

Firm Foundations



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Foreword

Welcome to the Autumn edition of Firm Foundations – our regular newsletter for people who work with and for young children and their families in Medway.

One measure of how well we are doing for children is the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP). The EYFSP provides a record of children's development and attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage when they are 5 years old (or nearly five).

In each of the past four years the proportion of Medway children reaching the desired level of attainment, as measured by the EYFSP, has risen. In 2008 Medway exceeded the national average for the first time, and the rate of progress was the greatest of any local authority area in the South-East.

The provisional data from the July 2009 EYFS Profile is better still, with both an increase in the overall attainment of children, and importantly a significant narrowing of the gap between the poorest attaining children and their peers.

This is not about teaching very young children to pass exams – the EYFSP is not a test, it is a developmental record of children's achievements. However the annual data provides clear evidence of the effective input of every practitioner and agency that support children in their early years. Together you and we are making a real difference for Medway's young children.

Best wishes

Mark Holmes

Strategic manager early years services

Early Home Learning Matters

The importance of a quality interaction between young children and their parents from birth to five has been shown to have a positive impact on the 'early home learning environment' and on children's outcomes. The Family and Parenting Institute (FPI) has created a new website, funded by the DCSF, which is a one stop shop for practitioners and parents, including:

- lessons learned around workforce development and training
- information for practitioners on how to get parents involved in early learning
- tips for parents on how to do early learning activities in the home

For more information visit the website:

www.earlyhomelearning.org.uk

BBC Children in Need Grants

Organisations working with disadvantaged young people aged 18 or under are able to apply for funding through the BBC's Children in Need Programme. Funding is available to organisations, (including schools) that work with young people who are suffering from:

- Illness
- Distress
- Abuse or neglect
- Are disabled
- Have behavioural or psychological difficulties
- And / or are living in poverty or situations of deprivation

The type of funding available includes Capital and Revenue grants. There is no minimum or maximum amount when applying for funds from BBC Children in Need and organisations can apply for up to 100% of project costs.

Organisations wishing to apply for funding need to complete the BBC Children in Need online grant application form. No paper applications will be accepted.

The next deadline for applications is 15th October.

For further information visit the website www.bbc.co.uk/pudsey/grants



Scrap Store



The Early Years and Childcare Professional Development Centre is proud to announce the launch of its Scrap Store!

The Scrap Store is the first of its kind in Medway and is full of resources that can be used by early years practitioners. Materials such as card, paper, fabric, buttons and other creative materials have been collected and will be available for teachers and nursery staff to take to use in their settings for a small fee.



The team at the PDC have received some very generous donations for the Scrap Store from local businesses and organisations including the Women's Institute, however further donations would be gratefully received. Donations of everyday household items such as tablecloths, curtains and biscuit tins are required as well as any other items that may be suitable for children to use as a fun and creative resource.



As well as launching their Scrap Store the team at the PDC would like to invite practitioners to attend their 'open week' running from 7th – 11th September. A range of activities will be taking place all week and practitioners will be given the opportunity to meet the team and discover first hand what the centre has to offer.

For more information on the Scrap Store and open event or to donate materials contact the centre on **01634 331488** or email **EYCCPDC@medway.gov.uk**

Responding to under threes

Over the past 6 months PVI Day Nurseries across Medway have been taking part in an audit of their baby and toddler room provision. The audit called ITERS (Infant and Toddler Environmental Ratings Scale) looks at seven different aspects of practice with the under threes and grades settings as to whether their practice meets specific stated requirements. The areas of practice that the ITERS looks at are: space and furnishings, personal care routines, listening and talking, activities, interaction, program structure and parents and staff.



First Friends Day Nursery in Gillingham was one of the first settings to take part in the audit. As a nursery, they have used the feedback to implement change in their baby and toddler rooms. They looked at the environment and how to respond to the children's needs, for example, having a cosy area which children can retreat to, to play quietly in and relax. The setting found the audit a great tool for development, making it very clear how they could move forward.



Safe Sleeping

Judith Howard from the Foundation for Sudden Infant Deaths (FSID) recently attended the Under Threes Forum to give a presentation on safe sleeping practices. The presentation was full of valuable information and advice for practitioners to put into their everyday practice, and into their policies and procedures.



Here are the main guidelines from FSID.

- Check room temperature... Have a thermometer in the room. The best temperature is between 16-20 °C / (61-68 ° F).
 - Babies need a **firm, flat** surface to sleep upon to be healthy and safe, therefore a cot (or sleep mat) is recommended.
 - Cots should be in good condition.
 - Gaps between cot bars should be less than 6.5cm.
 - Mattresses should fit into the cots well, with no more than 4cm space between the mattress and the cot.
 - Cots should not be placed by a window.
 - Cots should not be placed by a radiator.
 - Each cot should have a firm mattress in good condition.
 - Mattress should be covered with a waterproof sheet or have a built in waterproof membrane just below the surface. If not mattresses should be regularly replaced as bacteria can breed within the fibres of a mattress from saliva, vomit and leaks from nappies.
 - A well fitted sheet should cover the mattress, (make sure it is on correctly).
 - Blankets should be used to cover a baby. Light cellular kinds are recommended. One or more layers depending on the season, (be cautious, take care not to overheat babies).
 - No pillows, cot bumpers or duvets should be used for babies.
 - Place baby on their back with their feet touching the foot of the cot.
- Older babies may roll themselves onto their front or side to sleep but whatever baby's age always place them to sleep on their back.
- Make sure covers are tucked in well at the bottom of the mattress and bedding should be no higher than up to the shoulders of the baby.
 - No hooded tops or hats should be worn when sleeping.
 - New style dungaree style sleeping bags may be used but they must fit the child well across the chest, (baby must not be able to wriggle down inside it as this could prove to be a danger).
 - Baby should be checked regularly ... keep the door to the sleep room open.
 - FSID's latest guidance is that dummies, used when sleeping from about one month old - once breast-feeding is well established, help to reduce the risk of cot death, although not all babies will take to a dummy and they should **not** be forced.
 - Babies should be weaned off the dummy **before they are one** in order not to have a detrimental effect on dental health or speech development.

For more information, leaflets and downloadable resources, you can visit their website:

www.fsid.org.uk

Starting a Nursery Factsheet

In April 2009 the National Day Nurseries Association published an 8-page factsheet on starting a nursery. It provides a starting point for the areas that potential providers need to look at and consider when setting up a nursery, plus references on where to find further information.

To download the leaflet visit www.ndna.org.uk/advice-information/factsheets/index.htm

Medway Primary Strategy for Change

The government's Primary Capital Programme (PCP) is a national programme of investment to transform primary schools provision over a 14-year period.

In response, Medway Council, as the Local Authority, has issued its Primary Strategy for Change, a strategic approach to maximising this investment, securing value for money and supporting the Every Child Matters policy agenda. Parents, practitioners and residents are being asked to take part in a public consultation on proposals for a major reorganisation aimed at improving and investing in primary school education in Medway.

The council's cabinet has agreed to consult on the closure of:

- St Peter's Infant School and the relocation of the existing pupils to neighbouring schools in August 2010;
- Ridge Meadow Primary School in August 2010 and the relocation of the existing pupils to neighbouring schools, principally Oaklands and Wayfield;
- St John's Church of England Voluntary Controlled (CE (VC)) Infant School in August 2010 and the relocation of existing pupils to neighbouring schools.

In addition the cabinet also agreed to consult on the amalgamation of:

- Delce Infant and Delce Junior schools,
- Twydall Infant and Twydall Junior schools,
- Luton Infant and Luton Junior schools,
- All Faiths Children's Community School and St Nicholas' CE (VC).

This amalgamation effectively means that the council, as the Local Authority, plans to close these schools to establish a single new school in each case.

In addition, the council will also be consulting on proposals to amalgamate the following schools:

- Barnsole Infant and Barnsole Junior Schools,
- Lordswood Infant and Lordswood Junior Schools,
- Oaklands Infant and Oaklands Junior Schools,
- Thames View Infant and Thames View Junior Schools.

Full details of the proposals can be found on the Medway Council website: www.medway.gov.uk

For further information phone [01634 306000](tel:01634306000) or email prim.reorg@medway.gov.uk

Swine Flu

The number of reported new swine flu cases appear to have dipped over the school holidays, however it is expected that cases will begin to rise again during the Autumn.

Current government guidance is that we would expect schools, early years and childcare settings, and other children's services to be operating as usual at present. We will contact settings directly should the guidance change, or if the local circumstances require it.

If you have a CONFIRMED case (ie the child has been prescribed an anti-viral medicine such as Tamiflu) please can you **contact Richard Cooke on 01634 334004** so that the Early Years & Childcare Service are aware. You should also inform all your parents as soon as possible in the same way as if you had a case of any infectious illness (such as chicken pox, measles). *You do not need to do anything else.*

If you require specialist advice regarding a confirmed case please contact:

Kent Health Protection Unit Email: kentHPU@hpa.org.uk Tel: [01622 710161](tel:01622710161)

Other useful contacts:

www.teachernet.gov.uk/emergencies/planning/flupandemic

NHS Direct on 0845 46 47

www.direct.gov.uk

Sports Day at Beresford



The children and staff at Beresford Pre-School managed to successfully dodge the rain this June to hold their annual sports day. Friends and family cheered the staff and children on at the event held at Balfour Junior School on Friday 26th June.

The budding athletes split into four teams to compete in a series of fun filled races including the egg and spoon race, sack race and flag race amongst others. Each child got a chance to take part, earning stickers for their efforts at the end of each race. A great deal of fun was had by all and even the staff got a chance to take part in the day's activities in the 'chase the tail' race!



As the sports day came to a close the staff and children gave their families a chance to get competitive by inviting them to take part in a series of special mums, dads and toddler races.

The children had a fantastic time and really enjoyed taking part in the day's events showing great teamwork in all of the activities.



Capstone Park

Lordswood Under 5s Pre-School recently enjoyed a trip to Capstone Farm Country Park.

The park caters for all age groups and children can take part in a variety of activities including sensory walks, pond dipping and scavenger hunts.

The children and adults from the setting thoroughly enjoyed getting their hands dirty with Gemma, the Education Ranger that led their party.

They had a lovely day exploring the great outdoors in a safe and exciting way and are hoping to make more regular trips to the park as it was such a great learning opportunity for all involved.



The rangers can be contacted through their office on **01634 812196**. Initial contact & provisional bookings by phone are preferred.

All Saints NVQ success

A group of Mid-day meal supervisors at All Saints Primary School have been working with the Playwork team at Medway Early Years and Childcare Service to successfully complete their NVQ level 2 in Playwork.

A celebration assembly was held at the school on Monday 22nd June 2009. The theme of the assembly was 'What have you done today to make you feel proud'. All 11 ladies felt very proud as they received their certificate and a bunch of flowers from the chair of governors.

Congratulations!



Hempstead Village Hall Playgroup's trip to the 70's

Hempstead Village Hall Playgroup held a sports day with a twist this May as they took a trip back in time to the 1970's!



The children had a fantastic time as they took part in classic sports day races such as the sack race, egg and spoon race, skipping race and relay race. Mums and Dads were also able to join in the fun as they were put to the test in a child and parent wheelbarrow race.



More entertainment followed the races as a 1970's Toy Museum was set up in the hall. Full to the brim with toys from the 1970's, children were able to interact with toys including a 3D Viewmaster, spacehopper, ladybird books, Snoopy, Tiny Tears dolls and a Spirograph. Mums and Dads had a great time reminiscing and talking to the children about the toys they used to play with.

Side stalls including 'Guess the teacher', hook a duck and treasure hunts all added to the children's enjoyment with 1970's toys being awarded as prizes.

The emphasis on the day was to have fun and with the help of the staff, children and their friends and families Hempstead Village Hall Playgroup were able to raise £500!

A fantastic way to spend a summer's day!



Lilliput Brompton's 10th Birthday



In July Lilliput Brompton celebrated its 10th birthday and to mark the occasion all children were invited to a fun and games party.

Seventy children attended the celebration and were treated to party food, a disco, party games, and a range of outdoor activities including a special ride on a carousel that had been hired for the day.

The sunny weather made the day extra special as the children even got a visit from the ice cream man!

Further celebrations followed including a party for the staff and their families.

Congratulations Lilliput Brompton, many happy

Nursery Education Funding

All registered providers should have received Headcount pack for Autumn 09.

Headcount forms must NOT be completed in advance. Any forms returned to us before the headcount day will be rejected, and you will need to complete a second form.



Dates for your diaries are shown below:

Autumn 2009

Headcount Day

Return Headcount information for Autumn final payment (Deadline)

Autumn final payment in your bank account (see note below)

Date

17th September 2009

25th September 2009

6th November 2009

We are required to reconcile every child on headcount forms from all providers BEFORE we can make ANY payments. Any headcount forms returned late delay this process and may delay payments.

Please contact Clare Hassell on 01634 332202 or email clare.hassell@medway.gov.uk if you have any queries.

15 Hours Free Flexible Childcare

As has been previously announced in Firm Foundations, September 2010 sees the extension of free entitlement to early years care and education to 15 hours per week (from the current 12.5 hours), and a range of new flexible ways in which parents can access their hours.

This term a pilot begins across a large part of Medway to test out the new arrangements. By the time you read this most PVI providers in Chatham, Luton, Lordswood and Walderslade will be offering 15 hours of free nursery education and childcare to their 3 and 4 year olds. In addition accredited childminders across Medway and a small number of schools will also be offering the extended entitlement.

Early in 2010 we will be contacting all providers not in the pilot scheme to invite them to briefing sessions to explain in detail what the new offer means to them. By then, with the help of the pilot settings, we should have answers to any issues that have arisen this term.

2 Year-Olds Pilot Project

Local Authorities across the country are involved in a pilot programme to offer part time free provision for children aged two years from families on very low incomes.

Medway's pilot involves securing places for approximately 100 children, commencing this September. To begin with we are working with eight settings which are located in the most disadvantaged areas of Medway and which are linked to Sure Start Children's Centres that will offer a range of family support services to parents and carers, alongside the child accessing up to 10 hours per week of free childcare.

To be eligible families must live in the immediate vicinity of the pilot settings, and additionally be in receipt of Income Support or one of a number of specified benefits.

The pilot will run until 2011, at which point the DCSF will evaluate whether this scheme will be extended to a larger number of families and areas.

Single Funding Formula (SFF)

From April 2010 all Local Authorities will be funding Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) early years education providers in the same way as they do schools – using a funding formula rather than a flat rate payment. Currently in Medway, schools and PVI settings are funded via very different methods, although in practice the level of funding per pupil is very similar.

In preparation, we have already:

- Undertaken a cost analysis of PVI and school sectors
- Held a series of focus groups with sessional and full daycare providers
- Interviewed representative providers to get an in depth understanding of the differential factors affecting cost in different areas and sectors
- Discussed the approach with the Medway Schools Forum which oversees funding of schools and early years settings (and which includes PVI representation)

This term we will be consulting formally with all settings (PVI and schools) on a proposal for funding to be via a formula based upon not just the number of children at a setting and how many hours they attend but also the following factors:

- **Disadvantage** – with greater funding for children living in more disadvantaged areas
- **Quality** – likely to be based on the settings' Ofsted inspection judgement
- **Leadership** – with additional funding if the setting is led by a qualified teacher (QTS) or Early Years Professional (EYP)
- **Flexibility** - whether the setting offers hours longer than the minimum entitlement

Look out for the consultation documents this Autumn – these are important changes and we want to know your views.

For further information on the 15 hour Pilot, the 2 Year-Old Pilot or the Single Funding Formula contact Richard Cooke on richard.cooke@medway.gov.uk

Starting school

Parents of children who have their fifth birthday between 1st September 2010 and 30th August 2011 must ensure they have applied for a school place for their child by 1st March 2010.



Brochures are available from Infant and Primary schools from October 2009 or you can contact the Admissions Team at Medway Council on **01634 331110** who will send you a copy.

There is no automatic transfer from pre-school or nursery to school - so, even if children have attended one of these or if parents have visited a school and registered their interest the form must still be completed.

Written documents for childminders

On 8 April 2009 Ofsted published 'Factsheet: childcare - requirements for written documents: childminders delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)'. This factsheet sets out the records, policies and assessments that childminders must make and keep. It is part of a suite of childcare factsheets available via the Ofsted website.

To download this factsheet visit www.ofsted.gov.uk

Early Years in Egypt

Following an educational trip to Egypt in April, Medway teacher Emma Beadle gives an insight into Early Years in Egypt...

During the Easter break I, and ten other teachers from Medway, had the opportunity to visit Egypt as part of a research team for the British Council. We observed 5 government language schools in Cairo and the Nile Delta. Our main objectives were to explore methods for teaching thinking skills, observe strategies and ways of approaching teaching to develop literacy skills. As I come from an early years background I was keen to look at the impact of the learning environment and specifically observed kindergarten children.



In some of the schools visited, resources were limited and the teachers had a 'make do' approach. They used recycled materials to create informative displays, puppet theatres, books and resources for drama.



The children were involved in their own learning by displaying their own work, helping to create resources and keeping their learning environment tidy. One school had a class award for the best kept class each week; another school had a workshop where children were shown how to repair their own desks and chairs. There was a patriotic and community atmosphere in all of the schools that were visited. This was particularly apparent during the morning outside assembly where the children and teachers joined together to pledge their allegiance to the flag and sing the national anthem. To witness the morning ritual was amazing and I felt privileged to be able to take part. These assemblies displayed equality and a real sense of school spirit.

Despite the lack of resources and the limited space, the teacher's enthusiasm enabled the children to develop their learning. The teachers used their knowledge as a tool and thought of themselves as a resource. The teachers that I met wanted to know how they could adapt their classrooms and how they could improve their outside learning environment. I was also surprised to see a male kindergarten teacher; he was interested in developing phonics in his classroom and we spoke about the Letters and Sounds document. During our visit he was teaching one Arabic letter sound and an English letter sound each day and he felt this was too much for his young pupils.



I came away from Egypt thinking the key element of successful learning is the relationship teachers have with the children. It seems that a caring and relaxed atmosphere in the classroom, and the whole school, can provide the opportunity for the children to develop their skills and become independent learners. I had a fantastic time in Egypt and the visit made me carefully reconsider my own teaching, the impact of the learning environment and the relationship between teachers and pupils.

Ofsted complaints commitment

Between January and March 2008 Ofsted ran a consultation about publishing more information about childcare providers on their website; this consultation sought the views of service providers, service users and others with an interest in childcare. As a result of this consultation, from May 2009 Ofsted revised their complaints commitment aiming to ensure parents and carers have the most up to date information about those who they choose to provide care for their child.



As of May 2009 Ofsted will:

- Publish new complaints information on their website, separate from inspection reports as soon as they have completed an investigation
- Continue to publish information relating to complaints, made against childminders or childcare providers, only in circumstances where they, or the provider, take action to meet the legal requirements of registration
- Publish historic information about complaints received since a provider's last inspection where they, or the provider, took action to meet legal requirements
- Remove complaints information from their website five years after the closure of the complaint investigation.

Information about complaints received prior to a provider's last inspection will remain accessible in the last inspection report. This is to ensure that parents and carers can access a full history of complaint information.

Ofsted will make complaints information available on request to people who are unable to access the website either in writing or over the telephone.

If you have any questions about the complaints commitment please telephone Ofsted on **08456 404040**

For further information visit the website www.ofsted.gov.uk

Jeans for Genes day



Changing the world for children
with genetic disorders

Jeans for Genes is a national children's charity that works to provide care for children and families who are affected by genetic disorders. As well as providing care and support, Jeans for Genes help to fund research into the genes responsible for genetic disorders and the development of effective treatments and cures. Jeans for Genes aims to raise awareness and promote the understanding of what it means to be affected by a genetic disorder.

This year's Jeans for Genes day is on Friday 2nd October and organising your own Jeans for Genes event couldn't be easier! The first step is to sign up for a free fundraising pack full of everything you need to plan your own Jeans for Genes day plus some goodies from this year's Jeans for Genes mascots Fifi Forget-Me-Not and the Flowertots including stickers, a Fifi headband and much more.



Once you've received your pack simply decide what you want to do on the day. There's a whole range of activities you can arrange from a cake sale to a sponsored sing-a-long!

The money you raise from your event for Jeans for Genes day 2009 will benefit 10 different charities; having an impact on hundreds of thousands of families.

To sign up for your fundraising pack and for more fundraising ideas visit the website www.jeansforgenes.com



Outstanding OFSTED result

An increasing number of Medway settings are being judged by Ofsted to be "Good" or "Outstanding". Following an inspection in March, Bligh Children's Centre joined the list of Medway's Outstanding early years settings.

Bligh Sure Start Children's Centre, Strood, provides wrap around care for children aged between three months and five years old as well as providing a range of community resources such as health visitor drop-ins, midwife consultations, adult learning and a toy library. The centre is able to support children who speak English as a second language and children with disabilities and learning difficulties.



OFSTED declared the overall quality of the provision to be outstanding, highlighting the staff's dedication to the children in their care. Childcare Coordinator, Charlotte Shilling, was praised as 'an extremely motivated and dedicated leader' and all staff members were commended for the strong partnerships they have forged with parents and others involved in the care of the children at the setting, with the positive effects of these partnerships being duly noted.

"Practitioners encourage children to feel secure and valued in the environment."

Key areas highlighted as exceptionally good practice include:

- Planning
- Resources & activities available to children
- The setting environment and outdoor area
- The relationships practitioners have developed with the children at the setting and use of communication

The centre has recently completed an 'I Can' accreditation helping practitioners to have a greater awareness of language development and communication issues. This has enabled the setting to focus on how children acquire language and as a result identify any potential concerns in a child's language development.

"Children flourish in a bright and welcoming environment."



Outstanding early years settings in Medway

- Balfour Infant School, Chatham
- Bligh Sure Start Children's Centre, Strood
- Hempstead Village Hall Pre-school, Hempstead
- Hundred of Hoo Day Nursery, Hoo St Werburgh
- Kiddiwinks Pre-school, Gillingham
- Leapfrog Day Nursery, Chatham Maritime
- Prima Montessori Day Nursery, Hempstead
- Rainbows Pre-school, Rainham
- Swingate Infant School, Lordswood
- Twydall Infant School and Hand in Hand Children's Centre, Twydall



Places to go in Medway

A visit to Riverside Country Park is a fantastic way to explore the great outdoors and it's right on your doorstep!

Riverside Country Park, Gillingham, covers 100 hectares along the Medway Estuary, including Motney Hill and the Berengrave Local Nature Reserve. There are various habitats in the park including mudflats, salt marsh, ponds and reedbeds, grassland and scrub, which provide a haven for wildlife.



Riverside has recently secured a green flag award, the national standard for quality parks and green spaces, as well as securing a grant from The Big Lottery Fund providing funding for the

park to develop a naturalised play area. This space is designed to create a multi-sensory play facility for use by all children, including those with disabilities.



Riverside has excellent facilities including an education room, visitor centre, café, children's play area and picnic facilities as well as a dedicated ranger service. The rangers cater for all ages and hold regular events for children and adults that aim to increase public understanding about the local environment and the organisms that live within it.

Events include children's activity days, guided walks and kite making.

Special events coming up for

Autumn/Winter 2009 include Junior Ranger Club, Tiny Tots arts and crafts, tree dressing and a visit from Santa!

Riverside Country Park is easy to get to, with car and coach parking. Winter opening times are from 8:30am to 5pm with extended opening hours up to 8:30pm in the summer months. For further information contact the park on **01634 337432** or via email on riversidecp@medway.gov.uk



Engagements at Lilliput Brompton

The staff at Lilliput Brompton have had cause to celebrate this summer with 2 pieces of very good news.

Peter Bearfoot, Nursery Nurse in the Rainbow Room for 3-5 year old children, took an afternoon off to don a tuxedo and returned later carrying a large bouquet of red roses to propose on bended knee to Jenni Gillmore, the Baby Room Supervisor. The same evening Shellie Plackett, Nursery Nurse in the Jungle Room for 2-3 year old children, got a surprise of her own when partner Sam proposed. You will be pleased to know both ladies said yes!

Lilliput Brompton would like to congratulate both couples and look forward to their forthcoming weddings.

Congratulations!



Family Information Service

Medway Family Information Service is an award winning free service that aims to support parents and carers by providing childcare information and impartial advice on childcare related issues.

Services provided by Medway Family Information Service include:

- Up to date information on both registered and unregistered local childcare including day nurseries, childminders, out of school clubs, holiday playschemes, parent and toddler groups and other leisure activities available locally
- Help and advice on the different forms of childcare and nursery education
- Information on available help with childcare costs
- Up to date list of local job vacancies in childcare
- Information on childcare careers, qualifications required and training opportunities

Contact FIS by phone: 01634 335566 email: familyinfo@medway.gov.uk

local website: www.medway.gov.uk/childcare

national website: www.childcarelink.gov.uk/medway

Office opening hours Monday to Thursday: 8.30am to 5.30pm Friday: 8.30am to 5.00pm

Matrix Award

Medway FIS has been awarded the Matrix Quality Award for providers of Information, Advice and Guidance for a second time following a rigorous external assessment process.

The assessor noted that improvements included

- Significant improvement to service accessibility, ease of use and service availability to meet and exceed Medway customers expectations
- Supporting residents, employers and workers in Medway to explore their childcare options and make informed decisions on the choices available
- Efficient and effective deployment and utilisation of FIS resources

Find out more at: www.matrixstandard.com

Major changes and enhancements to FIS service delivery over the past three years include:

Delivering the information duty: The remit of the service expanded from providing childcare information to parents of 0-16 to providing information about childcare and other family support issues to parents of children and young people up to the age of 20.

Embedding a new information system for parents and providers: The new Family Information Service Directory can be accessed at www.medwayfisd.com in local libraries and information portals currently being installed at all Children Centres across Medway.

Enhancing FIS delivery channels: phone, email, e-forms, internet, libraries and through outreach activities organised in collaboration with health visitors, children's centres, job centre plus and other local activities. We also have a text messaging service.

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment: The assessment was the first of its kind nationally and it mapped out the structure and market dynamics of the childcare in Medway; reviewing the current demand and supply of childcare services. A full assessment will be carried out every three years.

Childcare brokerage: to support parents who find it difficult to find childcare that suits/meets their needs and the needs of their families. Family Information Officers will not only provide a list of services in the local area, but also go the extra mile in contacting childcare providers on behalf of the parent to find suitable matches.

Preventative Services: The Family Information Service now serves as an information hub for the new Children's Trust with the responsibility to support practitioners working with families by giving information about and signposting to both local and national agencies that could best meet the needs of the families they work with.

COMING SOON...

We are currently putting new systems in place to link our updating with the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, Information Duty and the new Parent Know How Directory. We will be contacting providers soon to review and agree what works best for your setting and how we can work with you – watch this space!

Focus on.... Family Information Service Directory

What is the Medway Family Information Service Directory?

The on-line directory allows parents and practitioners to search and retrieve appropriate information on childcare and family support services in their local community and nationally. It also enables children and young people to find information about positive activities, support groups, money matters and much more.

Who will benefit from using of this directory?

Parents and carers, childcare providers, young people, children and practitioners working with families should all find the directory very useful.

What can I find on the directory?

The **Parents** Zone provides information about family support, childcare, careers help, training, fun things for children to do and much more. The aim is to ensure that parents have access to high quality services, which can help them make the most out of the local area and improve their family life.

Targeted at supporting practitioners deliver the very best advice and services that they can, the **Practitioners** zone contains a wealth of links, organisations and practitioner resources, as well as organisations to refer people to if they require help beyond the brief offered by their organisation.

Whatever they are looking for, from help with bullying and exam stress to the latest skate park, the directory offers **Young People** information about clubs, leisure activities, support groups, disability, money matters, leaving home and much more. The directory is also linked to MIXIT which is another resource for Young People in Medway.

The directory hosts information about various agencies and organisations that are able to support families with children aged 0-20 through different phases of life. These include finding childcare, children centres, money matters, support groups, disability organisations, healthcare services, leisure clubs, parenting support, returning to work, employment, benefits and tax credits for parents and many more.

If you know of any services or activities that you would like to promote let us know by giving us a call, emailing us or via the feedback forms on the website.

How can I access the directory

You can access the directory by visiting www.medwayfisd.com.

For more information about Medway Family Information Service Directory, please call the Medway Family Information Service on **01634 335566** or email familyinfo@medway.gov.uk.



Dates for the diary

EVENT	DATE	CONTACT DETAILS	OTHER
Professional Development Centre Open Week	7– 11 September 2009	EYCCPDC@medway.gov.uk 01634 331488	This week long open day gives practitioners a chance to meet the team and see first hand what the centre has to offer.
Jeans for Genes day	2 October 2009	www.jeansforgenes.com	The annual fundraiser for children with genetic disorders. This year's mascots are Fifi and the Flowertots! See page 11 for further information.
Children's Book Week	5-11 October 2009	www.booktrust.org.uk/ Campaigns/Childrens- Book-Week	Children's Book Week is a celebration of reading for pleasure for children. Now in it's 78th year, Children's Book Week's theme for 2009 is words and pictures.
BBC Children in Need Appeal	20 November 2009	www.bbc.co.uk/pudsey	Support Pudsey at your setting this year by holding a Children in Need fundraiser! To get your free fundraising pack visit the Children in Need website.
Road Safety Week	23-29 November 2009	www.roadsafetyweek.org	Beep Beep! Day is back! The day provides and opportunity for you to teach simple lessons, such as holding hands and the word 'STOP' while children do fun activities.
Tree Dressing	5-6 December 2009	www.commonground.org. uk/trees/t-dress.html	Decorate and celebrate a living tree in your street, garden or playground and show how much you value it!

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this edition of Firm Foundations!

This magazine is written for you and we really value your views, we would like you to send us news about your setting or any other information you think may be useful to other providers.

The deadline for our next issue is Friday 11th December. Let us know about any upcoming events...

- Outings with your children (e.g. local visits, trips to the park etc.)
- Events at your setting (e.g. coffee mornings, competitions etc.)
- Any media recommendations (e.g. TV programmes, books etc.)
- Ideas about the kinds of articles you would like to read

Please note if you wish to send in any photos of the children in your setting, you need to ensure permission has been granted by the parents/carers before the photo is sent to us.

Please contact us if you would like us to send you a photograph release form.

As this is your magazine we want **you** to tell **us** what you would like to see, contact us to request information on interesting topics that you feel would benefit your own setting which will in turn benefit others.

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