

Partnership Plus

Summer 2010

Transition Case Study

**Celebrating Cultural
and Linguistic
Diversity Toolkit**

**Personalisation
Conference**

**Local Authority
Update**

Your News

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of Practice**





Partnership Plus



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Hello...

Welcome to the summer 2010 edition of Partnership Plus. I hope you have had a successful year so far as we move towards a busy summer for Leicestershire's childcare providers.

In this issue we are looking at transition which is a key subject as the new school year will soon be upon us, and children will be making their next steps in education which can sometimes be daunting. We talked to Andrea Lane from Warren Hills who explains their approach to transition.

We report from the recent Early Learning and Childcare Service Conference and speak to Improvement Advisor, Liz Smith, about a new toolkit which celebrates cultural and linguistic diversity.

We also take a look at the latest national childcare news, report on what Leicestershire's providers have been up to since the start of the year, and talk you through the current restructure of the Early Learning and Childcare Service.

As always we are keen to hear from you about ideas for future stories - all of our contact details can be found on the back cover.

Best wishes

Michelle Nicholls
Service Manager
Early Learning and Childcare

All content correct at time of publishing.

The views expressed within this publication are not necessarily those of Leicestershire County Council.

Transition at Warren Hills

The transition between school years has always be an anxious time for children - none more so than when moving from Reception to Year 1. However there are ways of helping the children to make a smooth and happy change between classes. Andrea Lane from Warren Hills Primary School has been doing just that and she explains how;

“We don’t just deal with transition at the end of each school year, we see it as a continual process. We do a lot of joint work with our Reception and Year 1 classes which allows the children to get familiar with the surroundings of the Year 1 area so it’s not a shock to their system when they do move.

Through our creative curriculum we organise joint activities between the two age groups and always include the children when deciding on a theme for the next project. From past experience we knew that they were all interested in food and cooking, but very few of them knew where their food came from - so we arranged a trip to the Botanic



The children from Warren Hills enjoying the sunshine at the Botanic Gardens

Gardens to look at all the different plants and see which we eat.

The children loved the Botanic Gardens! When we arrived we split the children into groups and made sure there was a mix of Year 1 and Reception children in each. This gives the Reception children a chance to interact with the older ones.

We spent the day discovering new ingredients from around the world and learnt about Fair Trade products. After collecting all the ingredients we took them back to the school room and baked a whole world cake which tasted really great. At lunch we had a picnic on the lawn which was a first for some children and talked about the different plants and trees we had seen. Seeing how food can grow on plants really captured their imagination and they were all keen to start growing their own food back at school. Some of the children even suggested growing a sausage tree!

The very next day we started to develop our garden area. The caretaker helped us find some space around the school which we could transform; all of the children got really involved and knew exactly what they wanted to grow after their visit. So it was out with the spades and seeds and we got our knees muddy planting and watering. Each plant was labelled with a lollipop stick so we knew what each one was. During the planting we kept the children in the same mixed year groups and the Reception class children spent time in the Year 1 classroom so they got used to the new environment.

As a treat for the children after all their hard work, we arranged a surprise banquet of exotic fruits for them to try - the children really enjoyed trying all the weird and wonderful types of fruits.

We encouraged the children to fill out an evaluation card with smiley and sad faces on for each fruit, they simply had to tick the smiley face if they liked it, or the sad face if they didn't - we put the results in the children's Learning Journey.

Now all the planting was done we moved on to another topic the children learnt about at the Botanic Gardens - Fair Trade food. We looked at where our food came from, who grew it and how much we paid for it - we arranged for an African drummer to come in and play for the children and we couldn't stop them dancing!

To celebrate all the work the children had done we arranged an assembly and invited the children's parents and a local playgroup. Both Reception and Year 1 children took part and wowed the audience by performing the songs they had learnt accompanied by African drums.

Both the parents and playgroups commented that it was clear the children were really enthusiastic about what they had learnt from the amount of effort they put in to the assembly.

Once some of the seeds had sprouted we officially opened the garden by inviting all the children's parents for an afternoon. The children provided refreshments by making cakes from unusual ingredients like chocolate and beetroot cake and muffins and smoothies from their favourite fruits from the exotic fruit banquet. The garden is a great success and the children are already planning what they can grow next!

During all the activities the children have done we have been taking photos, both to put in their Learning Journeys and to make a book which we can show to parents.

The overall aim of the joined up working between the two year groups was to make it easier for children to move up from Reception to Year 1. The Reception children now feel at home in the Year 1 area, they know lots of the children and are familiar with the teachers. Although we won't know for certain until the children make the move permanently we are sure that the experiences they have gained will make a difficult transition much more manageable."

If you would like more information about improving transition in your setting contact your Improvement Advisor - all the contact details are on the back cover.



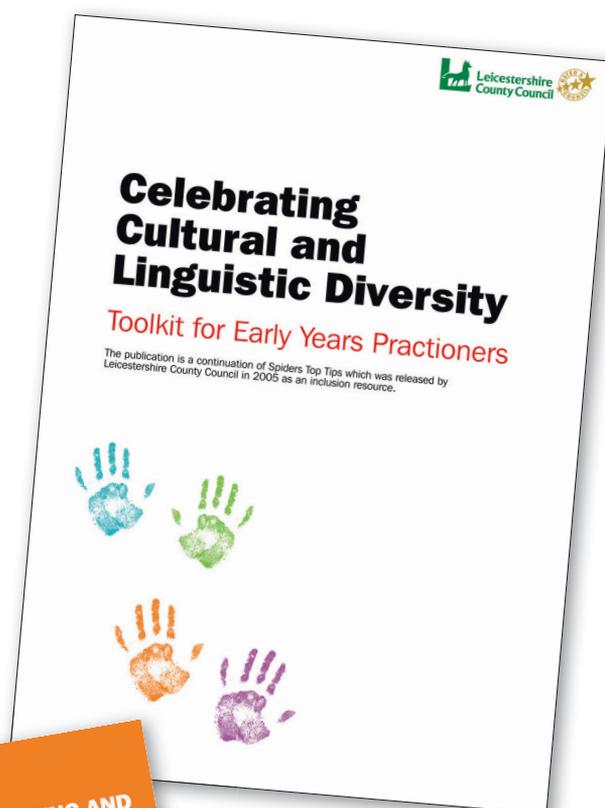
Celebrating Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Toolkit for early years practitioners

Meeting the individual needs of children lies at the heart of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and all early years practitioners have a responsibility to promote the development of children within their setting.

Recognising and valuing the different cultures and languages of all children is vital for their successful learning and achievement. All children need to actively understand their world through their own language and culture - children are linguistically and also culturally connected to the language and culture of their home.

Establishing an ethos whereby all children and families using an early years setting are valued and welcomed is key to effective inclusive practice.

The Celebrating Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CCLD) Toolkit has been developed by the Early Learning and Childcare Service to provide advice and guidance to support early years practitioners in meeting the needs of all children and families, but in particular children and families who have a language and/or culture other than English. It follows on from Spiders Top Tips which also focused on inclusion.



The new Celebrating Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Toolkit

The toolkit was designed to fit into the good work already going on in Leicestershire's provisions and is set out to follow the four principles of the EYFS.

There is a section for each principle which includes top tips, key points and is brought to life by a case study which shares good practice from one of Leicestershire's early years provisions, this shows how the information can be used in a real situation. To help you put the lessons in the toolkit to practice each section contains an audit so you can tick off the points as you implement them in to your setting, this also gives you a starting point for planning and developing your practice.

The new publication is easy to use and is a useful tool for all providers, however to make sure you get the most out of it we are running a series of training sessions through out the 2010 summer term. Each session is run by Liz Smith (Improvement Advisor) who led on the creation of this fantastic new resource and each session includes practical activities, opportunities for reflection and for developing and sharing good practice.

Some of the aspects that will be covered are;

- how to promote a culture of equality, opportunity and high achievement for all children
- encouraging the development of positive attitudes, policies and everyday practices that will underpin an inclusive approach and ethos
- creating an environment where diversity is visibly recognised and celebrated

All early years practitioners attending a CCLD training session will receive a copy of the toolkit for their school or setting.

Some training courses ran during the spring 2010 term, here are a few of the comments made by providers who attended:

"I think the toolkit is 'Super dooper' I've read it from back to front"

"Fab"

"A great addition to our resources"

If you would like more information about inclusion or the new toolkit contact your Improvement Advisor, all the details can be found on the back cover. If you are interested in attending the new CCLD training course call our training team on 0116 305 6392 or visit www.leics.gov.uk/trainingopportunities to view the latest dates and venues for all our training courses.



Leicestershire Early Learning and Childcare Service restructure

The Early Learning and Childcare Service has been looking to the future; both to the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and those of National Strategies. We have also looked at the requirements that early years providers have to deliver and how we can best support you - so in consultation with staff, unions and the Childcare Sector Partnership we have restructured and re-aligned roles and responsibilities.

Workforce Development and Improvement

The first thing we reviewed was the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which is a 0-5 framework. However our services were structured around 0-3 and 3-5 support - this led to confusion and sometimes duplication of services. To correct this, the current Improvement and EYFS Development Advisors will join together and be called Improvement Advisors - each will be allocated to children centre areas, moving areas every three years inline with National Strategies good practice.

Their main focus will be both pre and post OfSTED registration support and narrowing the gap between the bottom 20% performing children and the rest, whilst also meeting the expectations of local authorities by National Strategies and the Department for Children School and Families (DCSF) to direct support at those most in need.

To do this we are introducing an 'inverse proportion support' model, which means that inadequate and satisfactory OfSTED graded settings/childminders will work with their Improvement Advisor on an improvement plan. This includes brokered extra support, as required, from a range of other professionals, including, Business Development Advisors, other pre-school leaders etc.

Settings with a good or outstanding OfSTED grading will get light touch support, which includes telephone contact, invitations to network/collaborative meetings and an annual visit from their Improvement Advisor.

Information Management and Development

The current Development Advisors role will become focused on intensive support to new settings to ensure they are high quality, sustainable childcare businesses. They will also be responsible for ensuring that there is sufficient childcare for working parents by brokering additional services from existing childcare providers and liaising with district planners, Parish Councils, parents, Extended Services Coordinators, amongst others, to encourage new provisions to set up in areas where more childcare is needed.

Additionally we are now the county lead for the Play Strategy - with a designated officer liaising with District Council leads to ensure new high quality, adventurous and exciting areas for children and young people to play in.

Central Services Business Support

There is no change in this area, so we will continue to lead on the administration of Nursery Education Funding and the Early Years Census.

If you would like more information about the new service restructure visit www.leics.gov.uk/earlylearning

Out-of-school and playscheme resource page

The Early Learning and Childcare Service is setting up a webpage for playschemes and out-of-school providers dedicated to sharing and showcasing activities and play opportunities - any information about outside agencies that have provided activities is also welcome.

For this resource to be a success we need you to contribute and send your ideas, resources and experience in to us so we can share it on the web. The page will be launched in the autumn 2010 term so please start sending us your ideas.

Simply send us your ideas to childcare@leics.gov.uk or ring us on 0116 305 7373 to find out more.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) eUpdate

A new version of the eProfile programme has been made available; this new version has been prompted by the cancellation of proposed changes due to incompatibility issues between the eProfile and other computer software.

Users can download the new version at www.suffolkcpd.co.uk/fsp - there is no need to transfer data between versions as the new release will simply update the current software.

Disadvantage funding

Disadvantage funding aims to give children from poorer families and those in care the opportunity to take part in extended services activities, which they may not otherwise be able to afford. The aim of the funding is to improve well-being, raise attainment and narrow the attainment gap between these children and the rest.

A pilot scheme has been running since 2008 in local authorities across England to discover the best way to use and administer the funding - from April 2010 monies are available to all schools and school clusters.

Extended Services in Leicestershire are aiming to put together packages of extended activities. For example by working with Leicestershire Arts, a package for young people has been developed to teach stage skills and take part in a play - not only will this give young people a taster of acting it will also help towards improving their confidence and social skills.

Our Extended Services team is currently looking for providers in Leicestershire who would be interested in becoming part of packages set up for the funding. If this sounds like something you would like to be involved in contact David Brown on 0116 305 8386 for more information.

Window blind safety

In a joint campaign with Trading Standards we are reminding parents and childcare providers of the risks to children and babies from window blind cords.

Between 1 and 2 children die in the UK each year by strangulation from window blind cords, tragically there have been 3 reported child deaths this year already.

Children under 4 are at the greatest risk as they like to climb, however in 2007 a 10 year old boy died from a blind cord in his bedroom.

What can parents and carers do?

Consider cutting looped cords where possible - otherwise:

- make sure all looped blind cords and chains are safely out of children's reach
- move your child's cot, bed, highchair or playpen away from a window blind
- if you can, move other furniture away from the window blind as well
- secure a safety device (cleat hook) to secure the safety cord out of harms way

If you are buying new blinds you should look for ones that don't use looped cords at all. Failing this, buy ones with safety features such as chains that break under excessive force.

To find out more information about any aspects of child safety contact the Child Accident Prevention Trust at www.capt.org.uk or on 020 7608 3828. You can also speak to your Improvement or Development Advisor - all the contact details are on the back cover.

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on all local authorities to ensure that there is sufficient childcare within their area to enable parents/carers to work or take up training or education that could lead to work.

Part of this duty is the requirement to complete and publish a full Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) every three years. The next full CSA is due to be finished by April 2011 and Leicestershire County Council is beginning work on this now.

What does this mean for Leicestershire's providers?

Firstly, the major approach for assessing sufficiency will involve a consultation with parents/carers across the county. This will be

achieved by preparing a questionnaire and distributing this across a number of channels to ensure we reach as many parents/carers as possible.

One of these channels will be through childcare providers. This will not involve any effort, other than passing copies of the questionnaire to the parents/carers they have regular contact with.

Secondly, assessing sufficiency of childcare also means ensuring the details we hold about the supply of childcare (e.g. type available, opening hours, costs, etc.) are up-to-date. To achieve this, we will be sending out Provider Update forms to all childcare providers, asking them to check and update the information we hold about them. Please can you take some time to complete these forms and return them to us (pre-paid envelopes will be provided). Any of Leicestershire's providers who fail to return the update forms will be removed from the Direct Gov website until they do and so can't be accessed in this way by parents/carers.

Finally, the intention is to analyse the data from the parent/carer questionnaire alongside the supply data from the Provider Updates to identify potential sufficiency gaps. A draft Childcare Sufficiency Report will be prepared by the end of 2010 and there will then be a short consultation period where all interested parties will be asked to review and comment on the report and our findings. We would be really interested in your views during this period - so look out for further communication during December 2010.

Improving communications

With the introduction of online initiatives such as INFORM for Nursery Education Funding it is becoming increasingly effective for the local authority to communicate with Leicestershire's early years providers by e-mail - communicating through e-mail has many benefits:

- information can be sent instantly
- easier for providers to feedback on information received
- important information isn't lost in the post
- cost effective compared to the cost of traditional post

Our current database has less than 50% of Leicestershire's providers e-mail addresses and we are appealing for you to send us your e-mail address. Electronic communication is becoming wider used as we move towards more documents being available in electronic formats such as our Training Opportunities Booklet and Partnership Plus.

This can be done easily by sending an e-mail with your provision name and address to childcare@leics.gov.uk with 'e-mail address update' in the subject bar. All e-mail addresses are kept on our secure database and aren't shared with any other services within the council or any third parties.



The children at De Verdun children's day nursery with Bramley Bear

Diary of a bear

Encouraging communication between a child's home life and setting is key, but not always straight forward. De Verdun children's day nursery in Newbold Verdun has come up with an effective way of encouraging communication between children's homes and nursery life. Manager Jo Walsh explains:

"Over the years we have looked at many ways of improving communication between home and nursery life - some worked ok, some just fizzled out, and then we discovered Bramley Bear.

Bramley and his diary is the brainchild of the staff, a very simple concept that parents, children and staff have really entered into. Each weekend Bramley and his diary go home with one of the children and at their next session in nursery he returns with his diary filled in.

Bramley's keeper for the weekend has the chance to share the news; the staff read out of the diary and parents also include photographs for us to show to the children. We have had Bramley photographed at parties, at cross-country running races, shopping and even relaxing enjoying a glass of bubbly! The parents have really entered into the fun. Of course Bramley's weekend activities mirror the host families activities and this gives the staff and all the children many topics to discuss and build upon.

Bramley allows us to pull in all the key areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) - positive relationships, language, communication and literacy, even problem solving and reasoning. Then of course there is taking him out and about with the knowledge and understanding of the world and caring for his physical needs.

At our recent Ofsted inspection in January 2010 we received an outstanding rating for our effectiveness in our engagement with parents and carers."

If you would like more information about improving communication between your setting and home contact your Improvement Advisors - their details are on the back cover.



Belton playgroup toast club

Belton playgroup has introduced a toast club for parents/carers and children at the setting to take up the time in the morning between school "drop offs" and playgroup starting.

The setting came up with the idea after feedback from a parent questionnaire. Each parent pays a small charge for the toast, with the money made going towards the printing of the children's Learning Journeys.

Debbie Spicer from the playgroup has been thrilled with the results as the new club allows parents to meet each other, which is especially good for parents who are new to the area.

John, a parent from the toast club said "It's an informal place for parents to be with their child and not have to hang around, it's especially useful for working parents - I was very impressed by the Learning Journeys, a lot of time and effort from staff has gone into them".

For more information about setting up a toast club contact your Development Advisor - contact details are on the back cover.

Learning Together

Sharing Learning Journeys effectively when children access childcare from more than one provision can be a real problem - Julie Botterill from Britannia Field playgroup has worked closely with other local providers to tackle the problem for children at her setting:

Britannia Fields playgroup in South East Leicestershire has been providing their local children with childcare and early years education since 1994. During that time there have been many changes and developments in the early years sector, most recently the Progress from the Start Monitoring System, now statutory in all early years settings.

This, as with all new innovations, brings with it challenges and opportunities. One of these is making Learning Journeys effective when the children enjoy shared care with more than one childcare provider. At Britannia Fields we are experiencing a closer working relationship and friendship with a childminder with whom we share care for three of our children.

Vanessa Dolman (Vanessa's Childminding Services), who has just completed a Diploma in home based childcare, has been bringing children to the playgroup for three years. Having an open-door policy and weekly meetings with Vanessa has enabled the children to benefit from the different carers complimenting each. The exchange of information is of particular importance, as two of the current children have serious allergy problems which need constant updates and monitoring, as well as discussing any well-being and involvement issues that may arise.

Our introduction of Learning Journeys has opened this process up to the parents of these children as they have access to what their children are achieving either at playgroup or at Vanessa's home. Vanessa received permission to access Learning Journeys in the playgroup so when the parent has less opportunity to visit the group, Vanessa can add any points and next steps to their records. They can also reflect how the two providers work together to record progress and next steps in each setting.

This two-way interaction has enabled us to join together in a learning experience using the children's prompt of Jack and the Beanstalk. The children enjoyed making long strides measuring the hall and garden which lead to the story of Jack and the giant. Vanessa was able to access equipment from the local toy library reflecting the Jack story. We used the climbing frame for beanstalk climbing, made footprint paintings and retold the Jack story using masks and drama. Just to make it more interesting, Vanessa's children planted beans at her home and children at the playgroup did too.... so now the competition begins!

If you would like more information about any aspects of Progress from the Start or working closer with local settings contact your Improvement Advisor - all of their contact details can be found on the back cover.



Outstanding childminders recognised by Ofsted

Three childminders from Leicestershire have been honoured by Ofsted in a celebratory event recognising outstanding childcare in England.

Helen Clift from Burbage, Colette Bujdoso from Mountsorrel and Pam Summerfield from Queniborough attended the event at The Cutlers Hall, Sheffield which was hosted by Zenna Atkins, Chairman of the Board for Ofsted.

Zenna Atkins, said: "I wholeheartedly congratulate Helen, Colette and Pam on their success and hard work in delivering such high standards. Excellence does not happen by chance, these providers have a real drive to inspire, challenge, and support children. But there is no reason why everyone can't be outstanding, I hope they will be a source of inspiration to others."

Congratulations to all of Leicestershire's providers who have received an outstanding Ofsted rating.

If you would like to improve your policies and procedures to work towards achieving on outstanding rating at your next Ofsted inspection contact your Development and Improvement Advisors - all the contact information can be found on the back cover.

Playday 2010

Playday is a national celebration of a child's right to play, with thousands of children and young people playing at locally organised events right across the country.

This year's Playday is Wednesday 4th August and will mark the finale of the 'our place' campaign which puts children at the heart of our communities, and asks everyone, young and old, to help create better places for all of us to live and play.

Playday events range from small neighbourhood gatherings to massive public events organised by local authorities - last year there were over 800 events held across the UK.

Anybody can organise an event, so why not arrange one at your setting and get parents and childcare involved to celebrate the day. Your event can be as big or small as you like. If you would like some help visit the playday website - www.playday.org.uk

Remember to take some photos of your event and send them in to us with your name and brief description of your event to be included in a special Playday section in the next Partnership Plus. Send your photos to us either by e-mail to nathaniel.aust@leics.gov.uk or by post to Playday photos, Early Learning and Childcare Service, Room G19, County Hall, Glenfield, LE3 8RA.



National News **in brief**

1 NDNA quality assurance programme receives stamp of approval

The National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) has announced that its e-Quality Counts (eQC) quality assurance programme has been certified by the Intellectual Property Office, meaning nurseries who achieve the standards will be able to display a 'certified mark' to show that they meet the rigorous standards the scheme sets out.

The assurance programme from the NDNA uses online learning and mentoring to support settings undertaking the scheme and be supported to analyse every aspect of their nursery from nutritional requirements to leadership.

For more information contact the NDNA on 01484 40 70 63 or visit www.ndna.org.uk

2 Inspections show improvements

Ofsted's published data on childcare inspection outcomes, for the period from end of September to end of December 2009, show an improvement in results, particularly for childcarers on domestic premises.

Andrew Fletcher, NCMA Joint Chief Executive said:

"It is very encouraging to see that the number of registered childminders achieving and exceeding inspection standards is improving with 97% making the grade. The numbers receiving 'good' and 'outstanding' ratings remains at a high level of 66 per %.

For the full story visit www.ncma.org.uk

3 Child Safety Week 2010 - make time for safety

This years Child Safety Week is running from the 21st - 27th June 2010 and will be focusing on the theme 'make time for safety'. The week long campaign run by the Childrens Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT) aims to increase awareness of childcare practitioners, parents, families, grandparents and carers to make time for safety in order to prevent serious accidents to children.

If you would like to find out more about Child Safety Week, CAPT are offering a free Child Safety Week Toolkit full of quizzes and planning tips for your activities during the week.

To request your toolkit visit www.capt.org.uk/maillinglist

4 Ofsted set to outsource half of early years inspections

Ofsted have appointed two companies to undertake early years inspections. Tribal Group PLC have will cover inspections in the South, with Prospect Services Ltd dealing with the North and Midlands - the contracts will start from 1st September 2010.

An Ofsted spokeswoman said: "We believe that outsourcing some of the day to day inspection and registration visits will enable us to use our resources more effectively and to strengthen our role as regulator of the sector. It will also enable us to deliver our service more efficiently, meeting the needs of parents/carers and their children."

The impact of the Graduate

The Graduate Leader Fund (GLF) was introduced in April 2008, taking over from the transformation fund and supports progression toward creating and sustaining sufficient graduate Early Years Professionals (EYP) in the private, voluntary and independent sectors - working towards all full day care settings having an EYP in place by 2015.

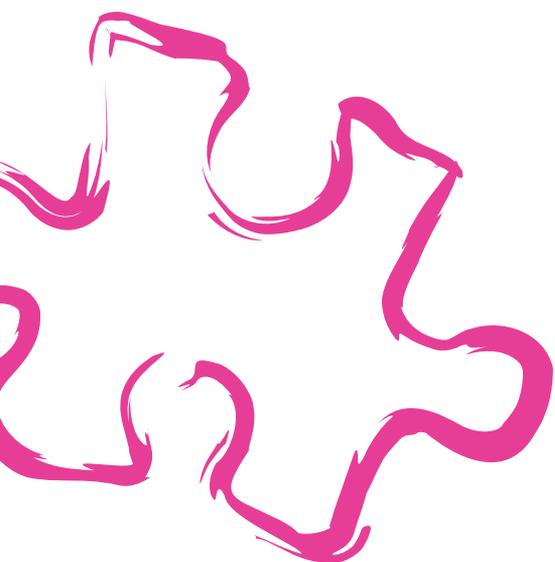
In order for the Early Learning and Childcare Service to measure the effect of the GLF on Leicestershire settings we sent a monitoring form to all 225 candidates who are working towards a Level 5 qualification supported by the GLF. The response was very positive and highlighted the difference the funding is making - here is a round up of the results:

Impact of the GLF on individual workers;

- candidates stated that the course had been of benefit to them as an individual, and had increased their enthusiasm and inspired them to improve their practice
- candidates stated that the course had increased their understanding of how children learn and develop
- candidates stated that the course had improved their paperwork, report writing, presentations and research skills
- candidates stated that as a result of the course they now had a clearer understanding and increased confidence in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), on the 'theories' behind it, how it came about and why
- candidates stated that as a result of the course they had become more 'reflective' and identify areas for development and improvement in their setting
- candidates felt they were now more aware of government legislation and have set up some form of information sharing system to share and cascade new information to staff
- candidates found that their reading range had been expanded and had improved their organisational and time management skills

Impact of the GLF on the setting;

- candidates stated that the Level 5 course had increased their confidence in their own work and the impact it has on everyone else in the setting
- candidates stated that they had improved activities, areas and planning for children's development in accordance with the EYFS
- candidates had identified areas for improvement and carried out these improvements
- candidates had looked at best practice and implemented these into the setting to enhance the children's learning experience and audited the setting and set improvement targets
- candidates had implemented and added information to staff information sharing, sharing legislation changes, current topics of interest and articles
- candidates now have a greater understanding of observations and what these mean in relation to each child's development and plan accordingly
- candidates have improved links and relationships with parents/carers, using letters, parents as partners, learning trees, questionnaires, notice boards and parent days



ate Leader Fund

Monitoring forms were also sent out to settings currently in receipt of the Pre or Post Graduate Premiums to gauge the effect of this additional funding. Settings are reminded that outstanding monitoring forms will result in a delay of the April 2010 payments.

From the forms currently received we can see how positive the effect of the GLF has been on Leicestershire's settings;

- "The Post Graduate Premium has made a huge difference to our setting, without this additional funding, in all honesty, the nursery would have struggled financially. The payments have enabled us to cover support costs incurred in releasing practitioners to attend college."
- "If this funding was not available, I would be unable to attend college during playgroup hours and this would be detrimental to me completing the course. I learn so much at college and I believe that the quality of my provision has improved due to my attendance and the further reading that the course has required."
- "The Post Graduate Premium has made a great impact for our staff, children, parents/carers and the quality of the provision offered. The fund has supported a graduate EYP to work in the setting, guaranteeing retention."
- "This additional funding has been used to support our EYP's salary and has enabled us to make her supernumerary so that she has support staff with planning implementation of the EYFS, and to do quality improvements. Also observing the nursery to improve the environment and making it an enabling environment. Our EYP has been able to attend EYP network meetings, foundation stage meetings etc to bring in new initiatives and help to implement them within our setting"
- "I believe the finance has made a difference to staff morale, knowing that their jobs were safe despite lower number of children on roll. This has contributed to the quality of the setting being raised"
- "The impact has been amazing, we have never had ICT items before and were so pleased that the children love to use them. They are now more than competent at using the laptop and printing out the pictures they have designed themselves. We are now hoping to create an environment in our garden that is both safe, secure and educational"
- "I believed at the start that completing my Foundation Degree was just ticking the boxes of my relevant needs towards staying in childcare; I have now realised, it's so much more - it's an education, thought provoking, evaluative tool that has improved my personal practice ten fold"
- "The impact I have brought to my settings practice has been immense, I pass on knowledge to others as I gain it - sometimes I feel they don't believe my excitement!"

Although the deadline for these forms to be returned was 31st March 2010, 94 monitoring returns remain outstanding. Candidates are reminded that no future funding will be agreed (including bursaries) until outstanding forms are returned completed.



If you would like to find out about available funding and all of our training opportunities visit our web pages at www.leics.gov.uk/funding or call us on 0116 305 6555.

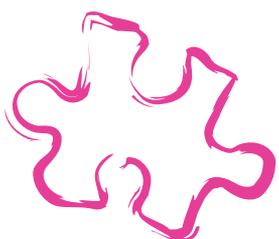


The children at Huncote pre-school enjoying a music session

Music and creativity in Huncote

The number of Early Years Professionals (EYP's) in Leicestershire has been steadily rising since it was introduced in 2007, with over 187 providers currently working towards the award.

The Graduate Leader Fund (GLF) is available to provisions (that already have, or have staff working towards the EYP Status) to provide support to the setting. Kerry Burgin from Huncote pre-school tells us how she used the GLF at her setting;



"At Huncote pre-school many of the children have shown an enthusiastic interest for music and dancing. This has been apparent during a regular sports session and also through children expressing their personal interests. We regularly put out percussion instruments, like tambourines, glockenspiels and rainmakers but we were not completely satisfied with our skills in using instruments in meaningful and fun activities.

We wanted to extend children's experiences of music and to build staff skills and confidence in this area of learning. To do this we used the GLF and arranged six sessions with a music teacher who was experienced in working with early years settings. For the first three weeks she was accompanied by a flautist and for the following three by a drummer.

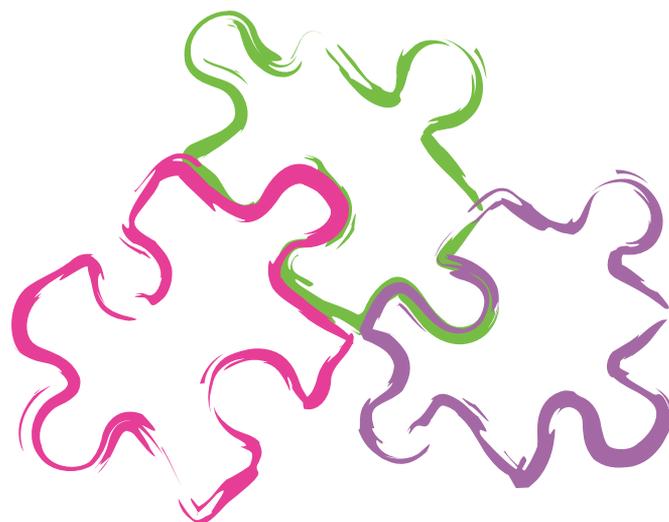
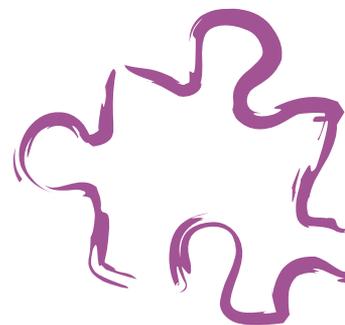
After week one, we were confident that the money had been spent well! The flautist arrived first and while the children were having a drink she began to play...the room became silent and many children stared in awe. When Rebecca, the session leader, arrived she instantly engaged the children in a gentle warm up using various puppets and props.

During the sessions there was an opportunity for free expression and the staff got involved enthusiastically, encouraging the children to feel confident in 'having a go'. Children explored how sound can express different feelings and experiences, e.g. singing in a sad way, or an angry way or the kind of sound that might express the movement or speed of an aeroplane or a snail. There was an opportunity to explore lots of different instruments and during this time Rebecca, the flautist and all the staff played alongside the children.

Rebecca supported the staff and modelled ways of working with the children with the instruments. This included playing at the same time as the child, allowing them to take the lead. We then had a time for free dance and this was followed with a wonderful cool down, during which many of the children became very calm and relaxed just prior to going home.

Now the sessions have finished we will continue to plan sessions involving music and instruments and exploring sound - and we feel able to do this with renewed interest and confidence."

If you would like more information about the GLF or about the EYP status contact us on 0116 305 6555 or visit www.leics.gov.uk/eyp





Early Years Professional (EYP) Nicola Speight bringing reading to life at Grace Dieu

Early years literacy evening at Grace Dieu

Working in partnership with parents and carers is a key way for provisions to help raise the standard of care offered to their children. Grace Dieu Manor School recently ran an information evening for their parents to encourage them to get involved with their children's reading.

The evening was led by Nicola Speight, one of a small number of Early Years Professionals operating in the area, and also a Reception teacher at Grace Dieu Manor School.

The evening was all about raising standards and how this could be easily achieved by working in partnership with parents and carers. Through an interactive presentation, fun activities and displays of resources, Nicola and her team, demonstrated to parents how they could become actively involved in supporting their children with reading in a variety of ways and in many different settings; reading labels and signs in supermarkets, road signs whilst travelling, as well as in more traditional settings such as libraries and in the home. The emphasis was to make reading fun and exciting for children which will, in turn, give young children a firm foundation to build on when learning to write.

One parent commented "It was just brilliant! It was informative and gave a great insight into how the teaching staff used various methods to encourage children to use sounds, and how to link these up.

It was delivered well and the balance was just right, really enjoyable".

The evening was funded by Leicestershire County Council as part of the drive to promote Early Years Professional Status within an educational setting. Nicola Speight was particularly pleased with the response to the evening and commented; "It was great to see such a show of parental support at the school and from the feedback we have had, I am sure that we will be planning more sessions in the future!"

If you would like more information about engaging with parents at your setting contact your Improvement Advisors - all the contact details are on the back cover.

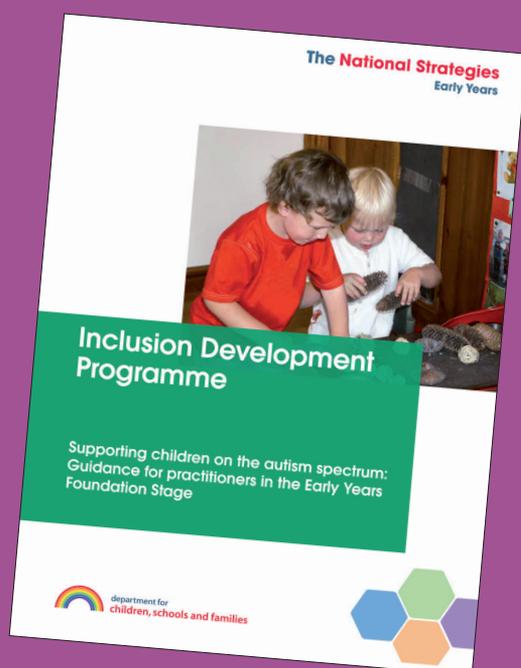
Inclusion Development Programme

The Inclusion Development Programme (IDP) is part of the Government's strategy for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). The programme runs over 4 years (2008 - 2011) and provides support for schools and settings working with children with a range of additional needs.

Each year a new resource is released to support the IDP. This year's focuses on supporting children on the autism spectrum and is relevant to all providers working within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), with children from birth to 5 years. The resource supports practitioners working with children who have been diagnosed with autism and those children with similar needs but are as yet undiagnosed.

Effective practice in the EYFS focuses on meeting children's individual needs and providing an inclusive setting for all. Even if you don't have any children within your setting with diagnosed autism the IDP is still a useful resource as it will enable you to make your setting more inclusive.

Each setting should have received a copy from their area SENCO meetings and it is also available online at www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications - for further support contact your area SENCO.



Family information made easy

Leicestershire's Family Information Service (FIS) in partnership with other organisations has developed a range of tools that can help you and the families you work with to find relevant information easily. These newly devised tools are:

Parenting Top-Tips

Parenting Top-Tips is an interactive online guide that gives excellent information on a whole range of issues, such as healthy eating, staying safe and fun and learning - the aim is to make information easier to find.

We are always trying to expand the information on offer and tailor it to Leicestershire's families - we would love to hear from you about any areas of information which you think should be included in the Top-Tips. You can do this by simply filling in our online form by visiting www.leics.gov.uk/family or by calling us on 0116 305 6545.

Family Information Directory

The new Family Information Directory has recently been launched for Leicestershire's families and has been designed specifically for parents/carers as an easy route to finding local and national family services - like a Google for parents.

The Family Information Directory will be the most comprehensive list of childcare and family services available for practitioners and families to use. Parents/carers can access the new directory through the FIS webpage at www.leics.gov.uk/family

family
information



Early Learning and Childcare Service Personalisation

Friday 12th and Saturday 13th March 2010 saw Leicestershire's early years providers take over the Marriott hotel in Leicester for our annual conference. This years conference was the first to bring all types of childcare providers together over the two day event, which gave providers the opportunity to network with peers.

The conference was based around the idea of personalisation and how it fits into the Early Years Foundation Stage. The two key messages were;

- personalised learning for children from providers and;
- personalised support for providers from the local authority

Early Education Consultant Marjorie Ouvry delivered the keynote speech which was based around Personalisation in Early Education. Her talk really helped to show the importance of ensuring children's learning is as targeted as possible to give them the best possible early education. Marjorie also ran an outdoor play workshop with those attending being given the task of building dens and creating outdoor art.

There were 17 other workshops on offer for providers to choose from, running three times during each day - these were split into three zones:



My World - which focused on personalising play for individual children



My Parents - which looked at how to interact with parents and encourage them to be more involved with their child's early education



My Business - which was full of information for your business, including marketing tips and how to beat the credit crunch

Some of the workshops were delivered by Leicestershire's providers which shows delegates that the information they were giving out is taken straight from the setting and is tried and tested to be effective. For a full list of the workshops on offer - including handouts (where possible) visit www.leics.gov.uk/earlylearningconference



Key note speaker
Marjorie Ouvry

Early Learning Conference

As well as workshops there were information and resource stands on offer during the day for providers to access such as;

- Business Links
- Workforce Development
- Healthy Tots
- Library Services
- INFORM

And many more...

Feedback

A lot of the feedback from the day was very positive, with lots of providers enjoying themselves and taking a lot of useful information away with them. However, as with all conferences, there is always room for improvement and from the evaluation forms collected on the day, here are a few of the suggestions which will be taken forward for the next conference:

- shorter lunch break
- longer workshops
- clear labelling on booking forms indicating which workshops are appropriate for different types of provider e.g. childminders, pre-schools etc

Dates and venues have not yet been set for any upcoming conferences but if you would like to see photos and resources from the conference visit www.leics.gov.uk/earlylearningconference - if you have any further comments about the conference please contact us on 0116 305 7373.

Leicestershire's providers enjoying the conference



Communication Language and Literacy Development

In 2009 Leicestershire became a funded authority (by National Strategies) to deliver the Communication Language and Literacy Development (CLLD) programme.

The programme was in response to the Rose review and the letters and sounds document was produced to support the daily discrete phonics (15 mins every day) in schools. A key element of the programme is transition and phase 1 of the Letters and Sounds document which Private Voluntary and Independent (PVI) settings are encouraged to use to support children's learning so that schools can build on what children know and can do.

Ten schools in Leicestershire were invited to join the project and the feeder pre-schools have been supported over the last two terms by the Improvement Advisors. One of the pre-schools was Daisy Chains nursery in Blaby who have recently been awarded an outstanding rating by Ofsted. They worked with Improvement Advisor Sarah Lissaman who supported them through:

- in house training using the Letters and Sounds document
- modelling how to use resource boxes
- completing a CLLD audit to develop the learning environment
- supported staff meeting through planning from a book and responding to children's interests and learning styles
- CLLD demonstration of Letters and Sounds for leaders and managers in another setting



Language Development



Daisy Chain nursery owner Amanda Donkin explains how the support has contributed positively to both her staff and setting.

“The support from Sarah with our CLLD work was great and has been positively received by all my staff. Before the training started we identified areas for development within the provision and Sarah made sure these issues were covered in her training.

The training on the Letters and Sounds document has been embraced by all the practitioners at the setting and the impact of the learning has resulted in children at the settings becoming more confident with the use of letters and sounds. The learning is being used holistically throughout the setting and the children now take their communication activities outdoors through communication friendly spaces. These areas are designed to make children feel comfortable communicating and have been a real hit.

The training has had a real impact on the setting and we are now even more determined to keep improving and maintaining our outstanding rating”

If you would like to learn more about using letters and sounds in your settings and Develop your learning environment contact your Improvement Advisor - contact details are on the back cover.



Leicestershire Healthy programme launched

A new Healthy Tots programme has been launched in Leicestershire - 14 settings across the county including nurseries, childminders, pre-schools and a children's centre have kindly volunteered to pilot the programme.

Healthy Tots involves settings focusing on three themes;

- healthy eating
- physical activity
- emotional health and well-being

Each setting collates evidence of how they are meeting criteria on each of these themes. This includes identifying their strengths and weaknesses and planning targets to address these. This may include reviewing some of their policies, incorporating healthy living messages into their planning, thinking about the views of children in their care and the settings involvement with their parents and the local community.

Parents have been asked to share their views as to where they feel settings are now. All parents that have responded feel their children are happy and safe in the setting and the majority feel children are given opportunities to learn about and make healthier food choices. However many parents feel they could be included more in the setting and that children could be encouraged to be more active.

One parent responded that “when my child started school, I could spot the Rainbows nursery kids in his year - they were all well behaved, confident, polite and caring children who settled into the school routine quickly”.

It is our hope that in the future this statement will be true for all children that attend a healthy tots setting. In addition to launching the programme we have been researching and producing resources that we believe will benefit settings. Our website www.leicestershirehealthytots.org.uk will be launched in April 2010 and will contain information on the healthy tots programme and especially our core themes.

We will have a leaflet for parents to explain the Healthy Tots Programme and we have also developed our “Nutrition for Healthy Tots” Guide which will provide comprehensive information about food and drinks provided in settings.

Within our library of resources, we will have publications covering all of our three core themes including books about listening to children, feeding the under fives as well as the busy feet pack and other active resources. We will be sharing these with all our pilot settings.



Tots



Some of the new
Healthy Tots resources

We will provide all our settings with this guide which focuses on phases of child development and what parents and practitioners might do to stimulate and support the child at each stage. It includes activities which cover communication, emotions, physical development and health. This booklet is accompanied by a development wheel which can be easily shared and discussed with parents.

Initially feedback from our Healthy Tots pilot sites has been positive and has included the following comments:-

“Looking over the Healthy Tots folder, it’s really good as a prompt to check and update policies and I’m asking parents their opinion more so it is also acting as a reminder that parents must be involved.” (Margaret early years)

“Healthy Tots fits the work we are doing around healthy lifestyles and reducing childhood obesity. We feel confident that we’ll be able to achieve Healthy Tots Status!” (Children’s Centre team for Blaby, Oadby & Wigston)

“Healthy Tots encompasses all the various elements to being and keeping healthy ensuring that the children, parents and staff have good knowledge and understanding. It puts in place good practice that will stay with the children throughout their lives and for the future generations.” (Rainbows nursery)

We are looking for more settings to be involved, so to find out more information about Healthy Tots please contact Cara Rowlett (Senior Healthy Early Years Advisor) on 0116 305 5418 or email cara.rowlett@leics.gov.uk

Boys mark making

The spring term saw the Mobile Community Centre travelling all over Leicestershire for the Early Learning Roadshows - this term's focus being boys mark making with a host of resources and information available. As always the Improvement and Development Advisors were onboard to answer any questions and queries Leicestershire's childcare providers could throw at them.

For those providers who weren't able to attend, here are a few of the tips given out at the Roadshows to encourage boys mark making:

- develop opportunities for gross-motor skills which include big movements and using large spaces before concentrating on fine-motor skills. They follow on from each other, but fine-motor skills can't evolve without the gross-motor skills. Allowing rough and tumble play is crucial to this development
- purposeful writing which comes naturally out of their play and which is initiated by them will promote writing in a way that a task imposed by adults for their own purpose will not
- model writing for a purpose e.g. writing notes to colleagues, comments on a drawn plan, labelling plants in the garden
- scribe their stories particularly based on their role-play and imaginative play: superheroes will come into it. We need to get involved in their role-play to develop their language
- provide resources that will develop fine-motor skills other than pens and pencils e.g. paint brushes in paint/water, drawing/tracing in different textures with sticks or finger, using resources in role-play e.g. swords' joining equipment e.g. staplers, clips, treasury tags, hole-punchers tools e.g. hammers, saws, vices
- providing both outdoors and indoors: role play and imaginative play; tools; all the above and a wide range of writing surfaces
- have white and black boards, flipcharts and large rolls/sheets of painting paper outside. Generally have surfaces both vertical and horizontal outside
- engage children in making signs, lists etc as required
- engage them through some written text to prompt play and then later encourage their own written response e.g. letters from favourite superheroes, from people relevant to their play e.g. a fire fighter, a garage owner, a gardener. Keep the dialogue through letters, emails and text
- initiate problem-solving activities based on their interest. Some of these could involve some recording in drawing
- involve them in their Learning Journeys so that they gather the evidence with you

The next Early Learning Roadshows will take place in the Summer 2010 term and the theme is problem solving, reasoning and numberacy - for more information visit www.leics.gov.uk/earlylearningroadshows or call us on 0116 305 7316.

Let's fly

Working with local colleges, schools or businesses can be a great way for childcare practitioners to give different experiences to their children. Thrussington C of E Primary School did just this, Nursery Nurse Jo Berry tells us more:

"Where would you like to go on holiday? America? Spain? Portugal? Well the children in Class 1 at Thrussington C of E Primary School decided they wanted to travel to the Philippines as part of an experience day with Grantham College.

On a snowy day in January, we travelled to Grantham College where the children were greeted by BTEC sports students who took us down to the sports hall. The children were put into pairs and taken through a series of obstacle races and games. The college students were fantastic with the children, who thoroughly enjoyed themselves saying they wanted PE to always be like that!

We then walked through the college ready to board the imaginary plane for our exciting journey to the Philippines. For children who have never experienced what it is like to go to an airport or fly this was a revelation! The college students, who are undertaking a tourism course, greeted the children and gave them all their passports ready for the flight. The children then had to check in, receive their boarding cards, check in their luggage (well their lunch!) and proceed through security and passport control. From there, they boarded Grantham Air - flight destination, the Philippines.

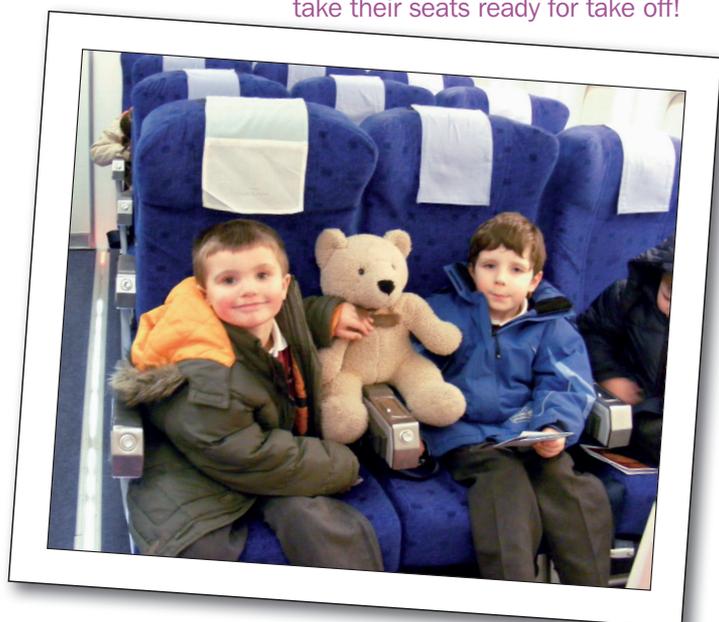
The children took their seats and were talked through the safety procedures - emergency lighting and exits, how to fasten their seatbelts, put on safety jackets and how to fit the oxygen masks. The children were then given the opportunity to try these out; they fastened their seatbelts, pulled their window blinds down and got ready for take off! There were many in the class - a mixture of Foundation through to Year 2 children - starting to wonder if it might be real!

The 'air stewards' served the children drinks and biscuits whilst they watched a cartoon on the TV screen during the flight. Unfortunately it was too foggy to land in the Philippines so we had to turn back home...

The children had a fantastic experience and the college students really got a lot out of it as well."

To find out more about the benefits of joint working contact your Improvement Advisor - all their contact details are on the back cover.

Two children from Thrussington take their seats ready for take off!



Inform developments

As of the spring term 2010 INFORM has been used successfully by 80% of Leicestershire's early years providers to return headcount and census information. This is a huge achievement for all concerned and is a positive step forward as we move into the age of e-communication.

As the last 20% of providers prepare to join us for the summer term 2010 the Early Learning and Childcare Service is looking to the future and how we can develop INFORM even further, all the time looking to make the system as user friendly, efficient and effective as possible.

The INFORM developments we have planned are reflective of your feedback as well as our need to constantly improve our services - ensuring security is always a priority. With this in mind you may notice some small changes to the questionnaires which will make the addition and deletion of child data quicker and easier.

Alongside these technical developments we are also looking at incorporating a 'provider area' into the system. This will be accessed very much like an email inbox and will allow providers to access various information documents such as NEF remittance advice, information letters and electronic versions of Partnership Plus.

Each 'inbox' will only be accessible by the relevant person at each provision and will be secured with existing log in and password protection. This will allow providers to access information quicker and easier than via the usual mail outs and will be cost effective as well. It is hoped that through further developments INFORM will be used across the whole of the service and not just for NEF validated providers.

If you are yet to join our group of 'INFORMers' please send an email to **inform@leics.gov.uk** giving details of your provision, provider number, name of responsible person and confirmation of the email address to be used - your log-in details will then be sent to you.

If you have used the system previously, refresher information is available from our INFORM web page **www.leics.gov.uk/inform**, please

also take the time to complete the feedback questionnaire available via INFORM - your comments are always welcome and can help shape further developments.

Finally a reflection on this year's collection of headcount and census data. Many providers took to the challenge and completed their forms with ease via INFORM. We did however encounter some late returns, but fortunately we were able to accommodate these and continue to make NEF payments on time.

Providers should be aware however that it is absolutely imperative that they submit their information to us on time in the future as, due to changes in our payments system, we will no longer be able to continue to make one off payments for late entries. The cut off dates for submitting information will be enforced and, as such, late payments will not be made.

With this in mind we would like to offer huge thanks to all those providers that did submit their information on time, once again we have ensured a 100% return of the census data to the Department for Children's Schools and Families.

New NEF Code of Practice

The Department for Children, Schools and Families is due to implement the new Nursery Education Fund (NEF) Code of Practice in September 2010. The proposed new code has now been released and is available for you to see on our website at www.leics.gov.uk/nefresourcepage.

There are some key messages within the new guidance:

- early years providers and local authorities are to work together to ensure that parental demand and the need for flexibility is met
- early years providers should ensure that parents receive their NEF place entirely free of charge and parents should not encounter any barriers to accessing their free place, i.e. having to take up additional hours, purchase uniforms or lunches, or be liable for any form of topping up on the NEF rate

We will be consulting further with the Childcare Sector Partnership group on our local interpretation of the code, prior to September 2010.

You will recall from a letter sent to all NEF providers in the spring 2010 term that we intended to issue interim guidance and provider contracts, to cover the period April 2010 - August 2010, however, on reflection we have decided to extend the current provider agreements and our NEF amended guidance for 2009/10 to 31st August 2010, releasing new agreements which reflect the new code of practice in September 2010.

If you have any questions about the new code of practice contact our finance helpline on 0116 305 5788

Provider NEF support

Nursery Education Funding (NEF) can sometimes be confusing, even for the most experience practitioner - so don't forget there are lots of areas of support for you to access:

NEF resource page - www.leics.gov.uk/nefresourcepage

This online support page is dedicated to NEF and is full of up-to-date guidance, support and advice. It also has useful leaflets to help you explain the ins and outs of funding to parents and staff.

Finance helpline - 0116 305 5788

Open to all providers, the finance helpline will take you straight to our friendly NEF team who will have the answers to all your funding questions and queries.

INFORM - www.inform.leics.gov.uk

Our secure online funding system has a support area which is full of helpful tips including frequently asked questions.



Single Funding Formula

You will by now have heard that Leicestershire is postponing the implementation of the Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF) until April 2011.

The advantages and disadvantages of introducing an EYSFF were discussed in depth throughout the consultation period which took place through October and November 2009. These consultations highlighted some very valid points, particularly around areas of sustainability for some of Leicestershire's smaller provisions, as well as providers feeling increased pressure around delivering flexibility and increasing staff qualifications.

Following these discussions, further work was carried out around the original formula, during which it became clear that we would benefit from having a clearer picture of the 'flexible offer' in Leicestershire, as well as the qualifications of early years practitioners.

The additional data needed has now been collected via the Early Years Census and will consequently create a more informed picture of what Leicestershire providers are offering in terms of the flexible offer and the standard of qualified staff employed; information on which we can build a more appropriate EYSFF.

We will also use the additional year prior to implementation to work with providers by offering additional business support where needed, to help those settings who may have sustainability issues.

The Early Learning and Childcare Service will enter into further consultation with its providers prior to the mandatory implementation of the Single Funding Formula in April 2011. It is hoped that the revised formula will continue to support the costs associated with offering flexible nursery education, delivered by highly qualified staff.

Please continue to visit our website; www.leics.gov.uk/single_funding_formula for any latest news and updates on the delivery and implementation of this new initiative.

Handy hint

Don't forget that parents/carers can claim their child's Nursery Education Funding (NEF) across no more than two different childcare providers.

For more information about NEF guidance, ring the Early Learning and Childcare Service finance helpline on 0116 305 5788 or visit www.leics.gov.uk/nefresourcepage

Handy hint

The hourly Nursery Education Funding rate for the 2010/11 summer term is £3.52 - further information about rates can be found at www.leics.gov.uk/nefresourcepage or by phoning us on 0116 305 5788.

Dates for your diary

National Playday

Wednesday 4th August 2010
Initial payment date

Nursery Education Funding (NEF) dates

Friday 11th June 2010
Final payment date / Mid term adjustment /
INFORM live

Friday 9th July 2010
Mid term adjustment deadline



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Naseem Moolla
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Workforce Development Assistants

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Recruitment helpline

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Finance helpline

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Monitoring Officer

Sara Lamont 0116 305 8252

Marketing Officer

Nathaniel Aust 0116 305 7373

Mobile Community Centre Officer

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