

500 families in strengthening programme

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THE Strengthening Families Programme designed to improve relationships between parents and children and bolster the social fabric, has reached more than 500 families in 35 suburbs since 2013.

The city of Cape Town's social development and early childhood development department hosted a graduation ceremony in Khayelitsha for the latest group of families to participate in the programme at the weekend.

The programme is part of the department's broader substance abuse programme.

It is internationally recognised and has been found to significantly reduce prob-

lem behaviour, delinquency, substance abuse in children and also improve social competencies and school performance. It also improves parenting skills.

The pilot phase took off in 2013 when 63 families attended the eight-week course featuring topics like open communication, family values, peer pressure, parenting skills and respect.

By the end of June, this total would have increased to 555 families in 35 areas.

This year alone the programme reached 335 children and 246 parents while also creating temporary employment opportunities through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) for 195 of them.

"Very often we are asked what the city is doing about gang violence and drug abuse. We're doing enforcement and awareness and offering rehabilitation at our six treatment centres but we're also helping to build relationships between parents and children," mayoral committee member for safety and security and social services JP Smith said.

"Poor choices are often the result of conflict within the family unit which can then go on to contribute to social problems in a community."

The strengthening families programme uses practical and interactive methods to broach topics like love and limits, house rules, encouraging good behaviour and consequences.

It also teaches children how to have goals and dreams, how to appreciate their parents, how to deal with stress, how to resist peer pressure and to associate themselves with good friends.

"It takes courage to sign up for a programme like this and I commend the more than 500 families who have taken the journey with us thus far," Smith said.

"They are an example of how the city and the public need to work together to create safer and healthier communities.

"These families have taken responsibility for investing in their collective future and I urge others to follow suit."

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