

Firm Foundations



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Foreword

Hello – and welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter for everyone who works with and for young children in Medway.

As anyone who watches the news knows, the Government will be making some extremely important decisions this autumn concerning public spending and the future policy for education and for families.

Children's Minister Sarah Teather has recently asked Dame Clare Tickell, Chief Executive of Action for Children, to carry out a review of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

The review will cover four main areas:

- scope of regulation – *whether there should be one single framework for all Early Years providers.*
- learning and development – *looking at the latest evidence about children's development and what is needed to give them the best start at school.*
- assessment – *whether young children's development should be formally assessed at a certain age, and what this should cover.*
- welfare – *the minimum standards to keep children safe and support their healthy development.*

Dame Clare will provide a final report in spring 2011. The Government will then consult on any proposed changes before they take effect from September 2012.

Meanwhile in Medway, the impact of the unrelenting efforts of everyone who works with young children has once again resulted in even greater numbers of children reaching the desired level of development and attainment at 5 years of age. The EYFSP data collected this summer indicates that for the fifth successive year in Medway there has been both an improvement in the number of children doing well, and a reduction in the gap between the poorest performing and the peer group as a whole.

You have made, and continue to make, a tremendous difference to the wellbeing of children in Medway, and genuinely improve their future life-chances.

At times of uncertainty and change, we would do well to remember that.

Best wishes

Mark Holmes – Strategic Manager, early years services

For further information and to participate in the consultation please log on to www.e-learningatlast.org.uk or at www.education.gov.uk and click on the consultations section to find the **Tickell Review of the Early Years Foundation Stage – Call for Evidence**

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>

Office opening hours — **Monday to Thursday:** 8.30am to 5.30pm

Friday: 8.30am to 5.00pm



Looking for money to help with a project?

Medway Council may be able to help you find what's available...

The Medway Council website has lots of advice about where to look for funding sources and how to apply for them; you can even subscribe for a FREE regular update on funding schemes as they become available.

For more information on available funding visit www.medway.gov.uk/index/council/funding or phone **01634 332114** or **01634 332875**.

Please note that the Early Years & Childcare Service does not administer this website.

Details of some of the funding schemes that are currently available are given below. Although most funders do not give grants to private businesses, there are some that do in the right circumstances.

The **Children in Need Small Grants** scheme offers grants of **up to £10,000 a year for three years** to third sector organisations working with children and young people. This is the first time this organisation has operated a UK-wide small grants programme and they are hoping to reach organisations that have not previously considered applying for funding from Children in Need. Applicants should be not-for-profit organisations working with children and young people under the age of 18.

The next application deadline is 15 October 2010. For further information visit the website www.bbc.co.uk/pudsey/grants/smallgrants.shtml or phone **020 8576 7788**.

Community Wildlife is the Big Lottery Fund's new programme for projects that bring local people together to discover, enjoy and protect the wildlife in their local area.

The programme is open to a wide range of organisations including voluntary and community organisations, schools, town and parish councils, and statutory health authorities. Grants of between **£300 and £10,000** are available for:

Projects that improve rural or urban environments for people to enjoy, for example by:

- creating a nature trail, woodland walk or wildlife garden

Projects that get people more active and healthier, for example by:

- providing opportunities for children to learn about nature through play.

The next application deadlines are 22 September, 24 November 2010. For further information on the programme and to access an application form please visit the website www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog_community_wildlife or call their helpline **0845 367 0610**. For ideas on future projects visit www.bbc.co.uk/wild

Awards for All is a lottery programme that will fund environmental projects, supplying grants of between £300-£10,000. Further information on the scheme and details on how you can apply can be found via their website www.awardsforall.org.uk

Grassroots Grants is now in its final year and offers grants of up to £5,000 to voluntary groups with incomes below £30,000 p.a. to be used for a number of purposes including purchase of equipment and refurbishment projects. There are no application deadlines for this scheme; to request an application pack and for further information email admin@kentcf.org.uk

Ernest Cook Trust – Offers support to environmental and countryside educational projects with a large grants programme and small grants programme running throughout the year. For further details and information on how to apply visit the website www.ernestcooktrust.org.uk

The Early Years & Childcare Service is happy to provide non-financial support for appropriate applications from providers to funding bodies.

Please contact Richard Cooke in the first instance on richard.cooke@medway.gov.uk

Final four Sure Start Children's Centres open in time for Summer!

Children across Medway had every reason to look forward to a fun-packed summer as the final four children's centres opened for a host of activities. The eagerly anticipated centres are the last planned Sure Start Children's centres in Medway, bringing one to every community. The new centres are based at Deanwood, Miers Court and Riverside Primary Schools in Rainham, and Delce Infant School in Rochester. They join the 15 centres already operating in Medway, offering families with children under five a package of facilities and activities from antenatal care and midwifery services to messy play, fancy dress parties and cooking classes.

Medway Council's Portfolio Holder for Children's Services Cllr Les Wicks said: "This is an exciting time for families in Medway. It's fantastic to see all the centres nearing completion, making this summer full of fun and smiles for families. We already have 15 successful centres and have worked hard to reach this point where there will be a centre offering families first class facilities and support on their doorstep. Congratulations to all the staff for their hard work and commitment".

Karen Sillers, the co-ordinator of Deanwood Children's Centre, said: "We couldn't wait to open our doors and enjoy our first summer. We've had lots of exciting activities for parents and their children. Much time and hard work has gone into this Sure Start Children's Centre."

Sure Start Children's Centres are part of a government strategy to provide high quality services for families under one roof. These include helping children lead healthy, active lives and giving parents support and opportunities to study and find work. The centres run free activities in community and church halls, and outdoor activities at Medway's country parks and reserves.

To find out more about Sure Start Children's Centres in Medway please contact the Medway Family Information Service on [01634 335566](tel:01634335566).



Saxon Way Children's Centre re-launches its community room



Following the flood in their community room back in May, Saxon Way Children's Centre are pleased to announce that they are back to normality and are functioning once again on a full time basis from the centre.

The team at Saxon Way would like to thank everyone for their support and understanding over the last few months and convey a very special thank you to Sally Hawkins and her team at Merryland Day Nursery for kindly allowing the centre to use a room at the nursery to ensure Saxon Way could still continue to offer families a service.

Normal services have now resumed and to celebrate Saxon Way will be hosting a re-launch party for the community room, in addition to celebrating the launch of their new website www.saxonway.org which goes live this September.

For more information on this event please contact the centre on [01634 852320](tel:01634852320) or visit their website www.saxonway.org

You can also keep up-to-date with events and activities at the centre by checking Saxon Way Children's Centre's facebook page.

Mosaic making at Brompton Sure Start Children's Centre

Brompton Sure Start Children's Centre is currently undergoing some exciting changes, with the Pavilion building on site being extended and modified to provide some much needed extra space for Sure Start activities.



To mark the new developments at the centre the staff at Brompton decided to create a new feature for the building. During family week in June all at Brompton set to work at designing and making a mosaic to be placed in the new outside decked area of the site; families from across the community joined forces with the staff at the centre to create a fantastic, bright and colourful mosaic.

Once the mosaic was complete, the community rewarded themselves for their hard work by tucking into a huge 'family' picnic!



Everyone had a great time and the children really enjoyed working with their families and friends to create a beautiful piece of artwork. Brompton Sure Start Children's Centre is very proud of its new mosaic and is delighted to have a permanent reminder of this year's family week and all the fun that was had by all involved.

(M)ind, (E)xercise, (N)utrition...(D)o it! (MEND)

MEND 2-4 is a FREE, healthy lifestyle programme aimed at helping children and their families lead happier, healthier lives. Developed by experts in child health, the MEND 2-4 Programme is a course for parents or carers with children aged 2 to 4 years of age. The programme offers a fun and creative environment for families to learn how to make healthier lifestyle choices and ensure their children have the best possible start in life.



The MEND 2-4 Programme...

- Helps families deal with fussy eating and encourages children to eat a wider variety of foods using food exposure techniques.
- Is suitable for families of all ethnicities.
- Encourages families to socialise in a fun and healthy way.
- Uses evidence-based behaviour change and parenting techniques.
- Aligns to NICE clinical guidance 43 and helps support the 'Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives Strategy' and the 'Early Years Foundation Stage' framework.
- Helps families understand the negative effects of sedentary behaviour and encourages active family play time.

MEND 2-4's ten weekly sessions combine parent-toddler active play, parent discussion groups and children's crèche style creative play activities. All sessions take place during the daytime in Children's Centres and community venues across Medway.

Why not help the 2-4 year olds from your setting get involved by referring their parents or carers and help them on the way to a fitter, healthier and happier life!

To find out more contact the Healthy Weight Team on **01634 333103** or via email mend@medway.gov.uk

For further information visit the website www.mendprogramme.org

Learning Stories: Fairview Community Primary School, Foundation Stage

As part of their professional development, EYFS staff at Fairview Community Primary School took part in the Self-Assessment Development Group run by the Medway Early Years and Childcare Quality Team. This ran across 2009/10 and part of their commitment to the project was to document the reflections and enrichments made to their early years practice. Here is their journey...

The journey so far...

Where it all began:

Learning Stories were first implemented in Reception at Fairview in September 2007. Reception staff would take pictures of children during their play; adults would then conference with the children, asking them a set of four questions:

- What are you doing in the picture?
- Where are you?
- Who are you with?
- How are you feeling? Why?

Although the children enjoyed seeing photographs of themselves, the pictures held no relevance as they had not always been aware that the photographs had been taken. Adults equally found this method quite monotonous, the children became accustomed to the same questions and therefore their answers equally became similar.

What happened next . . .

After attending the Medway Self-Assessment Development Group Carla Attard, the Foundation Stage Leader at Fairview Community Primary School, and her teaching assistant felt that a change was needed and decided to roll out these changes, starting with their own class to test their success.



The first step was to increase the children's awareness of the Learning Stories by placing them in a 'jazzy' new box, allowing the children to access them freely. The children were told that they could ask for photographs to be taken to use as entries for their books and were also able to access and use the camera themselves. A Learning Stories tray was introduced and it was explained to the children that this could be used to store pieces of work that were important to them which they wanted to go into their Learning Story.

The set four questions were looked at and were considered no longer necessary; instead the children were asked what they wanted to say about their photograph or piece of work and subsequently open-ended questions would then follow in response to their answers. When conferencing with the children, children were asked to collect their Learning Stories, photographs and work for which they were responsible for sticking in.

"Total control and autonomy had now been handed over to the children and as practitioners we felt amazing."

Carla and her teaching assistant also introduced reviews with the children, recording additional comments in their books whenever the children commented on their previous entries.

In order to ensure equality of opportunity they tracked on a monitoring sheet which children they had conferenced or reviewed with so that they could target gaps in the class. Children who did not request photographs or ask to use the camera were always asked by staff if they could take a photograph of what they were doing, with the understanding that if the child said no their decision was respected. With the success of the Learning Stories in this class, Fairview decided to introduce the new changes to the rest of the FS team where the initiative was greatly welcomed.



"Obviously the set up in each Foundation Stage classroom looks slightly different but then so do our children!"



The next step on the journey was to inform parents and carers of the changes that had been made, specifically with regards to questioning and then to also introduce the process of reviewing to them. Carla Attard said 'I can proudly say that parents and carers are now conferencing and reviewing with their child but more importantly sharing collaboratively. We at Fairview feel that this enrichment of an already established model has helped to give both our children and parents and carers a voice. Learning Stories are now cross-referenced to and used to inform children's assessments. We would be lost without them!'

Where do we go from here?

Fairview's next step is to introduce the use of flip videos in Reception. Who knows what quality language and self-assessment they will get from these...

If you would like to discuss Fairview's model or arrange to come and see some examples of Fairview's Learning Stories please contact **Carla Attard**, Fairview Community Primary School's Foundation Stage Leader on **01634 338710**.

Autumn Headcount 2010

All registered providers will shortly receive their Headcount pack for Autumn 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:

Autumn 2010

Headcount Day

Return Headcount information for Autumn final payment (Deadline)

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

Date

Thursday 7th October 2010

Friday 15th October 2010

Friday 26th November 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.

Barnardo's Big Toddle at Hempstead Pavilion Playgroup

This July Hempstead Pavilion Playgroup joined over 10,000 settings nationwide to take part in the Barnardos Big Toddle, the UK's biggest charity event for under 5s. This year's Big Toddle took place throughout the summer across the UK and saw around 500,000 toddlers participate in both national and local setting based events to raise money for the renowned children's charity.



The staff and children at Hempstead Pavilion Playgroup organised and took part in their very own toddle in the beautiful surroundings of Hempstead Park. Staff packed the toddle full of activities to make the toddle fun and exciting; the children went on a bear hunt, rolled and ran up and down the grassy slopes, played 'What's the time Mr Wolf?', were 'Dingle Dangle Scarecrows', flew in a spaceship, made grass angels, flew as aeroplanes and chugged as trains, sang and danced action rhymes and of course toddled their way around the park!



The children had a fantastic time playing together in the park and did a wonderful job raising money that can be put to good use benefiting children across the UK.

Beresford Pre-School's Sports Day

The children at Beresford Pre-School enjoyed a morning of fun in the sun this June as they took part in their annual sports day. Friends and family were there to cheer the children on and enjoy the beautiful weather at the event at Balfour Junior School on Friday 25 June.

The children had a fantastic time, splitting into teams to take part in a variety of races such as the egg and spoon race, sack race, flag race and scooter racing. The reds, yellows, blues and greens got the chance to compete in each race and were rewarded with stickers for all of their hard work.

After the children had tired themselves out it was their mums, dads and siblings turn to join the fun, taking part in a series of special running races. Everyone had an excellent time, especially the children who loved earning their stickers and showing them off to their proud families!



St. Nicholas Playgroup's Bonnet Parade

St Nicholas Playgroup in Strood gave their annual Easter Bonnet Parade an interesting twist earlier this year by incorporating the theme of the solar system, a topic the children had been looking at throughout the term.

A lot of hard work went into making the distinctive space themed bonnets. Mums and dads helped out and let their imaginations go wild, getting creative by combining the traditional Easter images of chicks, rabbits and flowers with planets, space ships, stars and even aliens to make a whole host of fun and fantastic bonnets.

On the day of the parade the children donned their bonnets to visit the day centre at St. Nicholas Church. The children spent the morning talking to the elderly and showing off their hard work; the elderly enjoyed seeing the children in their bonnets and found it difficult to choose a winner, coming to a decision after much thought!



The morning was finished off with some nursery rhymes, which everybody joined in with, young and old. The children had a lovely morning and really enjoyed taking part in their very unique Easter Bonnet Parade!

Blythswood Care appeal

Blythswood Care is a charity that has been working since 1966 to provide practical help for those in need. Whether through filled shoeboxes at Christmas, relief and development aid or social projects for young and old, Blythswood brings hope to thousands in Europe, Africa and Asia.



Blythswood Care have a local base here in Medway with a small warehouse on Medway City Estate and charity shops in Strood and Snodland and are currently appealing for resources for their next load of humanitarian relief to Romania, aimed at helping families who have been affected by the extensive flooding that has recently devastated the country. If any setting has any surplus educational supplies or toys in good condition

that they wish to donate or are able to collect any clothes (for all ages), Blythswood can use these resources to support educational projects including many pre-schools and help people in need both locally and globally.



If you are able to help and wish to make a donation please contact Blythswood Care on **01634 291411**.

For further information visit the website www.blythswood.org

Cold Weather Advice

With the nights starting to draw in and cold weather just around the corner here is some useful information to assist Early Years providers in the winter months...



Informing parents of closure via local radio stations

If you decide to close your setting, you can let your parents know via local radio stations. To do this, contact the radio stations via the methods below:

BBC Radio Kent – **0845 3004 700** Monday to Friday (5.00 a.m. to Midnight).

KM FM – visit the website <http://resources.thekmgroupp.co.uk/schools>

Heart FM – **01227 774 444** or news.kent@heart.co.uk or kentsnow@heart.co.uk

Closures will be uploaded to www.heartkent.co.uk as soon as possible. Heart respectfully request that schools and parents do not keep ringing to check when the site is to be updated unless in a real emergency, as this will slow the process down.

When emailing or contacting the local radio stations with information for broadcast about closing you must provide the following information: -

1. The appropriate password
2. The name and town of your setting and its Ofsted number.
3. A short message giving appropriate or vital information.
4. A contact name and telephone number.

NOTE: - The radio stations need all of this information to avoid hoax messages being given.

Further instructions and information will be sent to PVI settings shortly.

Working Temperatures

When it's Cold

There are no minimum temperatures set for the children. It is up to the named person to carry out a risk assessment, and use their judgement as to whether it's safe or not.

There *are* minimum temperatures set **by law** for the staff. These are 13C (55.4F) for 'Strenuous' work and 16C (60.8F) for 'General' work; all settings will probably come under the 'General' heading. It is **illegal to make people work in temperatures below this level**, and it is the duty of the employer to rectify this. It follows therefore, that if the temperature is below the minimum, the group would have to close until the situation is resolved.

When it's Hot

There are no maximum temperatures detailed by law. The named person should carry out a risk assessment out for the children, and use their judgement as to whether it's safe or not. It is recommended that this principle should also be applied to staff.

If you require any further detailed information you can contact the Health & Safety Executive Infoline on **08701 545 500** or log onto www.hse.gov.uk

Clearing Paths of Snow and Ice

It is acceptable to clear snow and grit areas within your own premises as this is showing that you have identified walkways and have made every effort to make this safe. Where public pathways are concerned, these are the responsibility of the highways department, and so it's probably best to leave this to them just in case there are other issues such as uneven surfaces/paving slabs etc to consider.

National Minimum Wage—New Guidelines

The National Minimum Wage (NMW) changes on 1 October 2010; the rates per hour change and the 'main' rate now applies to people aged 21 and over, previously this applied to people aged 22 and over. There is also a new rate for people on apprenticeships.

Current NMW rates

There are different levels of NMW depending on the employees age. The current rates are:

- £5.80 - the main rate for workers aged 22 and over
- £4.83 - the 18-21 rate
- £3.57 - the 16-17 rate for workers above school leaving age but under 18

From 1 October 2010 new rates and age bands will apply:

- £5.93 - the rate for workers **aged 21 and over**
- £4.92 - the 18-20 rate
- £3.64 - the 16-17 rate
- new minimum wage of £2.50 per hour for apprentices who are either under 19 or in the first year of their apprenticeship

Entitlement to the NMW

Most workers in the UK over compulsory school leaving age are legally entitled to be paid at least the NMW and all employers have to pay it if the employee is entitled to it.

It makes no difference:

- if you pay staff weekly or monthly, by cheque, in cash or in another way
- if your employees work full time, part time or any other working pattern
- if your employees work at the employer's own premises or elsewhere
- what size the employer is
- where the work is based in the UK

An employee is entitled to the NMW even if they sign a contract agreeing to be paid at a lower rate. This is regardless of whether they sign of their own free will or because the employer persuades or makes them. The contract will have no legal effect and the employee must still be paid the proper rate. Failure to pay your employees the National Minimum Wage can lead to a criminal prosecution.

Further information can be found on the **Business Link** website www.businesslink.gov.uk

Places to visit in Medway...

Since its opening in 2007, Dickens World in Chatham has taken its visitors on a fascinating journey to Dickensian Britain, treating both young and old to a vast assortment of attractions from the 'Great Expectations Boat Ride', Europe's largest themed indoor boat ride, to a lesson in a Victorian School, a visit to the 'Haunted House of 1859' and the Dickensian Courtyard where visitors get the chance to come face to face with some of their favourite characters! After all the excitement in the Dickensian Courtyard, visitors can take a rest in the 4D cinema show at Peggotty's Boathouse or at the animatronic show in the Britannia Theatre and sit back and enjoy the story of Dickens' life and his literary works...

Dickens World is located at Chatham Maritime adjacent to the Dockside outlet centre and is easily accessible by the Medway tunnel via the M2 (A2) and the A289.

Tickets are priced at £12.50 for adults and £7.50 for children, children under 5 are free. The attraction is open daily from 10am to 5.30pm; please note the last admission is at 4pm.

For further information and details of upcoming events visit the website www.dickensworld.co.uk



Dates for the diary...

PDC Open Days 9-10 September 2010

The Quality Team will be putting on activities and displays as well as being available to discuss current topics in Early Years and Childcare. Providers will also be able to see the facilities available to practitioners working in Medway.

01634 331488

Jeans for Genes Day 1 October 2010

The annual fundraiser is back, with Fifi and the Flowertots returning once again as the official mascots. Visit the website for lots of fundraising ideas and activities!

www.jeansforgenes.com

Humphrey's Pyjama Week The Children's Trust 11-15 October 2010

Over 40,000 children are expected to take part in this year's Humphrey's Pyjama Week and wear their pyjamas to nursery or pre-school. For a voluntary donation of £2 per child, children can wear their pyjamas to nursery and participate in a number of fun and educational themed activities, whilst raising funds for The Children's Trust. To register and receive your event pack log on to the website.

www.thechildrenstrust.org.uk

BBC Children In Need Appeal 20 November 2010

Support Pudsey by doing something different this year, for a range of fundraising ideas and to register log on to the website.

www.bbc.co.uk/pudsey

Road Safety Week 22-28 November 2010

This year's theme is 'KIDS SAY SLOW DOWN!'. In Road Safety Week this year kids will be telling motorists '20's plenty' and reminding drivers that by slowing down they can save a life.

www.roadsafetyweek.org.uk

Tree Dressing 4-5 December 2010

Decorate and celebrate a living tree in your street, garden or playground and show how much you value it!

www.commonground.org.uk/trees/t-dress.html

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 17 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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