

Firm Foundations



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Happy New Year!

Welcome to the first edition for 2011 of our regular newsletter for all those who work with and for young children and their families in Medway.

We all know that the coming year will be difficult for families as the impact of job losses, price rises and tight finances continues to hit home. For those of us who work to support children, this means increased demands and a continued need to ensure that we work ever harder to help those families.

But 2011 will also be a year of intense pressure on public finances, with some very tough decisions being taken by politicians both locally and in government about what to spend money on. In Medway, the Council, the NHS and many other publicly-funded organisations are grappling with these challenges as they seek to set budgets for the coming years.

Yet at the same time, there is a growing consensus in the country regarding the unique importance of the early years in shaping future life chances. In recent months a number of reports, speeches and research findings by academics, scientists, policy-makers and politicians from across the spectrum have highlighted evidence that the right support in the early years is the single most important thing in determining what sort of life a child will go on to have.

Frank Field MP was commissioned by the government to look at new ways of addressing child poverty. His report concluded that in order to prevent poor children becoming poor adults, the UK needs a concerted focus on high quality care, learning and parenting support in the earliest years of life. *"There are huge class differences in the range of children's abilities measurable on their first day at school. For many poor children life's race is by then already effectively over."*

C4EO is an organisation that looks at effective practice in the UK and beyond. Their recent report, *"Grasping the Nettle: Early Intervention For Children Families and Communities"* also highlights the critical importance of the early years and in particular how language and communication skills need to be addressed before the age of 5½ years. The key finding of this report is that early intervention works, and it works best when it happens in the early years.

In Medway, we have made huge strides in giving children a better start in life, and in ensuring that those children born into difficult circumstances have as good a chance as is possible to experience positive things in their first few years. We can see this each and every day in the pre-schools, nurseries, Sure Start Children's Centres, childminders' homes and play facilities across Medway. And we have scientific and statistical evidence to show the progress that children are making.

That is testament to the skills, commitment and energy of all of you who work with children and their families. Our task for 2011, whatever the new challenges, is to keep on making that difference.

Best wishes

Mark Holmes

**Strategic manager
Early Years Services**

Further information on the Child Poverty Review and the C4EO report, *'Grasping the Nettle: Early Intervention For Children, Families and Communities'*, can be found online at www.povertyreview.independent.gov.uk and www.c4eo.org.uk.

Family Information Service News

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA)

The Family Information Service is in the process of collating information for the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2011. When completed the assessment will give an overview of all childcare provision within the Medway towns; the FIS aim to publish the report by 31 March 2011. The Family Information Service would like to thank all providers for their co-operation in returning the completed CSA questionnaire to them.

Extended Schools

The Family Information Service will be providing schools with updated childcare provider information sheets for inclusion in their Extended Schools Portfolio in the New Year.

The portfolios are an invaluable resource to parents and practitioners, giving an overview of childcare services and facilities in and around each school. To find out more about the portfolio, visit your nearest school or contact the FIS for more information.

Contact Point

The Family Information Service run a surgery every Wednesday morning from 9am to 11.45am at the Contact Point, Dock Road, Chatham. For advice on Childcare, Parenting & Family Support and much more come along to the Contact Point where a member of the Family Information Service will be on hand to give expert advice, information and guidance.

Family Information Service Directory

The Medway Family Information Service Directory is a searchable online directory to help you access and utilise a range of services, resources and activities in the area. You can also view details of your setting online and advise us about the changes or updates you'd like to make! To access the directory visit www.medwayfisd.co.uk.

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:

- 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>



Looking for money to help with a project?

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 organisation working with children and young people under the age of 18.

Next application deadlines are **15 January 2011** and **15 April 2011**.

For further information visit the website www.bbc.co.uk/pudsey/grants/smallgrants.shtml or phone **020 8576 7788**.

The **True Colours Trust** is one of the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts. It can provide small grants of **up to £10,000**, usually for one-off purposes, to help smaller organisations develop and deliver programmes for children, their siblings and families.

Projects particularly welcomed include hydrotherapy pools, multi sensory rooms, mini buses, young carer's projects, sibling projects and bereavement support.

For further information visit the website www.truecolourstrust.org.uk/small_grants

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

Charity Commission – requirements and guidance

If your setting is a registered charity you will be aware that you have to send information to the Charity Commission on an annual basis. There have been some changes during the past year regarding the information that is required.



The nature of the information varies dependent on your annual income.

If your setting income is *more* than £25,000 per year you are required to provide both an:

- Annual Return *and*
- Trustee's Annual Report (TAR) complete with financial accounts

If your setting income is *less* than £25,000 per year you may only be required to provide an:

- Annual Return

We are aware that a number of settings are overdue in providing their annual information to the Charities Commission. We strongly urge you to check that your setting has fulfilled its responsibilities, and forward any outstanding information as soon as possible.

You can find further information on what information is required and what has been received on the Charity Commission website www.charity-commission.gov.uk/index.aspx. Alternatively if you wish to speak to someone at the Charity Commission you can call their contact centre on **0845 300 0218**.

Speech and Language Advice Drop-in Clinics

From January 2011 NHS Medway's Speech and Language Advice service for children will be changing. In addition to the three existing venues, a fourth children's centre will now be hosting the advice clinic on a monthly basis, meaning that there will be an advice clinic running somewhere in Medway four times per month.

The advice drop-in clinics are open to parents and carers of children aged two to four, who have not yet entered reception year at school. The clinics provide an opportunity for parents and carers to speak with a Speech and Language Therapist about any concerns about their child's speech and language progress.

The Advice Drop-in sessions, for which parents and carers do not need to make an appointment to attend, will continue to run from Bligh Children's Centre in Strood, Wayfield Children's Centre in Chatham and Saxon Way Children's Centre in Gillingham. Additionally, Hand in Hand Children's Centre in Twydall will also be hosting monthly advice clinic drop-in sessions.

Sessions will be supported by children's centre staff and will look to identify those children who have a genuine speech and language difficulty and require a referral into the speech and language service. The advice clinics are for children that have not already been referred to the Speech and Language Advice service.

Operation of the sessions

The clinics will operate at the following days and times. Please note these dates and times are applicable from January 2011 to December 2011 inclusive.

- **Bligh Children's Centre:** 2nd Thursday of the month from 1.00pm to 2.30pm
01634 336220
- **Wayfield Children's Centre:** 4th Wednesday of the month from 9.30am to 11.00am
01634 843544
- **Saxon Way Children's Centre:** 1st Wednesday of the month from 10.45am to 12.30pm
01634 852320
- **Hand in Hand Children's Centre:** 3rd Tuesday of the month from 9.30am to 11.00am
01634 365985

Clinics operate on a non-appointment basis and there are a limited amount of time-slots available for parents and carers at any given advice clinic. Appointments are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis; parents that arrive later during the session may have to wait some time for an appointment, or may be unable to be allocated an appointment at all.

Healthy Eating Consultation

Medway's Healthy Weight Team have commissioned a family consultation across the Authority during January and February 2011 to seek views, attitudes and behaviours around healthy eating practices. This is to assist future healthy eating work in becoming more effective in supporting behaviour changes. The target group for the consultation is families with children up to 18 years old and the consultation is hoping to reach a range of ages from this target group.

The consultation will be interactive and take a combined approach between on-street surveys, workshops and family interviews. The results of the consultation will determine what types of food initiatives are needed locally and will help support a co-ordinated approach between all partners to meet these needs.

The Healthy Weight Team hope that many of you would like to support this consultation and work to access the views of families that use your services. If you are interested in being part of this consultation please contact Claire Burgess at change4life@medway.gov.uk to register your interest.

**A HEALTHY
MEDWAY**
Easier ways to enjoy your food

Brompton Children's Centre celebrate a new family room

There's a whole lot more room for learning at the Sure Start Children's Centre in Brompton thanks to a spacious extension. Youngsters, parents and staff came to celebrate the official opening of the new look centre based at Brompton Westbrook Primary School on 3rd November.

It now has room for double the children and activities previously on offer. The changes included the addition of a kitchen with two cookers, which will be used to teach healthy cooking to families. The sure start staff, children and parents commemorated the opening by planting a tree in the centre's garden and also tucked into a celebratory cake.

Manager Nicki Webb said "It's important that we have a bigger centre so we can reach out to more children and families in the area"

The new, bigger room will now be used to host a range of sessions for local families with children under five, including baby massage and art and craft groups. They also run a Saturday group with activities including baking, woodwork, making collages and storytime.

Brompton Children's Centre is one of 19 Sure Start centres across Medway providing information and services for families with young children.

To find out more please contact the Family Information Service on **01634 335566**.



Inclusive fun days

Medway's Sure Start Children's Centres teamed up with Bradfield's Holiday Play scheme to provide three inclusive fun days for children under five and their families. The fun days, funded by Aiming High, took place on three consecutive Saturdays in November and were based around den building.



Many families attended the sessions across the three Saturdays and thoroughly enjoyed experiencing the sensory dens. There were dark dens that had neon and fibre optic lights inside and lighter, brighter dens for children to play in. There were also art and craft activities available so children could decorate the dens as they wished. Some children made camp fires out of coloured paper to place inside the dens and sing songs round their creation.



The fun days were aimed at children under five with additional needs and their families (including their older siblings), to give the whole family a chance to take part in a fun activity together and this was very well received.

It is hoped that another three fun days will run in the Spring with a new theme – so watch this space and get ready to book your family a place at your nearest Children's Centre.



News from the PDC...

We hope that you have had a restful break and wish you a happy New Year. At the end of last term, you should have received a copy of the Spring Term 2011 Training Programme. Applications have been coming in and we would urge you to send in yours as soon as possible in order to secure a place on the training of your choice. You can complete a training application form and post it to the PDC, alternatively the programme and application form are available on www.e-learningatlast.org.uk where you can complete an application and email it to EYCCPDC@medway.gov.uk.

The programme gives full details of the training available in the Spring Term and the facilities that are available for you to use. We are fortunate to have the PDC as a resource for Early Years and Childcare practitioners in Medway and welcome your feedback in helping us shape its development.

We have two 'Drop in's' booked again for this term on Thursday 17th February and Monday 14th March 2011. There will be a range of materials and equipment for you to make resources, for example, laminates, feely bags, books, storysacks, use of the Scrap Store and Library, etc. There is no need to book, just 'drop in' at a time to suit you between 10am and 5pm.

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

We look forward to seeing you.

Anita Griffin

Professional Development Centre Manager

Early Years & Childcare Professional Development Centre Adverse weather policy and procedure



In the event of adverse weather, for example, snow, ice, extreme winds, we reserve the right to postpone training, possibly at short notice.

The decision to postpone training will not be taken lightly but will consider the implications for individuals involved in the training, to include delegates, trainers and administrators.

The team at the PDC will endeavour to be aware of the five-day weather forecasts, particularly during the Autumn and Spring terms. In the interests of safety, if there are warnings of weather conditions that could potentially make travelling hazardous, a decision will be made as to whether training should be postponed.

In the event that training is postponed the procedure will be as follows:

- Wherever possible, delegates will be contacted by telephone before the date of the training to advise of postponement. As the weather is often unpredictable, it may be that you are not contacted until the morning of the training.
- There will be an announcement on www.e-learningatlast.org.uk and you do not need to be logged in to view this page.
- We will endeavour to arrange for an announcement to be made on Radio Kent. As we are co-located with Bligh Infant School and Bligh Junior School, the PDC will be closed if the schools are closed.
- If you have not received a telephone call, and you are unsure about whether the training may have been postponed, we recommend that you telephone to confirm whether the training will be taking place before starting your journey. The telephone numbers for this are **01634 338529** or **01634 331488**.
- Delegates will be advised of an alternative date for the training as soon as this is arranged.

We apologise in advance for any inconvenience postponement may cause.

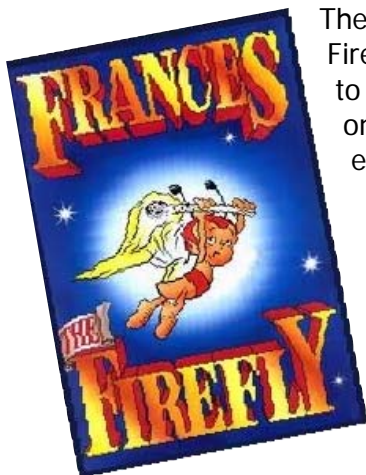
Fire Safety at Hempstead Pavilion Playgroup & St. Nicholas Playgroup

Two Medway settings learnt all about fire safety last term after the Fire Service paid them a visit. Fire Fighters from two services in Medway taught their budding new recruits about the role of a Fire Fighter and gave them some valuable lessons in staying safe.



Hempstead Pavilion Playgroup were visited by two of the Fire Fighters from their local service; the Fire Fighters were very patient with the children whose ages ranged from 18 months to 3 years and provided them with a lot of useful information in a simple format that they were able to understand.

The children had to count to twenty whilst the Fire Fighter put on his uniform, seeing if he could beat them, as Fire fighters must be able to don their whole uniform in twenty seconds! The children learnt that the Emergency telephone number is 999 & how to 'STOP, DROP & ROLL' if their clothes caught light.



The children then watched a DVD of 'Frances the Fire fly' before going out into the gated car park to see the Fire Engine! The Fire Fighters turned on the flashing lights and sirens and allowed each child a turn at using the fire hose.

After the visit the children put everything they had learned into practice by dressing up as fire fighters and using their experience to act out the role of a Fire Fighter. The children really enjoyed the experience and had a fantastic time learning some valuable lessons in staying safe.



Over in Strood, St. Nicholas Playgroup were visited by some of their local Fire Fighters from the Strood White Watch, who came to talk to the children about fire safety. The staff at St. Nicholas Playgroup carry out regular fire drills and talk to the children about keeping safe, so the children were well prepared to answer some of Fireman Mark and Fireman Sam's questions!

The children were able to use the fire hose and squirted water onto the grass. Children and staff were given a tour of the fire engine and were shown all of the equipment and what it is used for; Fireman Mark was most impressed with the children's knowledge especially Charlie, aged 3, who knew the name for the Fire Fighters' cutters 'The jaws of life'.

The children and staff had a lovely morning with the team from Strood White Watch; to say thank you to the Fire Fighters the children immediately set to work, drawing pictures to send in to the Fire Station!



A big thank you to both teams of Fire Fighters and well done to the staff and children at both settings!

A Cambodian Experience

Following a trip to Cambodia in November, Early Years Admin, Budget and Finance Manager Trevor Hughes gives an insight into schooling in Cambodia...

On the 24th November I was on a tour of Cambodia, part of which involved a boat trip around a floating village on the Tonle Sap Lake. Some of the houses are fixed on stilts, whilst others are completely free and float around as the level of the lake goes up and down.

As we were travelling along, the guide pointed out a floating school the 'Kompong Khleang Floating Primary School' and one of our party asked if it was possible to have a look inside. We pulled up alongside the school and clambered over the balustrades; it was lunchtime, so we weren't disturbing any lessons, but there were still quite a lot of children there.



In Cambodia, because of the lack of skilled teachers, children only get four hours of schooling per day in either a morning or afternoon session; these sessions run from 7am to 11am and 1pm to 5pm. The Catholic backed school has as many as 225 pupils per day over the 2 sessions with just one teacher.

The building itself was partitioned into two by a curtain and had very little equipment with just low desks for the children to work on and no chairs, leaving the children to sit or kneel on the floor. It was quite hot for us at around 30°C, and temperature remains constant throughout the year.

Despite all of this, the children were delightful, eager to learn and so willing to interact with us. One of our party spotted an A-Z alphabet chart and soon the children had sat down and were going through the alphabet with her, in English of course. We asked if they would sing for us and they were happy to do so, adding in actions to accompany their song.



When we left the children and their teacher came outside to wave us off. It was a lovely experience and all the better for being natural and unscripted. Later on we saw a boat full of children heading home from school, very different from anything in Medway.

Every Breakfast Club Matters Accreditation

On Tuesday 14th September 2010, the Early Years and Childcare Professional Development Centre held a celebration to congratulate the first group of Medway breakfast clubs to become accredited.

The 14 newly accredited breakfast clubs are held at All Saints Primary School, Gordon Road School, Melville and Brompton Breakfast & After School Club, Luton School, New Road School, Rockets @ Twydall, Play-a-way Activities Centre, Play-a-way Pre-School Day Nursery & Out of School Club, Bligh Junior School, St Michael's School, St. Mary's Island Primary, St. Margaret's School, Wayfield Primary and Woody's Breakfast & After School Club.



Mark Holmes, Strategic Manager for Early Years Services, gave a speech congratulating the providers on successfully becoming accredited breakfast clubs and handed out certificates individually to each club. The EBCM panellists, Aiming High Project Manager, Lesley Kedge, and Early Years Principle Officer, Richard Cooke, attended the celebration and the third panel member Kirsteen Harris, Quality Team Deputy Manager, sent her congratulations to the 14 Breakfast Clubs.

The Every Breakfast Club Matters Accreditation portfolio has been developed for all breakfast clubs, whether they operate in a school, as part of another Playwork provision such as an after school club, or a childcare provision or a nursery. The accreditation is aimed at maintained, private, voluntary and independently run provisions, and is of particular use to breakfast clubs that are not registered by Ofsted.

The Playwork team at Medway Council acknowledge that breakfast clubs are not often given recognition for the good quality childcare that they provide for children of school age. It is crucial that children and young people in Medway get a well balanced, healthy breakfast to boost concentration and creativity, to talk to friends and socialise during this important part of the day before school; the Playwork team have therefore developed the portfolio to enable breakfast clubs to ensure that their good quality provision is recognised through the accreditation scheme. The scheme provides a benchmark of criteria that should be considered as a minimum standard of practice, whilst providing examples and ideas for future development. It is also a tool to demonstrate and celebrate good practice.

It was a wonderful day and the breakfast clubs should be pleased with themselves for all the hard work, commitment and time they have put in over the year. Congratulations all of you!

Spring 2011 Professional Development and Training Programme



Providers should now have received their Spring 2011 Professional Development and Training Programme.

If you have not yet received your copy please contact the Early Years and Childcare Professional Development Centre on either **01634 331488** or **01634 338529** or via the email address **EYCCPDC@medway.gov.uk**

Big Toddle 2011



The UK's biggest charity event for under fives returns this summer with a brand new animal theme! This year around half a million children are expected to take a walk on the wild side at the many events that will be taking place throughout the country, raising money for Barnardo's projects for children under five throughout the UK. The children's charity works with vulnerable and disadvantaged children and their families, this includes supporting children affected by poverty, homelessness, disability, bereavement and abuse. It's all about children helping children.

Taking part couldn't be easier, simply join a Barnardos run toddle near you or organise your own event for a time and place to suit your setting. The toddle is a great activity for children and is a fantastic way to help children achieve core curriculum goals; being creative with the fancy dress theme will help children learn and develop and exploring new surroundings during their toddle such as their local park or nature reserve will help children learn about new environments.



Once again, if you are a nursery or other early years group you can keep 25% of the money you raise to fund a project of your own. To sign up and receive your free fundraising pack or for more information visit the website www.barnardos.org.uk/bigtoddle

Spring Headcount and Census 2011

All registered providers should have received their Headcount and Census packs for Spring 2011.

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:

Spring 2011

Headcount Day

Return Headcount information for Spring final payment (Deadline)

Return Census information (Deadline)

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

Date

Thursday 20th January 2011

Friday 28th January 2011

Friday 28th January 2011

Friday 18th March 2011

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.

Dates for the diary...

Chinese New Year 3 February 2011

Welcome in the year of the rabbit at your setting with some arts and crafts and a traditional Chinese New Year party!

www.activityvillage.co.uk

Unicef Day for Change 4 February 2011

In exchange for making a change for a day parents, teachers and children make a donation to help children and communities deal with the effects of climate change. Your setting can be involved in all sorts of exciting and creative events to mark Day for Change, such as fancy dress or cake sales.

www.unicef.org.uk

National Nest Box Week 14 - 21 February 2011

Take part in this year's nest box challenge and give a home to some wildlife in your garden.

www.bto.org/nnbw/monitor.htm

World Book Day 3 March 2011

World Book Day is the biggest annual celebration of books and reading in the UK and Ireland. Pre-Schools need to register online to receive support materials including the £1 World Book Day Tokens.

www.worldbookday.com

Red Nose Day 18 March 2011

The time has come again to do something funny for money! Red Nose Day 2011 will be taking place on Friday 18 March and schools and settings are getting ready to pull out all the fundraising stops! For ideas on how you can get involved visit the website.

www.rednoseday.com

Mothering Sunday 3 April 2011

Get creative with arts and crafts at your setting and help the children make a fuss of their mums this Mothers Day!

www.activityvillage.co.uk

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 8 April. 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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