

# Early Years and Childcare News

*in Essex*



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# Welcome to the Early Years and Childcare News!

Welcome to the Autumn newsletter. As the nights draw in and we settle in for the season of the senses - mists and woodsmoke, crunchy leaves underfoot on autumnal walks, fires in the grate, chestnuts and fireworks, I'm looking forward to the run-up to Diwali, Christmas and Hanukkah, the festivals of light in the darkness as the year swings towards winter.

In this edition there's a theme of celebration, of music-making with the Lullaby Concerts, of the Big Society taking off in Birchanger where a children's centre and some local

businesses came together to meet a need for a new baby and toddler group, and of an 'Outstanding' Ofsted achievement. We also maintain the momentum towards next year's Olympics, thinking about inclusion and the paralympics as a starting point for themes in your setting.

Here in Early Years and Childcare we've been reviewing how we deliver our service and ensuring we're as lean and efficient as possible, with a new structure that clearly aligns around the two themes of sufficiency and quality, adding up as always to improving outcomes for children within the wider agenda of early intervention and prevention. More of this next time! Have a great season.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Harriet Hill'.

**Harriet Hill**

Head of Early Years & Childcare

# Inclusion Matters Update

## The Important Role of the Equality Named Co-ordinator (ENCO)

It's great to see how the role of the ENCO is becoming established in settings across Essex, and congratulations to all those ENCOs that have developed a Single Equality Scheme (SES) for their setting, leading and inspiring colleagues, parents and others to make changes that really make a difference to children and families.

Early Years and Childcare recently carried out an 'impact study', to find out more about what difference having an ENCO can have. One of the ENCO's interviewed said, "We now understand that it is not about doing some festivals to cover ourselves. It is about looking at each child and their family as individuals and making sure that we are meeting their needs so that they have the best chance. You think that you are being inclusive, but until you go through the process, you don't realise that you may do things that aren't. This [process of developing the SES] gives you the chance to look closely at what you are doing."

To offer existing ENCO's additional support and a chance to share skills, knowledge and good practice, all ENCOs are invited to attend their local **Area ENCO Group**. Andree Race, Ethnic Minorities Officer will be at the first meetings to answer any questions and there will be updates, examples of resources and ideas on how to make your setting more inclusive.

For details of forthcoming events, contact Andree Race, Ethnic Minorities Officer on **07585 984484** or email **andree.race@essex.gov.uk**.

If your setting hasn't got a trained ENCO yet, then turn to Page 32 of the Early Years and Childcare Training Brochure, and book on a course as soon as possible.

## Inclusion training

You can check out the Early Years and Childcare Training Brochure for latest details of inclusion courses, which are grouped in two sections: Inclusion and SENCAN. Some of the courses are delivered by special schools, whose staff have a wealth of experience of working with children with a wide range of needs. For example, 'Team Teach' training can help you learn how to de-escalate challenging or aggressive behaviour and give you additional skills in calming incidents.

If you would like to find out more about different ways of communicating, you could attend a Makaton taster session, giving you an overview of Makaton sign language and some key signs to use in your setting, or 'Inclusive Communication' to find out more about picture, symbol and sign-based communication.

What about supporting children with English as an additional language (EAL) - did you know that in Essex schools there are currently 9,000 children speaking 172 languages! Most of these children were born in the UK, and many will be accessing early years or childcare services. Do you know how you can best support them? This term, the EAL course has been updated to reflect current best practice, and will give you lots of practical ideas for working with children (and their parents) whose first language is not English. Copies of the Early Years

and Childcare Training Brochure are sent to all settings with this newsletter.

## Resource loans

Early Years and Childcare have some resources available to loan to support the inclusion of children with EAL in particular. Resources include dual language books, storybooks and a 'Talking Pen' that can translate commonly used words and phrases into forty different languages! To discuss a resource loan, contact Andree Race, Ethnic Minorities Officer on **07585 984484** or email **andree.race@essex.gov.uk**



## Date for your Diary: Inclusion Conference 2012

The popular annual Early Years and Childcare Inclusion Conference will be taking place on Monday 6th February 2012. Last year's conference was fully booked, with many attendees wanting 'more of the same next year', so look out for the flyer and booking information, which will be with your setting soon!

# The Big Society and Birchanger Buddies

By Kelly Sampson, Development Officer for Unregistered Provisions (West Quadrant)

**The 'Big Society' is the government's vision of a society where individuals and communities have more power and responsibility, and use this to create better neighbourhoods and local services. Birchanger Buddies Baby and Toddler group is a perfect example of how the 'Big Society' agenda can work and the benefits it has on the community:**

Their story begins when a group of parents were approached by Spangles Children's Centre at a Stay 'n' Play session. The group were asked about local services in the area, and it became apparent that a baby and toddler group did not exist in the village of Birchanger (near Stansted in Uttlesford). It was strongly felt that the local community and the surrounding villages would benefit from having one. Therefore, with the support of Spangles Children's Centre and the dedication and enthusiasm of a group of parents, a committee was formed to set up Birchanger Buddies Baby and Toddler group in the village hall.

Birchanger Buddies were granted funding from Essex County Council to help them with the set up process, resources and the running costs of the group. Further to this, the committee were very proactive in involving the local community and businesses from neighbouring villages. The local businesses supporting the group consist of David Lee Estate Agents, Airport Lettings Stansted who sponsored an 'A' framed pavement sign, Yeoman's Cafe who give a weekly donation and the use of the café to hold fundraising

events. Homebase at Bishops Stortford also donated a plastic shed for storage of toys, and Golding Grocery donates fruit and vegetable for snack time. In addition to the above, a local clinic donates vouchers to raffle, a company set up their website for free and members of the local community volunteer at the group to assist with making drinks, snacks and helping with the activities.

Terry Farthing the Managing Director of Airport Lettings said, "I am delighted that Airport Lettings could play a part in the success of Birchanger Buddies. Since the start of the year this group of volunteers has given their own time and effort to ensure babies, toddlers and their parents can meet somewhere to socialise and support each other. We are very happy to be part of this achievement and wish them continued success in the future."

Birchanger Buddies have also achieved their Good Practice Certificate from the Pre-school Learning Alliance; this is recognition that the group demonstrates a safe, good quality, rich learning environment for children and adults. Pre-school Development Officer, Kelly Sampson said, "Birchanger

Buddies is a thriving, well attended group. The committee have been so proactive and their Good Practice Certificate is well deserved. The support offered by Spangles Children's Centre and the local communities is fantastic."

Baby and toddler groups are extremely beneficial to a community, as they bring children and adults together, to make new friends and create an opportunity to explore new experiences. The Chairperson at Birchanger Buddies, Gemma Mills said, "The group of mums that have set up the group are amazing people, bringing all sorts of expertise and experience to the group. I think we have all been amazed at how nice and generous people can be. And it really is true that if you don't ask, you never know".

**If you are interested in setting up a Baby and Toddler Group in your area or would like some support or advice for an existing group, please contact Pre-school Learning Alliance on 01245 438563 and speak to your local Development Officer.**

## Essex Children's Centres Update

As we reported in the summer newsletter, Essex County Council is undergoing the procurement process for the delivery of the county's children's centres from April 2012 -2014. The children's centres will be divided into four areas reflecting the county quadrant model of commissioning and delivery comprising Mid, West, South and North-East Essex, with a lead body for each area.

Final bids have now been submitted and these will be assessed and scored against strict criteria prior to the awarding of the contracts, which will be announced by early 2012.

Parents have continued to be fully involved. The Parent Panel formed earlier this year to assess the initial bids has been reconvened. Katy McBride, Children's Community Development Officer said, "We are really pleased that all the parents have been able to participate in assessing the Family Questions in the final bids. Their contribution has been so valuable and they have shown real commitment in getting to grips with the process and giving their time and consideration."

The first edition of a News Update, which has all the latest information about the commissioning of children's centres in Essex has now been issued to families. It is great to be able to report that more than thirty parents also helped us with the style and content of the Update giving their comments on the design and wording. Families also sent us some questions which we sought to answer through the same publication.

**If you have any questions concerning Essex Children's Centres, please email us at [eycomms@essex.gov.uk](mailto:eycomms@essex.gov.uk)**

## Another exciting international speaker presentation is coming to Essex!

**Gary Wilson is an author, freelance consultant and expert in the importance of 'raising boys' achievement'. He has worked extensively with children, parents and staff across the country, gaining an insight into the world of boys and their thoughts on learning, being confident and the difficulties of 'being a boy'.**



Gary will be joining us for an inspiring one day session in February 2012. In his presentation, he will outline the issues around boys' underachievement and what can be done about it, both in education and in the home.

Gary will give us his ideas backed by years of research on why boys tend to score lower in all areas of the EYFS and how society's beliefs can shape a boy's life-long achievement and confidence. He will include strategies on how we as practitioners, can support and guide boys in their early education and help them build sound foundations for future learning and development. He will discuss the importance of early intervention to promote positive outcomes in boy's education, self esteem and development.

The session will be a speaker-lead presentation, including examples of practice in the form of case studies, DVD footage, group activities on the principles, and will allow time for questions on the importance of supporting boys' achievement in early years.

This exciting event is open to any early years practitioners working in an Essex based setting.

Date: **23 February 2012**

Venue: **The Shire Hall, Chelmsford.**

Time: **9.30am to 3.30pm**

If you would like to be part of this special event please email the Workforce Development team at [ey-gta@essex.gov.uk](mailto:ey-gta@essex.gov.uk)

*Spaces are limited, so don't miss out!*

# Volunteers needed!

**Essex libraries are seeking volunteers to get involved with Baby and Toddler rhymetimes. Libraries provide safe spaces where families can relax together, and at Baby and Toddler times and Daddy Cool (Saturday rhymetimes) everyone learns rhymes and songs to share at home.**

As well as having fun joining in and sharing books, children make gains in confidence and social skills, whilst parents and carers learn how to support their child's speech, communication and early literacy skills. Rhyme and story sessions generate a friendly environment in which to meet new people, and children experience the wider community and friendships grow and develop.

Volunteers at Baby and Toddler times can share their enjoyment of books and rhymes whilst developing new skills, meet new people and contribute to local

communities. Volunteers help experienced library staff choose books and rhymes, set up the rhyme space, join in and chat with families about the benefits of talking, singing and sharing books with their children.

If you are interested get in touch – we'll invite you to come along to a session so you can see what it's all about. There are other

opportunities to volunteer in Essex libraries too – we already have over 400 volunteers who support the Home Library Service and a growing number who assist others in learning new IT skills.

***'It's a special time, enjoying songs and cuddles together.'***

**To find out more visit the Essex libraries' volunteering pages at [www.essex.gov.uk](http://www.essex.gov.uk) or email us at [www.libraries.feedback@essex.gov.uk](mailto:www.libraries.feedback@essex.gov.uk)**

## Free treasure for girls and boys aged three!

**Essex libraries work in partnership with Bookstart to deliver free book packs to families and last year 45,000 children here in Essex benefitted from the programme. Bookstart is based on the principle that every child should have the chance to enjoy book sharing from as early an age as possible. It's about quality time spent listening and chatting about the pictures, sharing the turning of pages and the surprises which follow!**



Bookstart Treasure packs, for children aged three, are delivered direct to pre-school settings. The free book packs are going to change shape and appearance next year, and will contain slightly different resources but families will still find treasure inside in the shape of two fantastic picture books to share together at home.

There is a strong message here, for us all to pass on to Mums, Dads, carers and the wider family, and that is linking the gift of books to library membership. Once inside a library, families can enjoy a wealth of books, make new friends at Baby and Toddler and Daddy Cool rhymetimes, find resources to help with raising

children, take part in special events and use computers for learning and leisure.

You can also request dual language books to add to a child's Treasure pack to help support their home language – Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Croatia, Czech,

Farsi, French, German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Kurdish, Panjabi, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Turkish, Urdu and Vietnamese – and yes, there are many more dual language picture books, as well as foreign language titles to be discovered in libraries!

**If your setting is not registered to receive Bookstart Treasure packs get in touch with Judith Mosley, by email at [judith.mosley@essex.gov.uk](mailto:judith.mosley@essex.gov.uk) or give her a call at Colchester library on 01206 245900.**

**Find out more about Bookstart at [www.bookstart.org.uk](http://www.bookstart.org.uk) and all about what local libraries offer to families at [www.essex.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.essex.gov.uk/libraries).**

# Messy Play Session with Braintree Out of School Clubs

By Lisa Phillips, Development Officer (South Quadrant)

The Braintree Area Partnership funded 20 messy play boxes for out of school clubs throughout the Braintree area. Development officers, Lisa Phillips, Tracey Markey and Kylie Halls used this generous funding to put on a messy play session, with the aim to share good practice, new ideas and show how to adapt the activities to meet the needs of all the children within the settings.

Playworkers and managers from Braintree settings were invited to attend. At the end of the session each club was given a box of goodies to take back and share with the children, along with a range of ideas to inspire staff, children and young people.



*Messy play is very effective in all types of settings, irrespective of a child's age.*



*A great display showing a range of ideas shared at the messy play session and individual children's ideas.*

The Playworkers had great fun joining in with all the activities and remembered how much fun it was to be involved and have the opportunity to be creative. Victoria Stares from Braintree talks about her experience, "The session was really good and helpful, and I learnt new things to take back to my work and share. It was great to get messy ourselves and get involved."

Children enjoy being involved in messy play, which is why it is important to adapt activities to spark the imagination of all the children within your setting. Using a range of different resources encourages them to use their senses in the process of exploration.

The main outcomes taken from the feedback and experiences of the messy play session were learning the importance of letting children focus on 'doing, rather than producing'. It was amazing to see what the children were capable of when they were given a range of materials that allowed them to recognise their creativity as individuals.

The session was a great success not only for the children, but the Playworkers and support workers as well.

# Our Forest School at Phoenix Day Nursery

By Rachel Thomas, Nursery Manager at Phoenix Day Nursery, Brentwood

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of Forest Schools being adopted throughout the county. The Forest School concept originates from Scandinavian countries in the 1950's. In 1994, lecturers from Bridgewater College visited Denmark and observing the impact of Forest School, decided to bring the concept back to England. The ethos of Forest School is to help build on self-esteem, have confidence and build a connection with the natural environment. The learning is based around the children asking questions, taking 'safe' risks and finding and exploring things for themselves.

At the Phoenix Day Nursery, we have introduced and created a Forest School for our rising 5's children. We have two qualified Level 3 Forest School leaders within our team, with another due to complete their training with the Greenlight Trust this Autumn. Another member of staff has also qualified with a Level 1 in Forest School. We have noted a significant change in the children's social skills, resilience, problem solving and interest in the environment since introducing it.

Over the weeks it has been great to see the children develop and benefit from exploring the Forest School site.

- The children are encouraged to place the boundary flags where they feel comfortable. As they start to feel more confident and comfortable, the children move the boundary flags further out.
- At each Forest School session we have an opening and closing circle. The children grow in confidence and begin to speak up and vocalise during this time.



- During the sessions, children who have been more static have begun to develop their gross motor skills and have got involved in tool use and gathering materials to create with.
- The children show respect for their environment and nature. They promote this with the other children, explaining about not throwing litter, looking after the trees and not disturbing the bug habitats.
- The children are sharing their own materials and equipment to research. They use reference books and cards to find the names of the different bugs and insects.
- The children display great problem solving skills and reasoning when creating and constructing structures in their rooms and in the outside play areas.
- The children work in teams, helping each other when they are using the logs and stones to balance on or creating things out of Lego.

One of the Forest School leaders has noticed the transferral of skills and enthusiasm between the Forest School and into the nursery:



During a recent visit Jackie Oldman and Jane Schofield, two Pre-school Learning Alliance Development Officers, were able to witness first hand just how confident the children were outside in their Forest School, as Jackie explained:

This was demonstrated not only in their use of language, but also their knowledge and understanding of the rules and their ability to experiment. It also showed evidence of the ability to explore and investigate independently, and to invite us to join in their games.

The children were motivated and animated, sustaining their interest in their chosen activities throughout the morning session. Adults were on hand to help when it was requested, but the lead and direction of the session was very much the children's own. For example, a child gathered logs and then asked for assistance when trying to secure them with knots. When Jane asked what he was making he

replied, "I am experimenting". Once satisfied with his creation, Jane asked if he wanted help to throw the ropes over a branch, thinking he had made a swing like some of the other children, he said, "No thank you". Then he proceeded to use it to strim the grass in the same way he had seen the gardener do it the

previous day. The boy told Jane "... the grass was long but look I have made it short".

Throughout the session the children self-imposed the safety rules and were quick to explain to us if they broke them! It was a delight to see the children using tools, such as a bow saw, in a safe and controlled environment.

It was strange to watch as a member of staff began to prepare the camp fire for lunch - no children had been called - but one by one they gathered around the circle taking their places on the logs, as if drawn by the fire. As the sausages began to cook and the children listened to the sounds of them frying, a child asked to sing the 'sausages sizzling in a pan' song and they all joined in. All the children tucked in and cleared their plates. Lunchtime was certainly a different experience, and tastier too!



## Continuous Quality Improvement Ofsted Inspections

A number of recent Ofsted inspections have identified some issues which have resulted in 'Actions' or 'Recommendations' being set and even in some cases with settings receiving an 'Inadequate' inspection judgement. To help you, we have collated a list of the most common from inspections across the county and don't forget for further support with any of the following, please contact your local Early Years Foundation Stage Adviser (EYFSA) or Development Officer.

### Welfare Requirements

- Ensure welfare requirements are known and met by all managers and the staff team.
- Ensure that Ofsted are notified of any changes.
- Ensure that your Safeguarding Children Policy includes the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff and ensure that all staff understand the policy.
- Ensure that staff have attended Safeguarding training and have a secure knowledge and understanding of current safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Ensure all staff have an up-to-date knowledge and understanding of safeguarding children issues and that the safeguarding policy is in line with Local Safeguarding Children Board guidance and procedures.
- Ensure that the information used to assess suitability includes both the record of staff names, unique reference numbers of Criminal Records Bureau disclosures and the date on which they were obtained are kept on the premises.
- Ensure risk assessments include all aspects of the environment that need to be checked on a regular basis and keep a record of these checks and when and by whom they are made.

- Carry out a full risk assessment of all outings and trips to be undertaken with the children.
- Ensure that information about evacuation drills is recorded in a fire procedure log book, with details of any problems encountered and how they were resolved.
- Ensure registration forms include who has parental responsibility and include written parental permission to seek emergency medical treatment or advice for all children.
- Review and maintain records, policies and procedures required for the safe and efficient management of the setting and ensure that they meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and reflect current practice.
- Ensure the complaints procedure includes the correct telephone number for Ofsted.
- Ensure committee members are given full information and guidance on their roles and responsibilities, for example, recognise the value of continuous quality improvement, monitoring the evaluation of the setting and how it impacts on children's achievement.

### Partnership

- Extend opportunities for parents and others across different settings to share what they know about the child and become

involved in identifying the next steps in their learning and development.

### Learning and Development

- Provide further opportunities for children to self-select toys and activities that motivate and interest them.
- Develop further the organisation and planning of the outdoor learning environment to provide children with opportunities to initiate their own play and follow their own interests.
- Review the organisation of the session including snack times to ensure every child receives an enjoyable and challenging learning and development experience that is tailored to meet their individual needs.
- Develop the systematic use of observation and assessment to plan the next steps in children's developmental progress and demonstrate how these are incorporated into the activities provided.
- Develop the use of reflective practice to identify the setting's strengths and priorities for improvement that will improve the quality of the provision for all children.

### Data

- Ensure the record of the children's hours of attendance is in place.

# Sandcastles Day Nursery, Hadleigh

## Ofsted inspection: Outstanding

By Jane Schofield, Pre-School Development Officer (South Quadrant)

**Sandcastles Day Nursery were delighted to receive an Outstanding grade following their Ofsted inspection in January. The inspector spent time talking to staff and observing practice in both the day nursery and out of school provision. Manager, Michelle Falshaw talked to us and provided some valuable information about how the inspection took place and shared some useful tips and advice along the way:**

When an inspection takes place, it is always stressed to settings beforehand to ensure that the day carries on as normal. Sandcastles ensured that this was the case, with the babies still going on their visit to the library and another group going off to the swimming pool. The inspector spent a considerable amount of time talking to staff, wanting to explore their roles and knowledge around their work within the nursery. The inspector was, Michelle added, very good at putting her staff at ease.

Michelle discussed that the inspector gave a list of all the items she would like to see and to this, she added a variety of additional supporting information. The inspector was also introduced to all of the staff and to parents, whose views were also gathered.

The inspector commented on the detailed Self Evaluation Form (SEF), declaring that it felt like she really knew what the nursery did before she arrived, and also commented that the manager had been, "... given good advice from outside professionals". Below

are a list of the key points that were raised during Michelle's discussion with the inspector. during their visit:

- **To be continually reflective in practice.**
- **To keep up to date with new legislation.**
- **To support the continuous professional development of the staff.**
- **To acknowledge that it is always a team effort.**

In addition to the key points above, Michelle also gave examples of how, since being in post, she had made changes in the nursery and had introduced new initiatives.

The following extracts of the report outlines the significant points that helped Sandcastles Day Nursery in achieving their successful grade of 'Outstanding'.

***"Exceptional use is made of the outside area to maximise opportunities for children's learning."***

***"Thriving partnerships with parents and other early years professionals ensure***



***that staff have an in-depth understanding of all the children's needs."***

***"Consistent staffing ensures that staff have exceptional knowledge of each individual child's developmental progress. This allows them to plan and deliver activities in tune with each child's needs."***

The setting is very pleased with the findings, but as Michelle stresses, the celebration is over and it is back to work with the focus still set on reflection, evaluation and continual development.

# Are you looking for new work opportunities or career pathways?

Did you know that Essex has its own dedicated website for the county's early years and childcare workforce. On the website you'll find information on:

- Details of early years and childcare jobs available across the county
- Information on training pathways for early years and childcare practitioners
- CPD opportunities for registered childcare providers, crèches and children's centre staff
- Information on the range of careers available within the early years and childcare sector
- Application and interview hints and tips

In addition to looking at career opportunities you can also access the Autumn/Spring 2012 editions of the Early Years and Childcare Training Brochure which gives full details of all the CPD courses currently available.

## Are you a childcare provider with jobs to advertise?

The Careers team is also responsible for managing the job vacancies and applications that come in via the website.

A large number of early years and childcare settings in Essex use the Careers service to advertise their vacancies. Last month, we advertised 48 new positions, attracted 735 applicants and saw the appointment of just under thirty practitioners.

Settings advertise a range of positions such as Nursery Practitioner, Cook/Cleaner, Children's Centre Support Worker, Crèche Supervisor, Gardener and many more.

The Careers team can offer tailored advice on all aspects of the recruitment process such as, undertaking a job analysis, writing job descriptions and devising interview questions.

**Find out more information or look at the exciting opportunities on offer today!**

**Visit: [www.essex-eyjobs.co.uk](http://www.essex-eyjobs.co.uk)**

**Contact the Early Years and Childcare Team Careers team:**

**Tel: 01245 438550**

**Email: [workingwithchildren@essex.gov.uk](mailto:workingwithchildren@essex.gov.uk)**

## Men in childcare? What's your opinion?

The Early Years and Childcare Careers team have been liaising with other local authorities who have taken the lead on male recruitment campaigns to encourage more men into the early years and childcare sector. Statistics show that only 2% of the early years and childcare workforce in Essex are male, which is extremely low in comparison to other local authorities such as Surrey where 5% are male.

There have been many publications and debates about men working in early years highlighting the positive effects that male staff can contribute to a setting. However, there are also those with negative views both within the general public

and media which may be a contributing factor in more men not working within the early years sector.

The Careers team are planning to work towards challenging these opinions and views to open up opportunities for men who may consider working with children:

'We plan to run tailor-made information sessions such as recruitment roadshows as a way of getting the word out that working in early years is not just for women! There is a range of roles that might attract men into the sector including play work, support worker/outreach roles, managerial positions as well as working in daycare and pre-school

settings. We also hope to run information sessions for settings and/or parents who want to know more about the recruitment and employment of male staff. However, first we want to find out settings' opinions on men working in the early years and childcare sector. This will then inform our recruitment campaign.

Whatever your opinion, please help us by taking a few minutes to complete our online questionnaire at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/malerecruitment1>

Thank you for your help and we will keep you updated on how our male recruitment drive is progressing!

# Early Years and Childcare Careers – We listened!

**During 2010/2011 many settings and applicants gave feedback about their experiences of using the Early Years and Childcare Careers service and several changes have been implemented to ensure our service users' recruitment and careers needs are met effectively.**

## **You said...**

Applicants sometimes fail to turn up to interviews without notifying the employer beforehand.

## **We did...**

The Early Years and Childcare Careers team now actively monitor applicants who do not turn up to interview. Each applicant is made aware of the implications of failing to contact the employer and is invited to give reasons for their non-attendance. It is important that settings let us know if any applicants do not turn up to interview so occurrences can be kept to a minimum.

## **You said...**

Some of the applicants lived too far away from the setting and when invited to interview they were often not prepared to travel the distance.

## **We did...**

The vetting process now involves checking how feasible the distance is for the applicant to travel to the setting before an application is submitted to the employer.

## **You said...**

Some applicants do not have the correct knowledge, skills and abilities required for the job.

## **We did...**

The Early Years and Childcare Careers team provide an advisory service whereby the Recruitment Advisers can provide assistance in developing job descriptions and person specifications so applicants are aware of the

knowledge, skills and abilities required for the role. The job description and person specification can be attached to the online advert, which will assist the Recruitment Adviser in effectively vetting the application forms.

## **You said...**

The application form does not fully meet settings' requirements as employment history dates and questions around number of days a candidate has had off sick are not included.

## **We did...**

Employment history dates and details about number of days' sickness are not included on the application form as this would contravene the Equality Act 2010. A Recruitment Best Practice training course has been introduced to increase practitioners' knowledge around employment law. Gaps in employment can be discovered either by asking overtly at interview stage or by including a closed question on the application form, such as, "Have you had any gaps in employment?" which can be explored in greater detail at interview stage, if the candidate meets the selection criteria. This ensures that settings are safeguarding children whilst remaining legally compliant.

## **You said...**

Applicants suggested that they would find it useful to have face-to-face advice on careers in early years and application or interview tips.

## **We did...**

The Early Years and Childcare Careers team offer free face-to-face appointments with a Recruitment Adviser to discuss early years careers, filling out application forms and how to perform well in interviews. To book an appointment with a Recruitment Adviser please call 01245 438550 or email [workingwithchildren@essex.gov.uk](mailto:workingwithchildren@essex.gov.uk).

## **You said...**

Applicants have commented that settings often do not notify them that their application has not been successful.

## **We did...**

The Early Years and Childcare Careers team advises all settings to notify any candidates who have not been shortlisted for interview that their application has been unsuccessful.

A lot of settings gave positive feedback about the efficiency and effectiveness of the Careers Service:

*"An invaluable service for early years settings to recruit successfully and widely used by early years professionals in Essex looking for work."*

**Caroline Clark,  
Seymour House Day Nursery**

*"This is a valuable service, which is easy to use. It is a great service particularly for charitable pre-schools who couldn't afford the ridiculously high costs of recruitment advertising or agencies. Well done!"*

**Jenny Scofield,  
Ardleigh Pre-school**

# New Recruitment Best Practice Training for 2011/2012!

This new course gives up to date information on best practice in recruitment, enabling delegates to confidently run a successful recruitment campaign. It is primarily aimed at managers, committee members and anyone employed within a setting who is directly involved in the recruitment and selection process. It is also recommended that this training is undertaken in conjunction with the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) Safer Recruitment training to ensure a holistic understanding of the recruitment process in terms of best practice, employment law and safeguarding.

## Course Content

- Basic introduction to employment law
- Conducting a job analysis and writing job descriptions, person specifications and adverts
- Advice on shortlisting, interviewing and assessing candidates
- How to effectively undertake pre-employment checks
- Welcoming a successful candidate into your setting

## Course Dates - all courses are 9.30am - 4.30pm

Date	Venue
Saturday 26 November 2011	Braintree
Tuesday 31 January 2012	Colchester
Saturday 4 February 2012	Colchester
Wednesday 22 February 2012	Great Baddow
Thursday 1 March 2012	Wickford
Saturday 10 March 2012	Wickford
Monday 26 March 2012	Harlow

## How to book

To book onto this course please go to [www.essex-eyjobs.co.uk/training](http://www.essex-eyjobs.co.uk/training), click on Training Brochure - Autumn 2011 / Spring 2012 and fill out the booking form. If you have any further enquiries, please call the Early Years Training Team on **01245 438555** or email: [earlyyears.training@essex.gov.uk](mailto:earlyyears.training@essex.gov.uk)

# Free Early E

## Auditing of Free Entitlement claims

We had said that a number of audits would be chosen at random by the Essex County Council Financial Audit team to assess whether the access and delivery of Free Entitlement is compliant and that there are supporting records to validate funding claims.

Of the nineteen providers audited towards the end of the summer term only five were assessed as fully compliant. If the sample is representative of the sector over 630 providers (74%) would be in potential breach of contract.

The following summary represents the main issues identified:

- **Claims were not supported by completed and signed Parent Declaration Forms.**
- **The Parent Declaration Forms did not specify the number of weeks and hours accessed.**
- **Parents had only been given the front copy of the Parents Declaration Form and were unaware of the guidance notes.**
- **Providers had amended the hours after the parent/carer had completed and signed the form.**
- **Providers had not verified the dates of birth of children to ensure that they were eligible.**

# Education Entitlement Funding

- **Claims had been submitted for children who had not attended and these included children who had started at school**
- **Claims exceeded the daily and two day maximum. N.B 15 hours may only be claimed where at least three days' childcare is accessed. Funding will be clawed back where these are in breach of the Essex and National Codes of Practice.**
- **Free Entitlement funding is routinely shown as a 'discount' on the parent invoice. This would give the impression to parents that a top up fee is being levied.**
- **Invoices were unclear as to what hours and services were charged for and did not specify that Free Entitlement funding was offered free at the point of delivery.**

We are continuing to liaise with providers to address these issues but we would hope that this serves as a reminder that Free Entitlement funding is dependant upon having effective administrative and financial processes.

A further series of auditing will take place during the autumn term.

## Autumn term anticipatory and headcount funding

In line with changes to this year's contract settings will have received a 60% anticipatory

payment predicated on summer term headcount submissions and where children would remain eligible by date of birth for the autumn term.

It is broadly acknowledged that the required changes to the Maintained Schools Admissions Policy has meant that a number of children who would qualify for funding may now be attending a reception class. This will undoubtedly mean that for the vast majority of providers the advance payment will have been considerably higher when compared to the actual numbers of children attending at the start of the autumn term. This means that the 'balance' headcount funding payment due for the autumn term will be reduced and this needs to be factored into budgeting and cash flow forecasting.

## Two Year Old Free Entitlement Funding

The deadline has now passed for the acceptance and approval of applications for this financial year, ending 31st March 2012. The challenge has been to ensure that sufficient places

are authorised to fully utilise the budget and that these are for at least two terms. We already have clear evidence that this funding programme has been influential in supporting children's progress and development and we have sanctioned 844 applications in the last five months which will have enormous benefits for these families and children.

We are also pleased to announce that we have a new training course for spring 2012, 'Best Practice for Two Year Olds in your Setting.' This is directly aimed at helping practitioners further develop their knowledge and understanding in providing high quality provision for this age range. Details can be found in the latest Early Years and Childcare training brochure.

To find out more about the government's commitment to the funding programme for two year olds go to:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/earlylearningandchildcare/early/boo77836/introduction>

**If you have any questions or queries concerning any aspect of Free Entitlement funding then please get in touch with us.**

**Contact details:**

**Terry Hollingsworth, Free Entitlement Funding Manager**

**Email [terry.hollingsworth@essex.gov.uk](mailto:terry.hollingsworth@essex.gov.uk)**

**Tel: 01245 438553**

**Helen Lomax, Free Entitlement Funding Officer**

**Email [helen.lomax@essex.gov.uk](mailto:helen.lomax@essex.gov.uk)**

**Tel: 01245 438515**

# Take Time to Think About Training

Research suggests that good quality childcare provision and a highly skilled workforce improves outcomes for children. As a practitioner you can ensure your skills are maintained and your practice is up to date by attending regular training. This should include core training and continuous professional development (CPD). Ofsted has an expectation that staff should access training to keep up to date, reflect upon the effectiveness of their practice and strive to improve.

According to the Early Years Quality Improvement Support Programme (p20, 2008) attendance at training should be on average more than one session in three months and have a sustained and continuous impact. However, Essex Early Years and Childcare Service recommend attending a minimum of three sessions of training each year as an achievable good practice guideline. This training should include core training as well as continuous professional development courses. Settings applying for funding through Essex County Council will have their training/CPD record reviewed to ensure sufficient training has been attended. Settings with insufficient CPD may be required to access training before funding is released or as a clause of contract.

Core training and continuous professional development should be embraced by all practitioners, regardless of their level of qualification or years of experience. Subjects should also be revisited from time to time to ensure knowledge is kept up to date.

## Core Training

Core training includes training that will support a practitioner to have the basic 'skills and experience suitable for the work' in order to ensure they meet the welfare requirements. This should include the following training as a minimum for all staff:

- Paediatric First Aid
- Safeguarding Training
- Health and Safety training
- Equality & Diversity / Inclusion training

Please ensure that you check the date that your certificates run out, don't leave it until the last minute to update your training. We have had to disappoint some people whose certificate has expired and for example they cannot get onto an Early Years and Childcare First Aid Course.

Core training also includes training which contributes to developing a practitioner's common core of skills and knowledge such as:

- Effective communication and engagement with children, young people and families

- Child (and young person) development
- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child or young person
- Supporting transitions
- Multi-agency and integrated working
- Information sharing

Some of these areas may be covered through face-to-face courses or online training and some whilst undertaking a qualification at Level 2 or 3.

It is considered good practice that all staff members undertake all core training and refresh their knowledge by attending training every three years. Where this level of 'refresher' training is not possible, a setting should ensure as a minimum that all staff members undertake safeguarding training every three years and as many staff as possible attend first aid and health and safety training. The document 'Working together to Safeguard Children – A Guide to Inter-Agency Working to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children (Department for Education 2010) clearly states

your responsibilities that as part of the early years workforce you should refresh your safeguarding knowledge every three years, this is now also highlighted on your Essex Safeguarding Children's Board Certificate.

There are also core training courses for those who have a specific aspect to their role as detailed below:

- **Designated Safeguarding Person – ESCB Designated Person's Training** (available from the Essex Safeguarding Children's Board: [www.escb.co.uk](http://www.escb.co.uk))
- **SEN Co-ordinator (SENCo) – SEN Code of Practice** available from Area Senco Team
- **Equality Named Co-ordinator (ENCO) – Role of the ENCO**
- **Health & Safety Officer – Health & Safety: CIEH Level 3**

## Continuous Professional Development

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) includes all training and development which goes beyond the basic core training and should be considered essential in all settings. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) includes any training which improves the quality of your setting and its staff. Having trained practitioners in your setting will help to develop and maintain high standards of care and education for the benefit of the children and families whilst also creating a positive culture of continuous improvement.

There is a wide variety of CPD training available through Essex Early Years and Childcare including courses covering:

- **Child development**
- **Business success for childcare**
- **Getting to know the Early Years Foundation Stage**
- **Early communication**
- **Food hygiene**
- **Inclusive practice**

We have tried to meet the needs of all practitioners, offering courses across the county, including some on Saturdays and in evenings. However, if you feel that you would like a particular course on a Saturday please let us know. We will do what we can to meet your requirements.

We are also keen to gather your feedback about other subjects and topics you would like Early Years and Childcare to offer. Please send any suggestions for future CPD sessions to: [earlyyears.training@essex.gov.uk](mailto:earlyyears.training@essex.gov.uk)

We are introducing some exciting new topics in January including: Child and Mental Health Awareness [CAMHS], United Nations Rights of the Child [UNRC], Early Communication, a ten session accredited course. Please see the Early Years and Childcare Training Brochure for dates and to book.

Before booking any course take time to read the content and its aims and objectives. This will give you an idea if this is the right course for you. You should also consider how it will help you in your work and providing the best outcomes for children and families.

## Accessing training online

There are a number of good quality free training courses available online. These can be used to complement any face-to-face training you decide to attend. Level 1 Safeguarding training is available from: <http://ecclms.co.uk/goecclms.asp> this is also the link to the online Integrated Working Training modules.

If you have responsibility for employing staff, the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) offers a Safer Recruitment course which can be accessed at [www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/safeguarding/safer-recruitment/resources](http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/safeguarding/safer-recruitment/resources).

## Safeguarding

Following on from our very successful article on Safeguarding Children training mentioned in the last issue we have trained 346 practitioners on our revised Level 2 training programme with a further 36 courses planned for the following two terms with September – December courses already full. If you haven't booked on a course yet please see the Early Years and Childcare training brochure for the new dates available.

# Nutritional Guidance for Childcare Providers for Under 5's

Over the past three years Essex Trading Standards have undertaken sampling and analysis of nursery meals; sampling over 95 daily menus from nineteen daycare providers across the county and in doing so has gathered a wealth of information about the meals that are on offer. The intention of this guidance is to share the findings of the projects with you and provide practical advice so that you can take steps to ensure the meals provided to young children in your care are nutritionally balanced.

The project focussed on the two to four age range where eating habits, both good and bad, are formed and consistently found:

- excess sodium (salt)
- slightly elevated levels of fat
- in more than 50% of nurseries the meals provided inadequate energy for a child
- failure to provide meat or a meat alternative at lunch and dinner
- nurseries were sometimes unsure whether the 'tea' they offered was intended to be the child's evening meal or a snack. It is suggested that 'tea' should be capable of being the child's evening meal. Where nurseries do not provide 'tea' as the evening meal they should indicate

this to parents in order that parents are able to make a suitable dinner provision.

Practical suggestions to reduce salt and fat, together with ideas to improve the interest, nutrition and value of meals were offered to participating nurseries and summarised below:

## Carbohydrate

- Where breakfast cereals are offered try to avoid high sugar/salt varieties, opting instead for porridge, wheat biscuits, or flaked wheat.
- Starchy foods should comprise approximately a third of the food served and include bread (e.g. wraps, pitta, soda), potatoes, yam, sweet potato, pasta, noodles, couscous and rice. Where possible opt for wholemeal varieties. Look for lower salt breads and avoid processed foods eg. potato faces, canned spaghetti in sauce and flavoured rice) which are all high in salt.



## Fruit and Vegetables

- Fruit and vegetables should be offered at each meal and snack. Where possible increase variety to maintain interest. Avoid canned vegetables with added salt and sugar. Do not overcook fresh vegetables, cut them up a long time in advance of cooking/eating or cook and reheat as these practices all reduce vitamin content
- Avoid offering dried fruit as a snack as this is high in sugar and can damage teeth,





instead offer with meals/ deserts e.g. rice pudding and apricots, bran flakes with sultanas or prunes.

- Include fruit, raw vegetables and starchy foods at snack times and ensure snacks are varied to maintain interest and nutritional variety. Try a range of fresh fruit and vegetables with dips such as natural yoghurt, humus, fromage frais or homemade guacamole. Try cheese cubes or cottage cheese with vegetables or breadsticks, crackers or pittas. Offer a selection of sandwiches or pitta pockets.

### Protein

- Ensure meat/meat alternatives: fish, eggs or pulses (such as beans, chick peas or lentils) are offered at each meal. Try a mild chick pea and lentil curry or add lentils to a mince-based bolognese, this increases the value of the meal while not compromising nutrition.

- Opt for full fat yoghurts not fat free versions (often high in sugar). Avoid unpasteurised and mould-ripened cheese.

### Salt and Sugar

- The most likely foods contributing to high salt include cheese, biscuits, tinned spaghetti, baked beans, soup and bread. These should not be omitted from menus as they provide other essential nutrients but where possible a reduced salt option should be chosen. For example, swap tuna in brine for tuna in oil or spring water. Avoid or limit (to once a week) processed foods such as ready made pizza, burgers and coated chicken products – Try making homemade pizzas with the children – adding

vegetables (tomatoes, peppers) to increase interest and variation. Never add salt in cooking or at the table.

- Eat sugary foods such as cakes, biscuits, sweets, chocolate, crisps and other savoury snack foods, soft drinks, ice cream and lollies and foods with a high proportion of fat and/or sugar such as pies, pastries and puddings occasionally.

### Drinks

- Milk – children under 2 years should be given whole milk and after the age of 2, if they are eating well, semi-skimmed milk can be offered. Skimmed milk is not suitable. Soft drinks containing sweeteners are not recommended. Cool tap water should be the drink of choice.

**Reference was made to the Caroline Walker Trust Guidance, further details of which can be obtained at <http://www.cwt.org.uk/publications.html> (Eating well for under 5's in childcare).**

# Musical Minds - the year in Harlow continues!

Barbara Greenley, Childcare Quality Adviser reports on this special project:

**The six summer settings have completed their ten sessions with musical leader, Adam Amor. Starting this term, six more Harlow childcare settings will benefit from the musical input provided by the grant from the Youth Music organisation and support from Essex Early Years and Childcare service and the Arts Development team. So far, the sessions have enabled over 1,000 places for children to sing, dance and use their imaginations during the time Adam spends at their settings.**



The work did not come to a stop during the summer. The Arts Development team further developed the relationship between City of London Sinfonia and Harlow to promote two Lullaby Concerts for family audiences to engage with orchestral performance. The Lullaby Concerts followed the existing format established by Suffolk partners in October 2010, taking the theme of animals and using music specially arranged for under 5's. In the run up to the concerts on the 26th July at the Meadows Children's Centre, three settings were engaged in three weekly music sessions with Claire Bloor. These ran on consecutive Mondays, with a regular group of children and their carers, attending.

Over the two concerts 137 children and 72 parents/carers participated. There were also at least 73 children and 53

parents/carers who joined the workshops that preceded the concert. In all, fifteen Children's Centre staff members were also involved in supporting the project as well as local authority and City of London Sinfonia staff. The project was realised with support from Essex County Council, Orchestras Live, Harlow Council and Youth Music.

The overwhelming feedback from parents, children and staff was that the event was a success. Many parents stated that it was the first time they had experienced a live orchestra and for many children the reaction to the sounds produced by the instruments was that of wonder and excitement.

Who knows, in the years ahead we may have inspired some of the children to learn how to play an instrument, compose, sing or just enjoy music in all its forms!

# Shared information meetings

By Sarah Simmons, Supervisor at The Friary Playcentre, Maldon

**The Friary Playcentre is a pre-school situated within the Adult Community Learning Centre in Maldon, Essex. We have a number of children registered who also attend other local settings. As you will be aware, Ofsted are keen to see evidence of information sharing between groups, and this is also covered in Standard 32 of The Early Years Foundation Stage. In the past we have regularly attended cluster group meetings, which provided training and resource sharing. We found though, that opportunities to discuss issues arising from shared care were not able to be addressed in this way.**

Having recently started my Early Years Professional (EYP) training at Anglia Ruskin University in Chelmsford, one of my course requirements is to chair a meeting with a group of settings. I decided to approach my manager with the idea of setting up an information sharing meeting. We discussed the needs we had in relation to shared care between local groups and I decided upon a plan of action.

I contacted local groups and the Children's Centre in Maldon, and we agreed to hold the information sharing meeting at The Friary, asking for suggestions and ideas to be brought along. The meeting was very well attended, and we agreed on a trial format for an information sharing document. Everyone seemed very positive about the idea, and it was suggested that we produce the prototype and send it out for perusal. We agreed to meet the following month to discuss our opinions on the format and I also offered to produce a contact sheet with all the settings' details for ease of communication.

The second meeting was again, well attended and the feedback received from the Information Sharing Form we distributed was

very positive. Topics that were discussed covered how we would put everything into practice, and deciding on Primary and Secondary settings, dependant on the number of hours a child with shared care attends each setting. A decision was made for the Primary setting to then take the lead in directing next steps, and then contacting the Secondary setting for evaluation and discussion of any major issues. As we must always be aware of confidentiality issues arising from shared care, we then agreed that we would produce a parental permission letter, and an introductory letter for other settings who may wish to join our scheme. We then emailed these out to everyone, along with the contact sheet.

It was decided that we would like to have a meeting once every term, as this will benefit all the groups, and also childminders, who can sometimes feel isolated. These will be held at The Friary as it is a central location, and has more practical accommodation for this purpose.

After the success of the information sharing meetings, I would encourage all areas to consider getting local settings



to meet up in this way. The meetings are quite simple to set up and as they are so informal, it is easier to discuss issues together and to just have a chat and get to know each other. Communication between settings can only benefit the children, as information sharing can help best plan their next steps in their learning and development and all in a considered and consistent manner.

# Are you up-to-date and online?

As you are aware, we are becoming an 'electronic world'. More and more people and organisations are relying on computers for communication, support with compiling and sending documents and as a tool to promote their service. Parents increasingly want information online and after hours, so why not consider how you can make this information available electronically and help improve your childcare business?

## Getting your information out to parents and carers!

Essex County Council provides a free Family Information Service which is a service for parents and carers looking for childcare. It is currently an email and telephone enquiry service but we are also working towards having an online childcare search facility. It is vital

that we have your accurate and up to date contact details so that we can signpost parents to your setting.

Make sure that you let us know if any of your details have changed by contacting the Early Years and Childcare Data Quality team via

email at [ey.data@essex.gov.uk](mailto:ey.data@essex.gov.uk). Their priority is to ensure the details for all childcare providers in Essex are accurate and most importantly up to date. You can request to view the current details we hold for you by emailing [fis@essex.gov.uk](mailto:fis@essex.gov.uk)

## Have you got an email address – a business email address?

If you are using a personal or family email address for correspondence for your setting, please think about setting up a business email account. It means you can manage your business communications separately. It lessens the risk of important business emails being deleted and it is easier to share access to the account with other delegated members of staff or committee members.

If you haven't got an email address at all, then you may be missing out, remember that email means:

- potential parents/carers can send email enquiries to you, at a time to suit them, which could lead to more paying customers
- you can put information about your service on relevant

websites and manage enquiries through email

- you are set up as cost efficient and paper free
- you can sign up for beneficial and useful updates through online mailing lists
- important documents can be sent or received quickly and for free - no postage; no delivery times
- you can receive the latest information from Essex Early Years and Childcare on funding, training and the support available to your setting.

### Tips on getting a business email address

- choose an appropriate name for your email address that relates to your business

- sign up for a free online email account. There are lots to choose from.
- inform the Early Years and Childcare Data Quality Team of your new email address by emailing [ey.data@essex.gov.uk](mailto:ey.data@essex.gov.uk)

### We can help:

If you haven't already got access to an IT connection, we may be able to help with an IT grant. This could help you set up and access a secure and free email account, receive and send business communications, keep up to date with latest legislation and childcare requirements, promote your services to reach a wider audience (perhaps even create your own website), manage your finances electronically and send data with assurance and ease.

If you need IT training contact the Early Years and Childcare training team: **01245 438555**.

# Good Practice in Transition

## Hatfield Peverel Nursery

By Pam Seear, Development Officer (Mid Quadrant)

**Following their recent Ofsted inspection Hatfield Peverel Nursery received a special mention on their transition procedures, particularly the good practice of ‘home visits’, which the setting performs before a child starts with them.**

After an initial phone call to register their child, the parent/carer is invited to visit the nursery to talk to practitioners and complete their registration form. They are shown around the nursery and given an induction leaflet which explains daily routines and expectations. The parent/carer then arranges the date that they want their child to start. After which the manager then explains the benefits of the home visit and how she will contact the parent/carer nearer the start date to make further arrangements.

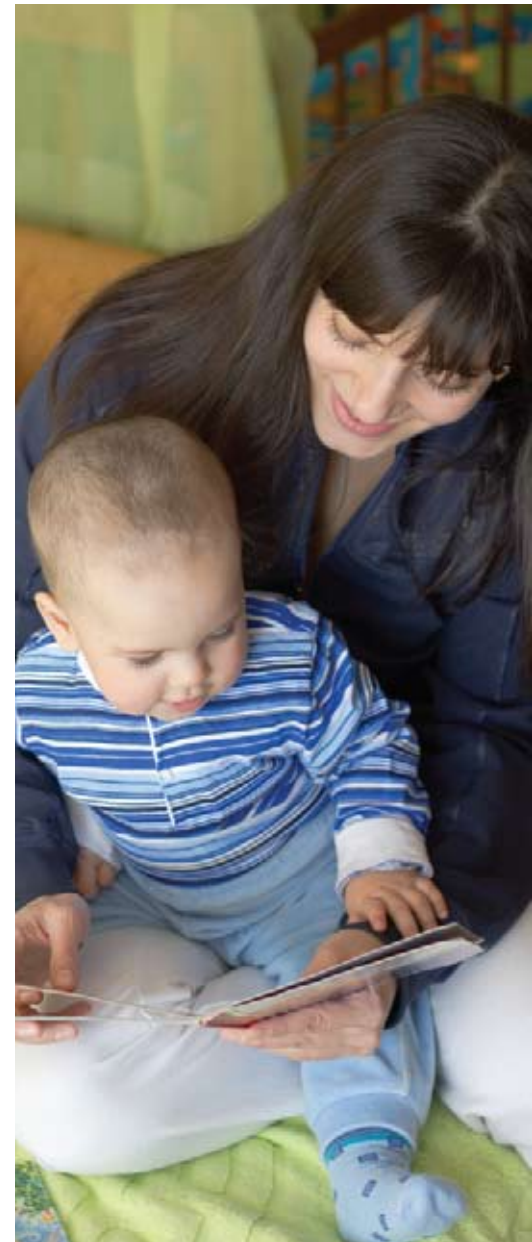
The home visit takes place just before the child is due to start. For instance, a child who is starting in September will be offered a visit sometime in August. The manager and the child’s key person both attend the home visit, which enables the manager to initiate a relationship with the parent/carer. Whilst this relationship is being built the key person plays with the child facilitating the beginning of their relationship.

Practitioners at the Hatfield Peverel Nursery feel home visiting has huge benefits, mainly as they have the opportunity to see the child and the parent in a relaxed

atmosphere, and in their own environment. Practitioners also get an idea of what family life is actually like for the child. The manager particularly feels that as it is relaxed and familiar that the parents are more comfortable in sharing relevant issues. The practitioners also have a chance to discuss routines and this provides an opportunity to share policy and procedures, for example safeguarding with parents/carers.

The home visit provides a more confident beginning to what can sometimes be an overpowering experience for a small person. The manager feels that the benefits outweigh any disadvantages, for example the financial implications. The experience of the home visit makes the transition from home to nursery a more positive experience for all involved.

Hatfield Peverel Nursery’s Ofsted report states, “Parents feel very involved in their children’s learning so that they can support them at home because the nursery has fostered excellent links with them. The nursery staff knows its families very well because the staff make home visits before the children join.”



The nursery received ‘Outstanding’ in several areas including in their partnership with parents with a ‘Good’ judgement overall. Well done Belinda, Hilary and their team an excellent example of good practice that really works.

# Olympic Games 2012 - Celebrating Diversity in the Early Years

The approaching Olympic and Paralympic Games are a good time for settings to introduce learning opportunities that focus on the Olympic and Paralympic values of **Respect, Friendship and Equality**, as well as **Inspiration, Excellence, Courage and Determination**.

Your setting's ENCO may take the lead with this initiative as the suggestions below are ideal activities to help meet the Public Sector duties of the Equality Act 2010 of 'Promoting Equality of Opportunity' and 'Fostering Good Relations'.

- Display a big map and plot friends and family connections across the world. Invite all the children to bring in photos to add to the display and this can be used to inspire discussion about travel. Have the children met these friends or family members? How did they travel? How will all the teams get to the Games? Aeroplane? Boat? Train? Include stories, songs and role play about travel.
- Display pictures of the Olympic and Paralympics Teams. Find out about their sport. Athletes from lots of backgrounds and with different strengths and abilities are all coming together to represent Great Britain. This display will speak for itself!
- The Games are about making friends. Use the opportunity to link up with other local groups. You could invite them to join

you for your own 'Mini-Olympics'. Make friendship bracelets to share with each other – just like the mascots!

- Make flags, try food and sing songs from some of the countries that will be attending the games. A perfect excuse to have a party!
- Learn greetings in different languages; this is a great way to involve families. Did you know that there will be 205 countries represented at the Games? That's a lot of different ways to say 'Hello!'

## **These activities will particularly link to the EYFS in the following areas of learning:**

**Personal, Social and Emotional Development** : Linking with Dispositions and Attitudes; Self Confidence and Self Esteem; Making Relationships; Behaviour and Self Control; Sense of Community.

**Knowledge and Understanding of the World**: Linking with Time, Place and Community.

## **The Games are not only about sport!**

The London 2012 Cultural

Olympiad is the largest cultural celebration in the history of the modern Olympic and Paralympic Movements. Spread over four years, the Cultural Olympiad is designed to give everyone in the UK a chance to be part of London 2012 and inspire creativity across all forms of culture, especially among young people.

In Essex, the highlight of this will be the Torch Relay and the 'Sparks Will Fly Festival', culminating in a finale event at Hylands Park, Chelmsford on 6th July 2012.

For more information, go to:

[www.essexlegacy.org/about/essex-cultural-olympiad/sparks-will-fly](http://www.essexlegacy.org/about/essex-cultural-olympiad/sparks-will-fly)

[www.london2012.com/cultural-olympiad](http://www.london2012.com/cultural-olympiad)

We are looking for eight Early Years 2012 Ambassadors to take the lead on participation and involvement. These could come from a range of early years settings and will be supported to develop and share good practice in their setting and beyond. Please email [emma.booker@essex.gov.uk](mailto:emma.booker@essex.gov.uk) for further information before the 28th November.

Sign up for regular newsletters at: [www.London2012.org](http://www.London2012.org) and [www.essexlegacy.org](http://www.essexlegacy.org)

# Congratulations!

We are pleased to announce that the Outreach team at Thorney Bay Children's Centre in Canvey were the worthy winners of a Highly Commended Award in the Essex County Council, EssexWorks Team of the Year Award.

The Outreach team was nominated for its outstanding work in providing advice, practical support and activities to the many vulnerable families living at the Thorney Bay Caravan Park. With huge amounts of energy, passion and commitment the team has worked incredibly hard to improve the quality of life for families living at the park. A few examples include providing a walking bus to get children to school who might otherwise not attend, sourcing donations of warm clothing, bedding and food in the cold winter months, and providing healthy eating and cookery classes. Through establishing good relationships with the families, they have been able to get them involved in improving things for themselves.

*Well done all!*



## Tell us how you are celebrating the Games?

The London 2012 Games are the sporting event of a lifetime and you have an important part to play in ensuring that it is a memorable occasion for the children in your setting.

We would love to hear about your Olympic preparations and celebrations. We want to collect and share as many examples as we can of how this historic event is marked by the children of Essex.

Please send your ideas or news of special activities to us via email to [eycomms@essex.gov.uk](mailto:eycomms@essex.gov.uk) and we will try and feature them in the 2012 editions of this newsletter.

## A Fond Farewell

**In November, we were sorry to bid farewell to Sue Burt-Price, Early Years Stage Adviser and Team Leader (0-3s). Sue is moving with her family to Adelaide in Australia.**

Those of you working in North Essex will probably know Sue well. She had worked for Essex County Council, across a variety of roles in Early Years and Childcare for more than 32 years. She had already received her Long Service Award, and was honoured with other long service employees at a lunch, hosted by Joanne Killian, Chief Executive, Essex County Council.

Harriet Hill, Head of Early Years and Childcare praised Sue's contribution, "There is no doubt that Sue has influenced both the thinking and good practice within the early years sector in Essex. In her most recent post, she was a champion for the 0-3s and was dedicated to furthering the understanding of the needs of this youngest age group. We will miss her experience and expertise, but we wish her every happiness in her new life."

# Pre-school Learning Alliance Volunteer Awards

**Four outstanding volunteers have been recognised by their peers for their work in day nurseries and pre-schools across England. The Pre-school Learning Alliance Volunteer Awards are an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the vital role that volunteers play in the organisation.**

The awards took place at a sparkling ceremony in London, in June, during the Pre-school Learning Alliance's 50th anniversary conference in Hammersmith. The four winners of the charity's Volunteer Awards were announced by Judith Thompson MBE, former Chair of Trustees, in front of a capacity audience of 700 Alliance members, who had travelled for the occasion from all over England.

Every year more than 40,000 Alliance volunteers give up valuable time and contribute their talents, skills and knowledge to benefit families with very young children and the wider community in a variety of ways, including helping out with fundraising or nursery outings, or becoming a secretary for their children's local pre-school committee. The judges were very impressed by the phenomenal dedication and energy shown by the many volunteers nominated from across England.

The winners in each category were:

■ **Outstanding Pre-school Committee Volunteer:**

Kirsty Curtis, Ashdon Pre-School, Saffron Walden, Essex.

■ **Outstanding Volunteer at a baby and toddler group:**

Joylin Mclean, St. Phillips Baby & Toddler Group, Croydon, Surrey.

■ **Outstanding Volunteer at a pre-school or nursery:**

Jenny Reeves, Dimson Day Nursery, Gunnislake, Cornwall.

■ **Lifetime Achievement Award:**

Frances Rodgers, Lewisham Sub-Committee in south London.

Kirsty Curtis, winner of the Outstanding Pre-school Committee Volunteer Award, has been Chair of Ashdon Pre-school in Saffron Walden, Essex, for more than two years. She promotes the pre-school tirelessly to attract more interest from families and as a result, has increased registrations. She led a successful grant application for a Forest School which has enhanced the lovely outdoor space, enabling the children to benefit even more from their rural environment. Kirsty's strong interest in training has improved the skills and motivation of the team and, through her role as Chair; she has directly contributed to an improved rating from Ofsted this year. Her ability to involve everyone from the staff, parents and funders to the local community, has placed Ashdon Pre-school at the heart of the community.

In the words of her nominator, Denise Brooks, "Kirsty has ensured partnerships with parents are fostered and encouraged while her willingness to engage with all early years



staff, readily seeking and accepting advice, has resulted in a huge improvement in the practice at the setting."

Neil Leitch, Chief Executive of the Pre-school Learning Alliance, said, "The commitment these volunteers have shown is really humbling. We as judges have all been overwhelmed by their moving stories. If Prime Minister David Cameron wants to see Big Society in action, all he has to do is visit one of our pre-schools or day nurseries. Volunteering in a pre-school and involving parents and grandparents in their child's early education has been a founding principle of the Alliance since it was founded in 1961. Quite frankly, without the dedication of our volunteers, the Alliance would simply not exist."

## Contacts for Early Years and Childcare in Essex

### Contact Address

#### Early Years and Childcare

PO Box 47, Chelmsford CM2 6WN

#### General Enquiries

Tel: 01245 438500

#### Business Support and Funding Information for Registered Childcare Providers

##### Business Support Helpdesk

Tel: 01245 438554

Email: [business.support@essex.gov.uk](mailto:business.support@essex.gov.uk)

#### Children's Centres and Childcare Capacity

Please telephone the Early Years and Childcare main number: 01245 438500.

#### Early Years and Childcare Recruitment Team

Tel: 01245 438550

E-mail: [workingwithchildren@essex.gov.uk](mailto:workingwithchildren@essex.gov.uk)

Website: [www.essex-eyjobs.co.uk](http://www.essex-eyjobs.co.uk)

#### Early Years and Childcare News

Charlotte Lodge, Communications Officer

Tel: 01245 438543

Email: [eycomms@essex.gov.uk](mailto:eycomms@essex.gov.uk)

#### Family Information Service

Tel: 0800 055 6874

Email: [fis@essex.gov.uk](mailto:fis@essex.gov.uk)

#### Free Early Years Education Entitlement

Terry Hollingsworth, Free Entitlement Funding Manager

Tel: 01245 438553

Email:

[free.entitlementfundingqueries@essex.gov.uk](mailto:free.entitlementfundingqueries@essex.gov.uk)

#### Training and Qualifications Guidance

Please telephone the Early Years and Childcare main number: 01245 438500

### Partner Contact Details

#### Pre-School Learning Alliance

For information and support on pre-school (including baby and toddler groups), full daycare, out of school, crèche and childminder provision:

Tel: 01245 438563

Email: [est@pre-school.org.uk](mailto:est@pre-school.org.uk)

#### SENCAN

Special Educational Needs and Children with Additional Needs

#### Mid Area Team

(Chelmsford, Braintree & Maldon)

Crossman House

Station Approach

Braintree

CM7 3QA

Telephone: 01376 550349

#### North East Area Team

(Colchester & Tendring)

Park Road

Colchester

CO3 3UP

Telephone: 01206 711112

#### South Area Team

(Brentwood, Castlepoint, Rochford & Basildon)

The Knares

Basildon

SS16 5RX

Telephone: 01268 632360

#### West Area Team

(Epping, Harlow & Uttlesford)

Latton Green Resource Centre

Riddings Lane

Harlow

CM18 7HT

Telephone: 01279 453507

This information is issued by

**Essex County Council, Schools, Children and Families Directorate  
Early Years and Childcare**

You can contact us in the following ways:

By email:

**earlyyears@essex.gov.uk**

Visit our website:

**essex.gov.uk/earlyyears**

By telephone:

**01245 438500**

By post:

**Essex County Council, Early Years and Childcare  
PO Box 47, Chelmsford CM2 6WN**

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