

Gateshead Early Years and Childcare Service Newsletter

Hello and welcome to the second edition of our newsletter. I must start by thanking everyone who has taken the time to contact the service to say they enjoyed our first newsletter. It would appear that the new look has been well received.



The aim of this new structure is to improve outcomes for children, young people and families in Gateshead by providing better joined up services. You can read all about the new working arrangements on page two.

Back in August we celebrated National Playday by holding a special event at the old Blaydon Comprehensive School site. Hundreds of Gateshead families attended and had a wonderful time. We celebrate the event in the newsletter and look forward to a successful event again next year.

I would also like to welcome Judith Pattinson to our team. Judith is our new Training Development Officer and you can read all about her and what she brings to the post on page four.

Enjoy the newsletter.

Pam Stephens

I said in the last newsletter that one of our aims is to have increased involvement and exposure for our childcare providers. In this edition we are featuring the Saltwell Park Montessori nursery and I would thank all those who have contacted us asking to be featured. You will be featured in future issues of the newsletter.

You may have heard about the new area structure here in Gateshead which was established in April this year.

National Playday 2008

Hundreds of Gateshead families attended an event organised by Gateshead Council to celebrate National Playday 2008.

The event, part of the National Playday campaign, was held at the former site of Blaydon Comprehensive School on 6 August and was hailed a success with more than 600 children taking part.

On offer were a number of 'risky' activities such as space hopper football, an obstacle course, water slide, tyre football, relay games, den building and much more.

Councillor Catherine Donovan, Cabinet member for children and young people at Gateshead Council said, 'this event provided a great opportunity for families and friends to come together to play and have fun.'

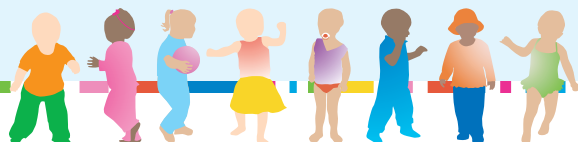


Children enjoying space hopper football at the annual playday event at the former Blaydon Comprehensive School site.

'But the serious underlying message is that children need opportunities to try new things and explore in order to learn how to manage risk.'

'Play is essential to children's development as it enables them to learn about themselves and the world around them and helps develop confidence, self-esteem and creativity.'

'This event has helped children and parents alike to see the value in risky play and how it can help children develop into healthy adults'.



Area Based Working in Gateshead

From 1 April 2008 five area based teams in Gateshead have been established and key appointments made including area managers, under 11 leads, over 11 leads and other strategic posts. These area based teams bring together Youth and Community Learning, Health, YOT Prevention, Play Development, Early Years, Education Welfare, Connexions and Community projects.

A top priority has been to ensure the safe transition of services into the new area arrangements. Initially, where necessary, staff continued in their previous posts to ensure standards in service provision were maintained. However, as the new teams took shape all area managers took up their full roles from 1 September.

The overall aim is to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families by providing better joined up services. The changes will help create stronger links with other services, including adult services.

Children and young people live in inter-generational families where issues affecting one family member will impact on the whole family. We recognise the importance of children's services working more closely with adult services. Area based teams will build on previous work undertaken through the 'swift and easy access' and 'targeted youth support' pathfinders, which focused on multi-agency teams around the family, coordinated by a lead practitioner. The area teams will extend this development, particularly where it might lead to early intervention of families at risk to prevent problems escalating.

Developments will continue throughout 2008 and 2009. Discussion is ongoing around aligning other key services to the area teams in the future.

For further information contact area managers directly:

West – Harry Matthews

harrymatthews@gateshead.gov.uk

Inner West – Pam Stephens

pamelastephens@gateshead.gov.uk

Central – Val Wilson

valwilson@gateshead.gov.uk

East – Ken Johnson

kenjohnson@gateshead.gov.uk

South – Ray Dodd

raydodd@gateshead.gov.uk

Service Manager Strategy – Ken Youngman

kenyoungman@gateshead.gov.uk

Assessment and Quality Lead – Sue Harrop

sueharrop@gateshead.gov.uk

Birtley Children's Centre Celebration

Birtley Children's Centre celebrated moving into its new premises with a family fun day for the local community.



The event was held on 21 August from 2pm to 6pm and featured different activities in the building as well as the community fire engine being a popular attraction outside.

Over 100 families attended the event and took part in a Teddy Bears picnic including singing, stories and food. Mr Merlin the magician proved very popular with the children also.

The Family Support Service provided platters of fruit, vegetables and made fresh smoothies throughout the event to help to promote healthy lifestyle and healthy eating.

Carolyn Jameson, Under 11's Lead for South was delighted with the event saying 'it was wonderful to see so many young children and parents in the Centre. The staff worked very hard to get the Centre ready but it was well worth it to see the children enjoying themselves'.



Childcare Focus - Saltwell Park Montessori

Saltwell Park Montessori has been operating for over a decade providing childcare for young children in Gateshead. The nursery is situated in Westfield Terrace, just behind Gateshead Leisure Centre.

The nursery is open Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm, 51 weeks of the year and is closed on bank holidays and between Christmas and New Year. The nursery is fairly small, registered for just 27 children and is currently running at 80% occupancy with the children ranging from five weeks to four years old.

The nursery promotes healthy eating with an offering of fruit, cereal and wholemeal toast every day for breakfast. The children bring a packed lunch and work is carried out with the parents to ensure that the children are eating healthily at lunchtimes. At the end of the day Deborah's Fresh Fruit Bowl gives the children something to eat on the way home and helps parents to avoid a trip to the sweet shop.

Exercise is also key at the nursery with a new garden at the front of the nursery with an all weather grass surface. Working to the new Early Years Foundation Stage means the outdoor area is just as important as the indoor space. Each day the children have a number of activities to choose from including Happy Land, Sticky Kids and Wheely Bugs.

Marketing

Having a good reputation is vital in today's competitive market and the nursery relies on this to promote the setting. Good word of mouth and recommendations help to promote Saltwell Park Montessori.

The nursery believes staff are the most important factor of a successful childcare setting and they work hard to recruit, develop and retain top quality people. They currently have 6 members of staff with qualifications ranging from NVQ3 to Level 5 Diploma and believe their staff team is up there with the best in the north east.

In addition to this the nursery is a Montessori setting and all of the staff receive weekly training sessions with an expert from the Montessori organisation. The nursery is also fully stocked with a range of Montessori equipment including the famous pink tower.

Rewarding

'Caring for children and helping them to develop is the most rewarding way you can spend your time and everyone should try it'. That's the message from the nursery and they believe that the best thing is to spend your working day doing something really worthwhile.



Saltwell Park Montessori can be contacted by telephone on 0191 4771097.

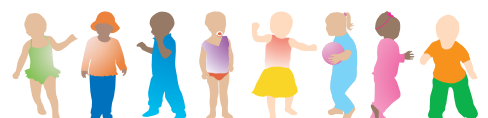
Childcare Choice - date for the diary

Following a successful exhibition style event called Childcare Choice, held at the Civic Centre on Saturday 15 March 2008, the Early Years and Childcare Service can confirm that the event will be held again in 2009.

The provisional date for this event is **Saturday 21 March 2009**, again to be held at the Civic Centre.

Childcare Choice brings together everyone involved in the childcare process through a host of relevant exhibitors, interesting seminar sessions and lots of fun activities for the children.

We are looking for childcare providers who would like to take part in next years event. To book an exhibition space please contact Kelly Nicholson on 0191 433 8721 or by email at kellynicholson@gateshead.gov.uk.



Chopwell Children's Centre Opens

Families in Chopwell have a new Children's Centre on their doorstep to offer them vital support.

Gateshead Mayor, Councillor Maureen Chaplin, officially opened the new facility, on the site of Chopwell Primary School on Derwent Street on Friday 26 September.

The new centre serves hundreds of families in the local area, offering information and support services for the parents of children under five, with an information hub, multi-purpose room, baby clinic and parent drop-in area.

The space is designed to be friendly, relaxed and accessible, providing a central point for families to find out about local activity groups and all areas of children's health and development – from speech therapy and immunisations to healthy eating and starting school.

Dozens of Chopwell families turned out to watch the opening, which included a music and movement session, buffet, and singing from local school children.

Councillor Catherine Donovan, cabinet member for children and young people, said: 'having young children can be tough, and sometimes isolating, so we wanted



to make sure that Gateshead parents and carers didn't feel alone.

'The centre is here on their doorstep, ready and able to help, and whether its finding somewhere to go to keep the children entertained and meet other people or just a query about a child's development, this new centre will help find the answer.

'We hope that local residents will find the new facility useful'.

Welcome Judith...

I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the newly appointed Training Development Officer for Early Years and to give you a little bit of background information about me.

After graduating I was employed by Phoenix House, which is a charitable organisation that works closely with the Prison Service to provide support to prisoners who have experienced substance misuse issues. I was based in HMP/YOI Castington.

Following my 'time' at HMP/YOI Castington I moved to Newcastle Council for six years in two roles.

My first role was that of Substance Misuse Worker for vulnerable young people in Newcastle Youth Offending team. This role gave me experience of service development and involved me working closely with key partners, children, young people and their families. More recently my role was that of Assistant Performance Development Officer for Children's Social

Care Services. My main role was to design, deliver and implement training and development opportunities for Children's Social Care staff. During my time in this post I completed a PGCE qualification.

My main role as Training Development Officer will be to co-ordinate the training programme to raise quality in the Private, Voluntary, Independent and Maintained Early Years and Childcare Services sectors in Gateshead. I'm very excited about being in post and am looking forward to meeting the challenges that this role will bring. I am trying to get out and about to see as many people as possible to introduce myself personally but if I have not yet contacted you and you feel that we would benefit from meeting please contact me by e-mailing judithpattinson@gateshead.gov.uk

I look forward to working with you,

Judith Pattinson.



Introducing Gateshead's Early Years Professionals

Currently there are four Early Years Professional practitioners within Gateshead who have agreed to come together as a Network in line with CWDC requirements to ensure their continuous professional development, explore innovative and inspirational practice and feed that back into settings as well as encouraging others to take up training and qualifications.

These four practitioners are:

- Carolyn Below, Bright Sparks Nursery
- Diana Cummings, The Village Montessori Nursery
- Denise Gray, Starting Out Nursery
- Ruth Ehrentreu, Gateshead Jewish Nursery

The Early Years Professionals will be researching into innovative practices and reporting back through this bulletin with updates and also developments from the network. Keep an eye out for future learning opportunities for all interested practitioners.

Are you a new EYP or on the pathway to EYPS?

If so the EYP Network would love to hear your suggestions on how and when the network could meet up with you. Maybe twilight or Saturdays would be good... let us know so we can share knowledge, provide support and grow our network!

Or are you thinking about EYPS and want to talk to someone who has been through the process?

Send us your details and we'll get back to you.

To contact the network please email: eyp@gateshead.gov.uk or telephone 0191 433 8731.

Look out for regular updates on the Network in the next Early Years Newsletter.

The network have developed a vision with which they hope all practitioners can relate to:

Our network is an example of a learning community working at its best

We engage in the kind of multi sensory and challenging learning that we expect for the young learners in our care.

We are learner led, confident and reflective.

We are open and flexible in our learning and practice.

We are purposeful in our own learning, engaging in intensive short-term experiences and longer-term journeys requiring perseverance and determination.

We are committed to self-growth and making a difference.

We continue to value play, fun and excitement in our own learning journey as we do with the young minds and bodies we encourage every day.

April 2008

Government pledge breastfeeding drive

The government has announced that it is providing an extra two million pounds to help women in England to breastfeed.

Funding will help to support hospitals in disadvantaged areas to achieve the Unicef Baby-Friendly Status, a set of best practice standards for maternity units and community services on improving practice to promote, protect and support breastfeeding.

Progress will be monitored through measuring the prevalence of breastfeeding at six to eight weeks in all primary care trusts as a key indicator of the child health and wellbeing Public Service Agreement target.

Dawn Primarolo, Public Health Minister said 'we want to ensure women know the importance of breastfeeding and the benefits to themselves and their baby'.



School Admissions

Admission to Reception Class 2009

Childcare providers are an important link in the school admission process for parents. Many have children of their own and have been through the admission process themselves. Please use the helpful tips below to alert parents who have children of the relevant age to make a successful start to the school admission process for September 2009:

When to apply for a place:	from 22 September 2008
Children of the relevant age (born between):	1 Sept 2004 to 31 Aug 2005
Closing Date for returning applications:	3 November 2008
Where to apply:	online at www.gateshead.gov.uk OR obtain an application form from the School or Gateshead Civic Centre
Offer date:	21 April 2009

When to Apply

Children born between 1 September 2004 to 31 August 2005 should start school (reception class) in September 2009. Parents should apply a full year earlier than when their child is due to start reception class.

Parents who have children of this age should now be making arrangements for their child to start school in September 2009.

It's important that parents do not miss the closing date as this may jeopardize their chances of gaining a place at the school they want. Applications must be returned by 3 November 2008.

How to Apply

Parents can apply online or apply by submitting a paper form to their chosen school. Parents must obtain a receipt when they return their application. On-line applicants will automatically be e-mailed a receipt.

Unfortunately children lose places every year, simply because some parents fail to return their application on time, i.e. by 3 November 2008.

Parents should visit the council website where there are links through the Schools Directory to individual school information.

Be aware that if parents have older children in the same school and forget to apply on time for a younger child they are not guaranteed to get a place for their younger child if they apply late.

Late applicants should still contact the school admission team on the numbers below

Parents can contact School Admission staff at Gateshead Civic Centre on: 4332757 or 4332756 to discuss any queries they might have.

IMPORTANT – DON'T MISS THE CLOSING DATE

Applications forms are available from 22 September 2008 and must be returned by 3 November 2008.

Congratulations Sandi

Sandi Hind, Baby and Toddler Development Worker at the Pre-school Learning Alliance reached an important milestone in October. She has been employed by the Alliance for 25 years!

Sandi was presented with a special award from the National Executive Committee member Sylvia Hillen at the PSLA Showcase event.

Congratulations and best wishes Sandi from all your colleagues at the Alliance and from all the staff at the Early Years and Childcare Service.



Weblog gets facelift

The Early Years and Childcare Service weblog has recently had a facelift.

The new look site went live in the summer and boasts a range of new features and updates to the original site.

Categories have been updated to take into account the new area based working arrangements for Children's Centres and the latest news section has been redesigned.

The site now includes the facility to include photos and video clips allowing the service to display photos from activities and events in a slideshow format and include any relevant videos.

Other new features include a tag cloud which will display the most common 'tags' used in articles. This will allow users to see what is the most popular on the site.

Ross Glasgow, Information Systems Officer at the Early Years and Childcare Service is delighted with the new



look and features saying, 'the new and improved features on the site show that the service is using cutting edge technology to communicate with our users and allows us to promote the service effectively using new media channels'.

Visit the new look weblog at:
www.gatesheadearlyyears.org

Owen shows character to scoop best vegetable prize

The Village Montessori Nursery School had reason to celebrate recently when it won a number of prizes in a competition organised by Dobbies.

Owen McCaughey and Ria Somal, both aged three, came first and second respectively in the 'best vegetable character' competition and the nursery also won the overall nursery competition winning £50 to spend on their garden.

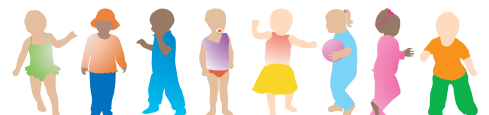
Diana Cummings from The Village Montessori said 'the children were very motivated by the vegetable competition and it was very rewarding for them to follow the flow of their ideas until they were happy with the end result'.



Owen McCaughey receiving his 1st place certificate from Paul Travis-Anderson of Dobbies.

News in brief

- The Children's Workforce Development Council has launched its new website which has updated and improved content. For details, visit www.cwdcouncil.org.uk.
- Parents can claim back up to 80% of their childcare costs through tax credits when they use Ofsted registered childcare, providing they work more than 16 hours a week.
- Gateshead Pre-school Learning Alliance are holding a Christmas Craft Ideas for the under fives/Christmas Market and second hand toy sale on 12 November at 6.30pm to 8.30pm. All are welcome.
- Giggles CDROMs are a collection of educational software CDROMs for 3-7 year olds. Registered with the Governments Curriculum Online; they are proving very popular with the managers and children at pre-schools, nurseries and infants. Jelly Bridge Productions offer a free fourteen day trial of the software to any school or nursery, giving them the opportunity to try the software with their children before deciding whether to purchase it or not. Visit www.jellybridge.com



If I was in charge of.....

In each issue we let five members of our team take charge. In this issue we start with a small task. We ask them what they would do if they were in charge of the NHS for one day.

Ross Glasgow – Information Systems Officer, Early Years and Childcare Service

Firstly I would call for a greater percentage of the tax we pay to be invested in the NHS so that people could see greater rewards for the money they pay and be given a health system to be proud of.

Though it's no doubt easier said than done (I think I would delegate this task) my next priority would be reducing waiting times whether in casualty, on waiting lists or elsewhere.

Next up I would invest in facilities for admin staff to ensure records are accurate and hopefully cut out any potentially embarrassing or traumatising errors.

Finally I would point out how stressful current working conditions can be and call for a change whether it be a 4 day week or the introduction of siestas.

Michael Hunt – Communications and Information Manager, Early Years and Childcare Service

My first act would be to introduce free parking for visitors at all NHS hospitals as quite often the last thing on your mind is ensuring you have the right amount of change to park your car.

Investing in better equipment and facilities in hospitals would be a priority and would hopefully help to save thousands of lives each year. Staff would be trained in how to use the new equipment to ensure every patient received a quality service.

Next would be to ensure a quality after care service for those patients who required it. The patients care shouldn't end the day they leave hospital, a follow up service should be available and would be with me in charge.

I would invest in the latest technology to ensure that patients notes were available to all doctors and nurses whenever they needed them. Paper files would no longer exist

under my proposals.

And finally, a ban to imposed on anyone over the age of 70 talking to you in waiting rooms.

Simon Wake – Employment Co-ordinator, Early Years and Childcare Service

To me this would be quite simple. More staff, more beds and free on site parking for visitors. I mean surely if Holby City and Casualty got together they could send some beds and extras over to the NHS just to 'beef it up' a little bit. These staff could potter around with clip boards saying 'do you concur' and this would make us all feel a lot better. With all seriousness though, when my wife was in labour there was one midwife to 6 patients and this is simply not good enough. We need more highly trained staff and an increase in the level of care on offer.

The next topic would be MRSA (Mighty Red Sanitised Ants) which could be deployed to keep the hospital tidy. The last time I was in a hospital I felt that the level of cleanliness was excellent and I would look to continue the already good work in place.

The final change I would put in place is to reward and acknowledge the 'unsung' heroes of the NHS who work so hard with patients and nothing is ever too much trouble. There would be medals, banners, pictures and even the odd cup of tea.

Cathy Taylor – Children's Centre Manager for the East

I would employ Greg Wallace and John Torrode from Masterchef to train all the kitchen staff so that they could produce sumptuous 3 course dinners at mealtimes (preferably not served under a blue Tupperware type warming plate!).

I would also ask Gucci to design a range of tasteful operation gowns (unlike the one I wore for my

operation which left little to the imagination).

I would definitely look at the spread of GP Practices throughout the country so that everyone could easily access a surgery no matter where they lived – unlike my current situation where I have to get 2 buses to go to the doctors.

On a more positive note, I would award our own local QE Hospital with an outstanding award for services to the community. Luckily (fingers crossed) I have not been an in-patient myself but over the years have supported many family and friends through various hospital stays and treatment programmes. The staff there have been second to none, working tirelessly to support the whole family through some very difficult times under difficult working conditions I'm sure.

Finally, I'd set up a gift voucher scheme for cosmetic surgery as I'm always stuck for Christmas gift ideas for some of my friends (you know who you are!!).

Jill Routledge – Information Assistant, High Fell Children's Centre

I would make sure that there were equitable services for everyone and I would make sure that every hospital had sufficient finance and resources to purchase the necessary equipment needed to deliver a full service to all.

I would bring down hospital waiting lists and prove it! I would make the services delivered more friendly also.

If a hospital has a car park attached then I would make sure that the hospital received the car parking fees and not the local Council. This money could then be put back into service delivery.

Finally, I would support a training programme to provide help to newly qualified doctors in their local area.

Contact: The Editor, Early Years & Childcare Service,
Dryden Centre, Evistones Road, Gateshead NE9 5UR.
Tel: 0191 433 8548 Email: info@gatesheadearlyyears.org

