families (4 Home Visitors)

2016 – Visiting 120 families (30 Home Visitors)