

Firm Foundations



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Foreword

Welcome to the latest edition of Firm Foundations – the early years and childcare newsletter for Medway.

The coming period is likely to be a challenging one. The government and the local authority face some difficult decisions over funding, and we await with interest how this might impact on early childhood services locally. Whatever the outcome, I think we will need to get used to hearing more about getting absolute best value for money, working together smartly, and targeting our resources precisely to effect the greatest outcomes for children and families.

This term also sees the introduction of the new early years single funding formula, and preparations for the extended flexible free offer (of 15 hours per week) from September. Change is never easy, but I would like to put on record my admiration for the way in which settings in Medway have responded so positively. During the next couple of months we shall continue to work with you, through meetings such as the foundation stage leaders' briefings, in advance of the new regulations coming in to force in the autumn.

Finally I'd like to offer my congratulations to those practitioners, settings and organisations whose achievements are described in this newsletter.

- Collectively, the first stage of the target to establish integrated early childhood services in Medway has been achieved with the completion of the programme to provide a Sure Start Children's Centre in every community. If you haven't visited your local Children's Centre, now is the time to do so.
- Another group of Medway settings have attained the accolade of being judged "Outstanding" by Ofsted in their recent inspections – testimony to many years of hard graft and a relentless pursuit of quality.
- And the remarkable expansion of Medway's graduate early years workforce continues with the award of Foundation Degree in Early Years Studies to a further cohort of extremely clever and committed students.

Fantastic!

Best wishes

Mark Holmes
strategic manager - early years services

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.medwayfisd.co.uk**

national website: **<http://familyservices.direct.gov.uk>**



News from the PDC...



Scrap Store

The Early Years and Childcare Professional Development Centre will continue to open the Scrap Store for another six months. Whilst it has been popular the centre has some concerns regarding its sustainability. The PDC currently have some suppliers who they collect from on a regular basis but would still like to make more contacts; If you are aware of any companies who have suitable materials, please contact the PDC with their details.

For PVI's and Schools, membership renewal will be £5.00 and will last until the 31st September 2010. As before, filling your bag will cost £1.50 each time you visit. If you forget your bag, it can be replaced for £2.00. There are limits on the amount of resources that can be taken at one time; these limits are clearly labelled on each item.

There will be no specific opening times in the next six months; to arrange a visit to the Scrap Store practitioners are asked to contact the centre to arrange a time for their visit. Please note providers will continue to be limited to visiting once a fortnight as before.

Drop-in Sessions - Tuesday 15th June and Friday 9th July 10.00am - 4.00pm

These sessions are designed to support practitioners working in the Early Years Foundation Stage by providing an opportunity to meet with colleagues and members of the Quality Team. There will be materials and equipment to help you provide appropriate resources and experiences for use with the children in your settings. Full details of the sessions are in the Summer Term training programme.

Other facilities at the PDC

Please see the Summer Term training programme and enclosed flyer for details of some of the facilities available at the centre.

Any enquiries / questions can be emailed to the training administrators at the PDC via email EYCCPDC@medway.gov.uk or they can be contacted via **01634 331488** or **01634 338529**.

Nursery Education Funding - Changes to payments

By the time you're reading this edition of Firm Foundations, you should have had your first monthly Nursery Education Fund (NEF) payment under the new formula. As you are aware this is now paid in monthly instalments rather than in two termly amounts.

We believe that this regular income will make it easier for settings to manage their finances over the year. However, we suggest that all settings examine the way they pay expenses such as rent etc to ensure, wherever possible, that payments going out from your accounts reflect the new arrangement of monthly income.

Should your setting experience any difficulty during the transition from termly to monthly payments please do not hesitate to contact us via email eyheadcount@medway.gov.uk, and we'll do our best to help.



Children's Centre Validations

This year looks set to be an exciting one for Sure Start Children's Centres across Medway, and for many of them the beginning of 2010 called for lots of celebration.

All 10 second phase Sure Start Children's Centres in Medway became officially validated centres, after receiving confirmation from the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), that they offer the full core offer of services, support and activities for children and families.

The confirmation comes as Medway prepares for the final instalment of children's centres to be completed later this year, with new centres developing in Rochester and Rainham, fulfilling the pledge to provide a centre in every community.



In order to receive this recognition as providers of core services to young children and families, the centres must provide a specific range of services and activities.

These include:

- Drop in activity sessions for children such as stay and play
- Child and family health services
- Active involvement with parents
- Family support services
- Support for children and parents with special needs
- Support for childminders and carers

Mark Holmes, strategic manager for early years services at Medway Council said, "I would like to congratulate all of the Sure Start Children's Centres in Medway that have been officially validated. This is the result of the care, hard work and enthusiasm of all of the staff and partners working at each one of our Sure Start Centres to make them enjoyable and friendly places, where young children can learn, play and grow.



Our collective aim is to meet the needs of local families and children by offering support and guidance, and high quality experiences, so that children get the best start in life. I would urge everyone to encourage families we know and work with to go along to their local centre and see the wide variety of outstanding services and information available to them.

With the last of the construction work nearing completion, and all of our newest centres having been officially approved by the DCSF, we are now on the verge of fulfilling our pledge to provide a children's centre in every community throughout Medway, so that every family can benefit from all that they have to offer."

By the summer of this year, there will be 19 Sure Start Children's Centres across Medway, with new centres based at:

- Delce Infant School, Rochester
- Miers Court Primary School, Rainham
- Riverside Primary School, Rainham
- Deanwood Primary School, Parkwood

To find out more about Sure Start Children's Centres in Medway please contact the Medway Family Information Service on **01634 335566**.

Winter Play Week

Winter Play Week saw five of Medway's Sure Start Children's Centres team up to provide a range of free activities to local families. The main event was held at Gillingham Park on Wednesday 17th February with the teams from Brompton Westbrook, Burnt Oak, the Hand In Hand Children's Centre in Tyndall, Saxon Way and Woodlands all there to lend a hand.

There were a wide range of activities for families to enjoy including parachute games, a golden leaf hunt, bean-bag rally and welly wanging, with vegetable sculpting and mosaic making also being provided by the Health Promotions Team. Great fun was had by all and the beautiful winter sunshine made the day even more enjoyable!

The event was really well received with around 150 families taking part; due to the event's success, the centres plan to team up again this summer to offer another activity day at the Riverside Country Park.

The event will be taking place on Tuesday 10th August and promises to be an action packed day with more fun activities on offer and the opportunity to take part in a Teddy Bears Picnic lunch!



Parent craft - 'Bump Club'

Last term Saxon Way Children's Centre and Medway Primary Care Trust worked in partnership to provide a parent craft class, 'Bump Club'.

The workshop was delivered to expectant parents who were invited to the class by their midwives and provided parents with information on what to expect around the birth of a child, offering practical advice and demonstrations on how to wash their baby and various other essential parenting techniques. The class was designed to encourage the expectant parents and equip them with the skills they will need to look after their new arrival and the confidence to do so.



This was followed by a 'dads only' group which focused on relationships and what to expect when their newborn arrives; the session offered information on how to offer support to their partners with the new arrival including practical advice and support. Dads-to-be put on their very own baby bumps to gain a greater understanding of pregnancy from their partner's perspective.

The session was a huge success and proved very popular with the mums and dads! Saxon Way are planning to hold the class again in the future and are very keen to hear from mums and dads to be!

For information on future dates or to register your interest contact the centre on **01634 852320**.

Summer Headcount 2010

All registered providers will shortly receive their Headcount pack for Summer 2010.

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:

Summer 2010	Date
Headcount Day	Thursday 20th May 2010
Return Headcount information for Summer final payment (Deadline)	Friday 28th May 2010
Summer final payment in your bank account (see note below)	Friday 23rd July 2010

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 eyheadcount@medway.gov.uk if you have any queries.

Meeting the EYFS Welfare Requirements - Paediatric First Aid

We would like to remind settings and schools that it is a requirement that "At least one person who has a current paediatric first aid certificate must be on the premises at all times when children are present. There must be at least one person on outings who has a current paediatric first aid certificate." EYFS Statutory Framework (2008:26)

Through discussions with practitioners it has come to our attention that the nominated first aider does not necessarily have the paediatric first aid certificate and we would therefore strongly advise that settings and schools check that they meet this statutory requirement. Medway Council also requires settings to keep a record of any first aid training undertaken and a record of appropriately trained adults in the setting.

Medway Council does not endorse or recommend any particular organisation or company, however we are able to identify that the following companies meet the welfare requirements for the EYFS.

Enhance Training Ltd

0845 226 2407 www.enhanceservices.co.uk

First Aid at Work (Training) Associates

01304 830768 www.fawa.co.uk

First On Scene Training Limited

0845 644 3305 www.firstonscene.co.uk

Health & Safety Resolutions Ltd

0800 043 9963 www.hsrltd.co.uk/index

Kent First Aid Training Ltd

01474 365731 www.kentfirstaidtraining.co.uk

Medi Aid (UK) Ltd (previously known as *Mediaid Training Services Ltd*)

01634 540999 www.mediaid.co.uk

Pulse First Aid

01634 241354 www.pulsefirstaid.co.uk

Data Protection

It is likely that your work as a childcare / early years provider means that you keep details about other people on a computer. If you haven't already done so, you may need to notify the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) that you are a "data controller" for data protection purposes.



The ICO suggests that providers' data protection responsibilities under the Data Protection Act are as follows:

- If you keep all your childcare records on paper, you do not need to notify the Information Commissioner under the Data Protection Act.
- If you keep information about the names, ages and addresses of children and their parents, details of any payments, or any data for staff administration on a computer, purely for accounts and records purposes, you are also exempt from notification.
- But, if you keep more extensive records, or information of a more sensitive nature, for example about children's health, behaviour or development on a computer, then you need to contact the ICO to find out if you are required to notify them.

We strongly recommend that if you are in any doubt as to your responsibilities you should contact the ICO as soon as possible for their advice.

You can check whether you need to notify the ICO, and also complete your notification online at www.ico.gov.uk. Alternatively you can request the forms by calling the Notification Helpline on **01625 545740** or **08456 306060**. There is a cost of £35 per year to be registered.

Places to visit in Medway

With summer fast approaching the Strand Leisure Park is the perfect place to visit with plenty to do for all the family.

Situated in attractive surroundings on the edge of the River Medway, The Strand is a large leisure area complete with an open air swimming pool, children's paddling pool, adventure playground, crazy golf, tennis courts, riverside walks and much more.



In the summer months the park really comes to life with the swimming pool, children's paddling pool, lazy river ride and miniature railways all opening from May right throughout the summer.



An on site cafeteria and picnic areas along with good quality toilets and baby changing facilities ensure that the needs of the whole family are well catered for.

The Strand Leisure Park is easy to find, situated on the A289, Pier Road, Gillingham, and is well signposted from the M2 Motorway and Medway Tunnel. There is ample free parking and a frequent bus service during the summer months.

The park is open daily from 10am to 6pm during school holidays and weekends and from 11am to 6pm Monday to Friday term time.

For further information contact the park on **01634 852907** or via email on blacklion@medway.gov.uk

Hempstead Village Hall Playgroup's Christmas Party

The UK has been caught in the grip of the worst winter for over 30 years with snow and freezing temperatures causing havoc throughout much of Britain with Medway being no exception. Medway was hit by heavy snow in December and January with some areas seeing as much as 20cm, forcing several schools and settings to close.



Hempstead Village Hall Playgroup braved the snow to hold their Christmas party on the last day of the autumn term, Friday 18th December, the day after the first night of heavy snowfall. Children from the setting donned their wellies and hopped on their sledges to get to the playgroup to join in the festivities. The party was a great success with children tucking into their favourite party food, decorating gingerbread cookies and playing classic party games such as 'musical chairs' and 'pass the parcel'.

Sadly the one person who couldn't make it to the party due to the weather was Father Christmas himself! Luckily, however, he still managed to get presents delivered to all of the children via his trusty reindeer!

The children had a fantastic party and the snowy weather made the day extra special, turning the setting into a beautiful winter wonderland. Despite further snowfall in January, the staff managed to keep the setting open throughout the winter for children to enjoy regardless of the conditions.



Stay and play at Kloisters Kindergarten

Every term Kloisters Kindergarten and Pre-School, Rochester, hold a 'Stay and Play' session where parents and carers of the children who attend the nursery are invited to join in the morning activities and experience what it is like for a child at Kloisters.

All classes are invited to take part and at the last event the setting had over 68 mums, dads, brothers and sisters attend, as well as the children from the Baby Room, Kindergarten and Pre-School classes. It was an extremely busy morning and the children really enjoyed showing their families their work and favourite toys!



The 'Stay and Play' session is a fantastic way to help parents feel more involved in their children's early learning; allowing them to get to know more about the setting and gain a greater understanding of how their children are progressing.

One mum of a former pupil said "My son went to Kloisters from the age of 6 months until he left to start school aged 5.

I found it really hard to leave him at such a young age, I always felt guilty, until one day I was invited to a 'Stay and Play' session at the nursery. It was then that I saw for myself how much fun he had with the carers and his friends, and all the excellent grounding he was having before he started school, both on a social and academic level. "



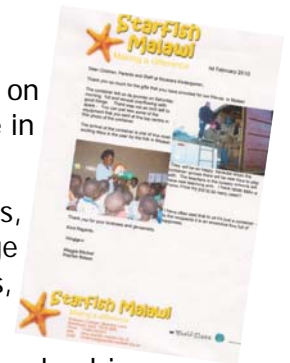
Starfish Malawi

For the last two years Kloisters Kindergarten have collected a range of resources on behalf of the charity Starfish Malawi, an organisation that seeks to make a difference in education, vocational training and AIDS awareness in Africa.

This year Kloisters managed to collect over 3 car loads of equipment, including toys, books, paper, paint, pencils, tables and chairs and a substantial quantity of large equipment, for example climbing equipment, sensory items and outdoor play items, to be packaged up and transported to Malawi by container.

Kloisters have established an excellent relationship with the charity and the nursery school in Malawi, receiving a letter of thanks from the charity and maintaining regular monthly contact with the setting via newsletters and lesson plans. Supporting the children in Hope Nurseries in Malawi has an amazing impact on their lives; the children are always thrilled with their new toys and the support offered through Starfish has made teaching and learning very exciting for the teachers and children alike.

As a gift of thanks the children in Malawi sent the staff and children at Kloisters a selection of hand carved jungle and water animals that were carved by the children themselves. To show them off, the pre-school classes at Kloisters have made backdrop scenery for the wooden animals and they are now proudly on display for all to see!



National 'Stop the Rot' day

This year's national Stop the Rot day saw over 100 nurseries across the UK 'Smile like a Crocodile' and take part in 'The Big Brush'; the event took place on Thursday 18th March at 9.30am and saw around 2,000 children brushing their teeth simultaneously for two minutes.

The children at Saxon Way Children's Centre, Gillingham, joined in the fun of 'The Big Brush' armed with their new toothbrushes and ably assisted by Smiley the Crocodile. Throughout the morning children learnt about the importance of good dental habits and how to fulfil the campaign's 'smile promises'. Those who took part were rewarded with stickers and a certificate along with lots of other goodies provided by the Oral Health Promotion Team and the National Day Nursery Association.

Everyone who took part felt a great sense of achievement and a fantastic time was had by all!



Chinese New Year Celebrations

The staff and children at Hempstead Pavilion Playgroup celebrated the Chinese New Year in style this February with a whole range of activities. Children danced in the year of the tiger, dressing in Chinese costumes and dancing with the playgroup's own Chinese dragon.



Children then set to work at making their own authentic Chinese food, chopping vegetables and placing them in woks to be cooked with bean sprouts and noodles, before getting to grips with their chopsticks to tuck into their tasty snacks.

The celebrations ended with each child receiving a lucky red envelope with their names printed on them in Chinese symbols containing gold coins!



Gong Xi Fa Cai! Happy Chinese New Year!

Outstanding Ofsted results

Congratulations to four more settings who have joined the list of Medway's 'Outstanding' early years providers.



Last November Busy Builders in Gillingham had cause to celebrate after achieving an 'Outstanding' Ofsted rating. Open since 1990, Busy Builders is a sessional pre-school predominantly serving the local community providing support to children from a variety of backgrounds with a range of needs. Ofsted declared the overall quality of the provision to be outstanding, praising staff's knowledge of the children's individual needs, the partnerships they have made with other professionals to further assist children with additional learning needs and the support given to children and parents with English as an additional language as just some of the key areas of good practice.

"Adults provide a warm, caring and consistent approach to children's differing needs."

Allhallows Pre-School, which first opened its doors in 1997, was also judged as 'Outstanding' in its latest Ofsted inspection in December. The inspector remarked that the children experience a caring, stimulating environment where they have good access to a range of resources, helping them to develop in all six areas of learning; areas for improvement are quickly identified and adapted by the setting, helping to provide a more exciting environment for the children to use. The setting was also praised for its links with the local school and the partnerships staff have formed with parents.

"Children's enthusiasm for exploring their environment is encouraged by the staff who provide an interesting range of resources for children."

Parkwood Pre-School are another Medway setting to be deemed as 'Outstanding' following their latest inspection in January. Based in the grounds of Parkwood School, Parkwood Pre-School has provided sessional care for children aged 3 and 4 since its opening in 1997. The setting is inclusive, providing support to children who speak English as an additional language and children with special education needs. Ofsted declared the quality of the provision to be outstanding in all areas, particularly praising the setting's resources that are used to help children learn more about the world around them and the manager's strong vision for the setting.



"The children enjoy looking after their goldfish and talk about what they need to survive and be healthy."

This February The Orchard Pre-School in Rainham was also judged to be 'Outstanding'. The setting originally opened in April 2000 and offers a variety of sessions to children aged 3 and 4 years of age. All children at the setting are given the opportunity to learn British Sign Language, with visual aids such as posters showing pictures and signing actions being displayed around play areas. Inspectors praised the staff's knowledge of each child's specific needs and interests with activities being planned around children's interests and requests ensuring children are eager to participate in all activities available to them.

"The provider is strongly committed and dedicated to ensuring continuous improvement within the setting."

**Many congratulations to all four settings.
Keep up the good work!**

Congratulations to Medway Early Years Graduates



Medway Early Years Service would like to extend many congratulations to the September 2007 cohort of Foundation Degree Early Years Studies who graduated on Saturday 13th March 2010.

These practitioners have managed to successfully balance the demands of family and work alongside the foundation degree. Undertaking to complete further qualifications is a brave step but one that these graduates undertook.

Many of these practitioners have decided to complete this particular pathway by continuing on to gain a BA (Hons) Early Years Studies (*with a recommendation for Early Years Professional Status*). This has also led to a pay enhancement of up to £5,000 for their role as the EYP leading on the delivery of the EYFS.

Medway Council has a vision for quality experiences to be delivered by highly qualified practitioners across the EYFS. These practitioners are part of a growing graduate body within the Private, Voluntary and Independent sector that is contributing towards high quality experiences for our youngest children.

Establishing a graduate workforce within our PVI sector has been made possible through generous funding from the Department of Children, Schools and Families, in the form of the Graduate Leader Fund. Medway Early Years Service is currently funding the seventh cohort at Canterbury Christ Church University and we are looking to support an eighth in September 2010.



If you are interested in gaining your level 5 qualification please contact the Early Years Professional Development Centre by phone on **01634 331488** or via email **EYCCPDC@medway.gov.uk** for application forms and further details.

Details can also be found on **www.e-learningatlast.org.uk**. Funding covers course fees, course readers, initial and final support payments as well as supply cover which must be passported directly to the practitioner taking the foundation degree.

I CAN's Chatterbox Challenge

On Thursday 18th March Kloisters Kindergarten took part in I CAN's Chatterbox Challenge. Children from all four rooms at the setting, from the ages of birth to 4 years old, joined in the fun by singing songs, using simple sign language and taking part in activities about mini-beasts and the garden in front of a proud audience of senior management, room leaders, all staff members and peers at the nursery.

Pre-school members worked hard to make up a story, using props to tell the tale. Children worked together to make mini-beast headbands, costumes, flowers and painted backdrops and really enjoyed taking part.



Nikki Bromley, the Assistant Manager at Kloisters said, "Chatterbox Challenge has been a perfect opportunity for the children to learn and improve their communication skills through activities and songs about the weird and wonderful mini creatures around them. The morning was a fantastically active and noisy affair and it has been an important lesson for the children to understand the importance of not only helping themselves, but also less fortunate children who struggle to speak and understand words."

Following weeks of practice their efforts raised £1,000 for children's communication charity I CAN as part of Chatterbox Challenge 2010. Every penny raised will go directly to help children with communication difficulties. Congratulations to everyone at Kloisters Kindergarten!

Dates for the diary...

Sweeps Festival

1-3 May 2010

Medway's annual Sweeps Festival recreates the joy and laughter enjoyed by the chimney sweeps at their traditional holiday.

www.whatsonmedway.co.uk

Dickens Festival

4-6 June 2010

The Dickens Festival returns to Rochester this June and promises to be a spectacular event of colour, costume and entertainment!

www.whatsonmedway.co.uk

National School Grounds Week

9-13 June 2010

A week of focussed activity encouraging schools and settings in all parts of the UK to get outside and use their grounds.

www.ltl.org.uk

Father's Day

20 June 2010

Get creative with a range of Father's Day crafts, cards and activities.

www.activityvillage.co.uk/fathers_day_page.htm

Child Safety Week

21-27 June 2010

This year's theme is 'Make Time For Safety'. By making time for safety yourself during Child Safety Week and encouraging the parents and families you work with to make time for safety, you can help prevent serious accidents to children.

www.childsafetyweek.org.uk

Bring Your Bear

25 June 2010

A fantastic opportunity for children to have fun with their furry friends and raise money for research into children's illnesses. Teddy Bears picnics, treasure hunts and competitions are all part of the fun to help us celebrate Paddington's birthday!

www.action.org.uk/get_involved/bring_your_bear

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 23rd July. 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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