



Adult Learning Service, Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board

Commended – Family Learning to Support Health and Wellbeing Award

[Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board](#) (KCETB) provides high-quality education and training opportunities across both counties in Ireland. Its work includes post primary education, Further Education and Training, Youthreach, and community learning. Within this, the Adult Learning Service plays a key role in supporting adults with literacy, numeracy, digital, and language needs.

Family learning is a core part of this offer. KCETB works with schools, libraries, family resource centres, and community organisations to deliver accessible, informal learning for parents, and carers. These programmes focus on building confidence, strengthening home and school links, and supporting parents as their child's first educator. The service works closely with local communities, particularly those who may face barriers to learning or engagement.

Family Learning to Support Health and Wellbeing: St John's Podsquad

This project was developed in response to a need identified within the school community at St John's Junior and Senior Schools in Kilkenny. Many parents had low confidence in using technology and previously felt excluded from digital spaces. There was also a need to support wellbeing, reduce isolation, and build stronger connections between families.

KCETB responded by creating St John's Podsquad, an imaginative family learning programme centred around podcasting. The project combined digital literacy with creative expression and wellbeing support, offering a unique and engaging route into learning through varied workshop style classes with each session inspiring conversations that were later explored and shared through the project's dedicated podcast.

Participants were introduced to the full podcasting process, including planning, recording, interviewing, and editing. For many, this was their first experience with digital tools. Sessions were practical and collaborative, helping to reduce anxiety around technology and build confidence gradually.

Alongside the technical learning, each session included activities such as mindful colouring, nature walks, homemade face masks, and self-care workshops. These created a relaxed, supportive environment where participants could connect and reflect, empowering parents to become creators, storytellers, and collaborators.

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The programme was strengthened through its collaboration with community partners. Haircare and wellness experts delivered practical self-care sessions, the Money Advice and Budgeting Service provided financial guidance, and visits to the library and Butler Gallery introduced families to community resources. KCETB worked closely with The Home School Community Liaison Coordinator to build relationships with parents who might have found it more difficult to take part.

Podcasting became a platform for storytelling and shared experience. Participants explored topics that mattered to them, building communication skills and sparking curiosity. The approach was inclusive and accessible, supporting learners with different levels of confidence and experience. It also created a ripple effect across whole families, strengthening bonds as children watched their parents learn, create and grow. Many young people expressed real pride in seeing their parents' voices and stories celebrated, turning the learning journey into something shared, meaningful and deeply affirming.

"I enjoyed about learning how to budget and manage my money to help me and my family financially. I also gave parents tips on saving accounts for their kids that can come straight out of your account and into their savings accounts, so you won't miss what's not there and it benefits the kids when older." – Stephanie





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Impact and next steps

The project led to clear improvements in confidence, digital skills, and wellbeing. Parents who were initially hesitant became active participants, with many feeling able to complete podcasting tasks independently and support others.

There was strong evidence of increased engagement, with consistent attendance and high levels of participation. Participants reported feeling more connected to the school, local community, and more confident in supporting their children's learning at home.

The wellbeing focus had a lasting impact. Parents described adopting calmer routines, using ideas from the sessions such as storytelling and nature walks with their children. Participants also developed relationships with their peers, creating a supportive network beyond the sessions.

Family Learning KCETB plans to build on this success by including more creative, sensory, and collaborative tasks and developing digital progression pathways. They will also continue developing partnerships in the community and explore home activities to support intergenerational learning.



Scan the QR code to listen to Sharmin's experience