

## Working with Parents

St Paul's Community Development Trust and Smartlyte, #GetBalsallHeathReading **Birmingham**



An excellent initiative with life-enhancing skills gained

— judge



GetBalsallHeathReading is a literacy campaign for isolated families aiming to improve parents' skills in order to help them in turn support their children's development, enhance their own social mobility and create a more integrated community.

As part of its commitment to raising literacy and encouraging families to enjoy reading, St Paul's Community Development Trust, which runs Balsall Heath Children's Centre, commissioned training partner Smartlyte to develop its early years parental engagement work by creating the campaign.

Set in one of the most deprived wards of Birmingham, #GetBalsallHeathReading introduces families to books and reading at weekly classes and sessions in the holidays. Parents attend twice-weekly classes based on

the principle of modelling reading behaviour, with this intended to be transferable to the child, improving development. Since February 2017, more than 200 families have joined Balsall Heath Library, where many of the sessions take place, as a result of the programme.

The initiative also delivers English My Way, a pre-entry English for Speakers of Other Languages programme. The most recent intake in September 2017 registered 89 learners on this, 178 per cent of Smartlyte's target. After completing English classes, parents can progress to digital skills and numeracy classes and are also offered first-aid, road and home safety courses as well as support with CV-writing, as part of follow-on programmes that Smartlyte has developed to support families at home and offer pathways to employment.

The original members of classes are able to work as mentors and volunteers to assist with new learner intakes. They can also continue to meet on a more informal basis at coffee mornings to maintain their language skills as part of the follow-on campaign, #GetFamiliesTalking. This helps parents feel less isolated, supports their well-being and encourages them to engage with local services.

The campaign hosts a weekly radio show, #GetFamiliesTalking on Unity FM, which aims to boost parents' communication skills, reaching up to 370,000 listeners.

#GetBalsallHeathReading aims to develop aspiration and confidence in underprivileged families to help reduce the attainment gap.

### FINALISTS

EasyPeasy

Koru Kids, London

South Acton Nursery School and Children's Centre, Outreach Groups, Acton

### CRITERION

Open to services or projects that support parents, enhance their understanding of their children's learning and development or improve children's outcomes through involvement and co-operation with families



**HIGHLY COMMENDED**  
Fit 'N' Fun Kids, Young Mums Will Achieve, Cornwall

The Young Mums Will Achieve (YMWA) project provides activities and support for vulnerable young mothers or expectant mothers, aged between 14 and 24, with 450 accessing the programme since it began in 2009.

The aim of the project is to improve outcomes for teenage parents and their children to reduce the incidence

of child poverty. The project increases the number of young parents in education, employment or training.

YMWA offers mothers an opportunity to develop positive routines, meet and discuss challenges with peers, and engage with services. Fit 'N' Fun Kids provides on-site childcare and guidance, while Cornwall College offers Level 1 (BTEC) qualifications and Level 2 units one day a week, 30 weeks a year for up to two years.