

An exploration into the multiple perspectives of parents and practitioners on parental engagement strategies employed in family literacy programmes in an area of socio-economic disadvantage.



Pioneering Prevention & Early Intervention



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Implementation Matters

- In Ireland's socio-economically disadvantaged communities children continue to lag behind national averages and norms in language and literacy development.

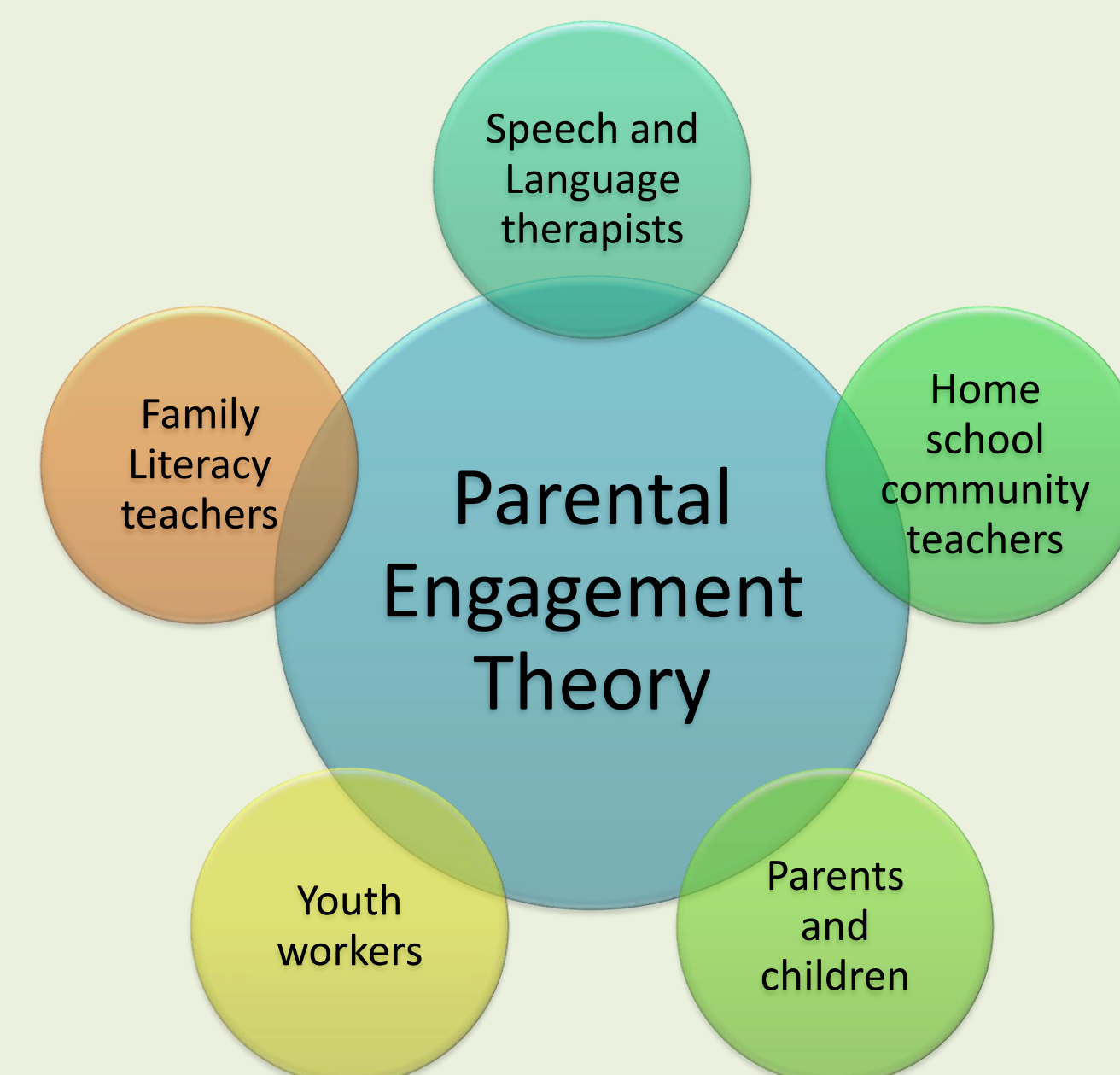
Risks for children

- Children growing up in areas of social disadvantage are at higher risk of experiencing language and literacy difficulties

Evidence base

- Research has consistently shown that the earlier parents become involved in their children's language and literacy learning, the more profound the results

The objective of this research is to develop a theory grounded in the data that will identify parental engagement practices for services engaging parents to support the development of their children's language and literacy skills.



The method used is Constructivist Grounded Theory. Exploring with practitioners and parents their experience of parental engagement in the family literacy programmes. Research from a constructivist's perspective is a meaning-making activity where the researcher constructs an understanding of interest from the perspectives of those who experience it.

Data Collection Process

Focus group 1 May 2019: 11 parents

Focus group 2 June 2019: 3 parents

Focus group 3 June 2019: 7 practitioners

Focus group 4 June 2020: 3 YB practitioners

Focus group 5 June 2020: 4 YB practitioners

Focus group 6 June 2020: 3 YB practitioners

Focus group 7 March 2021: 7 parents

Focus group 8 March 2021: 5 practitioners

Preliminary findings

Barriers to attendance identified by both parents and practitioners as situational, dispositional, educational & institutional. Community involvement & ownership of Breakfast Buddies results in greater attendance.

Family literacy programme objectives being met with coaching seen as a major factor in its success, literacy improvements in children and parents identified. Breakfast Buddies is a fun learning environment, free resources including food seen as important to its success.

Connections being made across and between services by both parents and practitioners leading to greater engagement of parents in services. Initial reports from services agree that parents involved in Breakfast Buddies are now attending clinics and appointments with other services.

MIND THE GAP

The problem

There are many barriers to engagement for families accessing services. Change for communities happens at the intersection between families' engagement in services and service practice.

Families' engagement in services hampered by many social and contextual barriers

High rates of attrition experienced by services engaging parents in practices to enhance life outcomes for children.

Family literacy programme

The focus for this research will be Breakfast Buddies, a Youngballymun family literacy programme. It is delivered in partnership with local primary schools, youth groups and Speech and Language Therapists and is open to all parents in Ballymun. Each Breakfast Buddies morning is spent supporting parents in fun ways to enjoy learning with their children at home.



OPEN FOR DISCUSSION

Insights from parental engagement are precious and inform us about the nature of learning and engagement

What is needed to actively support practitioners and parents to engage in collaborative partnerships

What are the unique features, benefits and challenges of an inter-disciplinary approach to parental engagement