



Western Area Childcare Partnership Newsletter

(Supporting Affordable, Accessible, Quality Early Years & Childcare Services)



Volume 8, Issue 1 Sept. 2011

Recent Developments

As reported in last year's Newsletter (Sept. 2010), the Childcare Partnerships have undergone several changes as a result of the Review of Public Administration. Gerry Conway has been appointed as Chair of all of the Childcare Partnerships and this in turn has led to a more regionalised approach towards planning within the Childcare Partnership Teams. It has also led to a regionalisation of the posts within the Childcare Partnership teams. While new appointments have been agreed with regards to Information Officers supporting the Childcare Partnerships, the recruitment process for securing Early Years Specialists to support the Sure Start Developmental Programme for 2-3 year olds has just recently been completed. Further work is underway to secure the Childcare Partnership Coordinators, Training Officers, and Administrative Support staff.

In the meantime, a joint meeting of the four existing Childcare Partnership Members took place on 17th May 2011 at Gortalowry House, Cookstown. The purpose of the meeting was to:

- ◆ allow a review of the most recent work of the Childcare Partnerships promoting a shared understanding of the issues currently affecting the sector
- ◆ share current developments underway within the larger Regional Early Years & Childcare Organisations
- ◆ consider current trends (statistical information) to help plan the way forward, and promote a shared understanding of the resources available to the sector



Attendees at the Partnership Meeting

It was envisaged that as a result of this meeting the Childcare Partnerships would be in a better position to draft an Action Plan for the way forward. The draft Action Plan would then be shared with the sector through a series of local consultations to further inform the final draft Action Plan.

Announcements

The Western Childcare Partnership would like to extend a warm farewell to Linda Wylie, Coordinator, Northern Childcare Partnership who has moved on to take up a post with the PHA. Linda has been a very supportive colleague, sharing her knowledge of best practice with all of the Childcare Partnership teams. And while we wish Linda all the best for the future, she will be missed by all of those who have worked with her over the years.



Pictured left to right is: Tony Rodgers, Linda Wylie, Gerry Conway and Martin Quinn

Western Consultation Events

Local consultations were organised and provided by the Western Childcare Partnership and representatives of the Locality Planning Groups (Action-for-Children). These events took place as follows:

Tuesday, 24th May 2011 (1:30 – 4:30 pm) at the Mellon Country Inn, Omagh

Wednesday, 25th May 2011 (1:30 – 4:30 pm) at the Waterfoot Hotel, Derry/Londonderry

Wednesday, 25th May 2011 (1:30 – 4:30 pm) at the Killyhevlin Hotel, Enniskillen

Through these events it was possible to share the latest information on the following developments and seek opinions from those working within the sector, delivering services directly to children and their families.

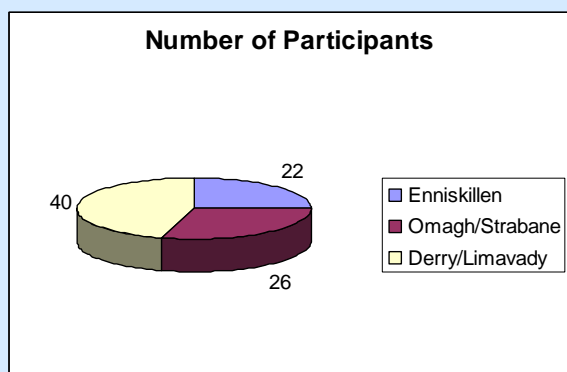
- ◆ Regionalisation of Services
- ◆ Early Intervention & Prevention Services
- ◆ Health Indicators in the Early Years (0-12 years)
- ◆ Speech & Language Development
- ◆ Child Safeguarding
- ◆ Family Support
- ◆ Workforce Development
- ◆ Regulatory Requirements
- ◆ Training & Quality Development



Attendees at the recent consultation

Consultation Results

The consultation was very well attended with 88 members of the Early Years sector attending one of the three events.

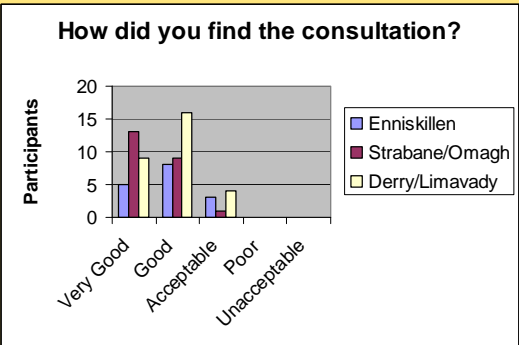


Consultation Results..... Continued

Q1. How did you find the consultation?



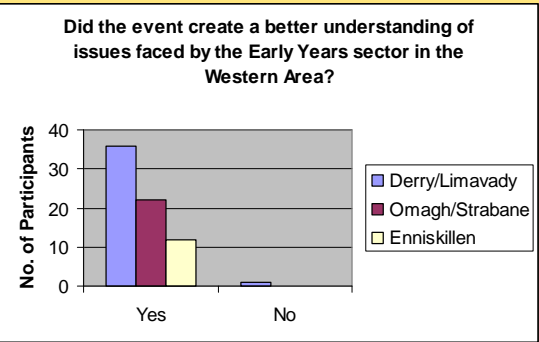
81% of those who completed the evaluations thought the consultation was very good or good.



Q2. Did the event create a better understanding of issues faced by the Early Years sector within the Western area?



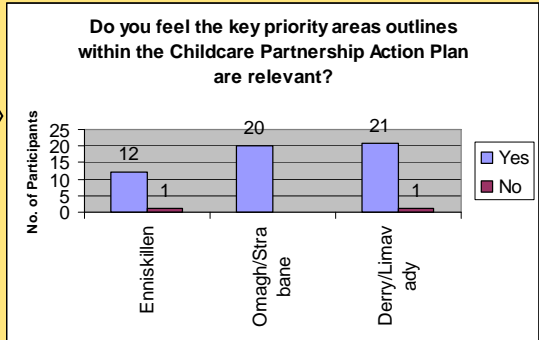
99% of participants said it gave them a better understanding of issues currently being faced by the early years sector within the Western Board area.



Q3. Do you feel the key priority areas outlined within the Childcare Partnership Action Plan are relevant?



63 participants thought that the priorities outlined within the action plan were relevant.



The consultation events were very timely in that they have helped to inform the training programme for 2011-2012. It also allows the Western Childcare Partnership to take onboard the issues and concerns expressed by those working within the sector before finalising its programmes for 2011-2012. The Childcare Partnership would like to thank all those who attended and provided this valuable feedback.

Capital Developments



Further funding was made available by DE during 2010-2011 to improve Early Years and Sure Start facilities. The following is a brief update on the additional facilities to benefit from this funding stream. Anecdotally, the Childcare Partnership has been hearing from providers that the capital funding programme was very welcome and parents and children are pleased with their newly improved facilities. The Western Childcare Partnership will be seeking feedback from groups that were successful in accessing this funding to gain a better perspective of the overall impact of the capital funding programme. Groups that benefited during 2010-2011 were:

Extension to Shantallow Sure Start facility

Name of Group	Amount	Purpose
First Steps Playgroup, Killen	£99,719	Extension to the facility
Little Smarties Playgroup	£34,950	Internal refurbishment
Newtownbutler Playgroup	£79,306	Extension to the facility
Dungiven Playgroup	£48,788	Re-vamp toilet area, storage and meeting space
Kindertee Playgroup	£4,995	Minor repairs
Park Playgroup	£100,000	Extension to the facility
Rosslea Playgroup	£20,000	Contribution towards the new facility
Naiscoil Colmcille	£58,337	Outdoor Play Area
Donemana (Woodlands) Playgroup	£69,515	New facility and outdoor play area
LAST Sure Start (Fintona)	£30,634	Canopy for outdoor play area
Jack & Jill Playgroup	£2,800	Re-Tarmac the outdoor area
Carebears Playgroup	£10,254	Re-vamp toilet area and replace floor covering.
Ardstraw Playgroup	£5,769	Repair floor, replace floor covering and blinds
Total	£565,067	



Opening of the new extension at Park Community Playgroup.

Indeed, representatives from the Partnership were pleased to be invited to attend several of the capital launches this year.



Yvonne Tracey (Rainbow Sure Start) and Gerry Conway at the opening of the extension at Newtownstewart.



Examples of some capital improvements



Parents at the opening of the new extension at Park Community Playgroup.

Quality Developments

QUALITY DEVELOPMENTS

Research and feedback from providers has highlighted the need to support practitioners in developing their skills to promote Speech & Language Development and positive behaviour in young children. It is generally recognised that promoting positive behaviour also requires staff to work more closely with parents as well as children. As a result, the Childcare Partnership provided several training programmes to address these issues, some which were specific to the Sure Start Teams initially, and some which were made available to the wider sector. These included:



Elklan Speech & Language Development

The Childcare Partnership was fortunate enough to secure Elklan training that could be delivered to all 9 of the Sure Start projects between January 2011 and March 2011, which included both the "Lets Talk" and the "Lets Talk with the under 5s" training courses. "Lets Talk" is an introductory course, whereas the "Under 5s" course requires a good deal more written work. The courses aim to help parents, pre-school practitioners and Speech & Language Therapists, share the same information and work collaboratively to promote the communication skills of all children under 5 but particularly those with delayed Speech & Language.

The aims of the course are:

- ◆ To share information about normal speech and language development
- ◆ To discuss ideas to help children learn to listen, understand and talk
- ◆ To know about communication difficulties children can experience
- ◆ To meet other pre-school practitioners, parents and carers

A total of 61 Sure Start staff received training in the Elklan approach towards Speech & Language development.

Hanen Speech & Language Development

The "Teacher Talk" course provides a step-by-step approach to promoting young children's language and development in early years groups, settings and school Foundation stages. Practitioners learn practical, interactive strategies to help children (including those whose language is delayed or at risk) to communicate effectively, by providing a rich and inclusive learning environment. There are opportunities to learn new skills and share ideas with staff from other settings.

Course objectives include:

- ◆ To learn practical interactive strategies to help children (including those with language delay) to communicate effectively
- ◆ To support the development of a rich and inclusive language learning environment
- ◆ To support children to interact with peers
- ◆ To explore links between language and literacy and develop storytelling within early years settings.

A total of 30 Sure Start staff received training in the Hanen approach towards Speech & Language development.



The Childcare Partnership envisages being able to offer more Elklan and Hanen training to the wider Early Years & Childcare Sector during 2011-2012.

Quality Developments.....Continued

Mindstretchers Training

Mindstretchers is a dynamic company of people dedicated to providing children with multi-sensory and real-world educational environments through training and consultancy, educational products and Nature Kindergartens. Mindstretchers provided 2 courses to Early Years & Childcare providers in the Western Area on 28th & 29th March 2011.



"More than Words: Talking & Listening"

This course examines the place or oracy in the Early Years. Areas covered include:

- Talking and thinking books
- Talking tubs
- Storytelling
- Creating a positive ethos

"Nurture through Nature" (0-3s)

This course explores the strategies used to connect very young children to nature. Areas covered include:

- Designing a motivational environment for 0-3 year olds
- Exploration of schemas and their use in planning experiences
- Development of life skills through real life experiences outside
- Experience epistemic play through nature's elements



A total of 51 Early Years/Childcare Practitioners attended the above two courses.

Speech & Language Resource Boxes

The Childcare Partnership recognised that there was simply not enough funding to provide Speech & Language training to all Early Years/Childcare Providers. However there was a need to raise awareness of the issue with a view to providing further training to the wider sector over time. To begin this process, the Childcare Partnership commissioned the purchase of a Speech & Language Resource Box for every Early Years/Childcare facility within the Western Area. These were disseminated through the local Sure Start projects. The Childcare Partnership is endeavouring to arrange for several workshops to be provided throughout the area, facilitated by an experienced Speech & Language Therapist. The aim of the Workshop is to demonstrate how to use Speech & Language development resources as effectively as possible. A total of 170 Speech & Language Resource Boxes were distributed to Early Years & Childcare Providers through the Western Area



Peer Early Education Programme (PEEP)

During 2010-2011, the Childcare Partnership sought to pilot the adoption of the PEEP programme for delivery within the Western Area. PEEP is a research-based parent support programme which all 9 local Sure Starts agreed to implement on a pilot basis.

PEEP aims to contribute towards a significant improvement in educational attainment by whole communities of children, from their birth, by working with parents and carers. Set up in 1995, this early learning intervention aims to contribute towards improving the life chances of children, particularly in disadvantaged areas. The primary purpose of PEEP is to raise educational attainment especially in literacy by focusing on everyday learning opportunities at home such as listening, talking, playing, singing and sharing books. PEEP practice ensures that the parent's role is valued as the child's first educator and as such is recognised as an empowerment model. This model uses a specific set of principles, curriculum, core activities, materials and a broad spectrum of delivery methods. PEEP recognises that:

- ◆ Children need the opportunity to learn using everyday interactions
- ◆ Early effort is encouraged through provision of praise and encouragement
- ◆ Children need interaction with adults to encourage learning
- ◆ Modelling is important - adults are role models for behaviour, attitudes and activities.



EYDF Small Grants Scheme

The Childcare Partnership has provided support for the following through the small grant scheme:

Name of Group	Description of Grant	Amount
Erne East Community Partnership Ltd / Oak Healthy Living Centre	The aim of this project was to sustain childcare for the 14 communities that constitute the Erne East Area of Fermanagh through partnership working. A second aim is to integrate healthy lifestyle practices into the childcare sector through cooperation with the Oak HLC.	£10,000
Liberty Consortium (The Playtrail)	The overall shared aim of the project was to improve the personal, social and emotional development of an identified number of children in need through integrated working in Partnership.	£10,000
Rainbow Child & Family Centre	The core aim of the project was to promote and secure the inclusion of all children within their three playgroups: 1) Employ a full-time (25 hrs./wk.) Special Needs Assistant 2) Ensure equal access to quality early years service 3) Maintain high level of pastoral care for all children within the playgroups	£7,412.95
Positive Futures	To replicate the Partnership Model of working developed in Fermanagh, the 'Lakers' Consortium within Derry/Londonderry.	£10,000
Westville Family Resource Centre	To provide group sessions (54 sessions) for Families which consist of children 0-5 yrs with their parents or carers, through a partnership working approach linking in with other agencies to provide a quality service whilst improving on the planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of the project in line with the government service outcomes for children	£10,000
Small Fry Community Playgroup	The overall aim of the project was to plan, implement and monitor a pilot project using an innovative approach, the "Reggio approach".	£5,061.62
Omagh Day Nursery Consortium	To deliver the Developmental Programme for 2 Year Olds to practitioners working with young children 0-3 years in early years settings. This is an 8-day course (1 day per week) intended for those working with young children in Daycare, pre-school (2-3 yrs), Sure Start or home based settings.	£9,892
Early Years the Organisation for Young	The aim was to ensure that all participants recognise the value of outdoor play and learning and can communicate too and involve parents/carers and local communities in the creation of challenging outdoor learning environments.	£9,978
NI CMA	To fund two Part-Time Development Officers Posts to promote Childminding as a viable career option within the Western Childcare Partnership Area.	£41,522
Action for Children	2 x Development Officers Posts for the Locality Action Planning Groups	£25,000



The above photos relate to Westville Family Resource Centre who received funding during 2010/2011 from the EYDF Small Grants Scheme.

Partnership Working

Over the years, the Childcare Partnership has been working in Partnership with a variety of agencies and organisations to develop a coherent approach towards meeting the needs of children and families, allowing children to get the best start in life. The following are a few examples of more recent developments.

Achieving Derry/Bright Futures Initiative

For the past several years, the Childcare Partnership has been working closely with the Achieving Derry/Bright Futures Initiative. This partnership approach has led to an exchange of information and ideas particularly focusing on the needs of children and their parents during the early years, and the importance of developing a coherent, sustainable and long term approach in raising educational outcomes in areas of high social deprivation in the Derry City Council Area.

One such exchange has been the opening of training in the Musical Pathways to Learning (MPL) Programme to some Sure Start staff, who have indicated that the MPL programme has the potential to complement several of their programmes.

"Musical Pathways to Learning"

Musical Pathway to Learning is a music-based scheme which focuses on the development of pulse, rhythm and pitch in every child, from the earliest possible opportunity. These skills are developed through a progressive programme of varied and stimulating activities including rhymes, songs and games. Although the focus is music, the learning and the skills development are universal.



Attendees at the Start to Play training which was funded by the WACP small grants scheme.



DARD

Rural Childcare Initiative

The Childcare Partnership would like to express its appreciation to DARD for its support in enhancing access to childcare services for families living in rural areas.

DARD's Rural Childcare Strategy allowed **9** initiatives within the Western Area to be funded which produced **109** new childcare places. Additionally, in excess of **300** children benefited from this funding overall.



NICMA

Childminding Strategy

The Western Childcare Partnership has had a Childminding Strategy in place for the past several years. This strategy funds 2 part-time Development Workers to promote Childminding as a career option. The strategy has highlighted the importance of ongoing support for Childminders, particularly during the first year when they are working to deliver a quality service while at the same time establishing themselves as a small business. Fortunately, several Sure Starts have opted to develop a Childminding Network within their local areas. Additionally, during 2010-2011 the Childcare Partnership was able to assist a local group of Childminders, through its small grants scheme, in the Dromore Area to develop local Childminding Support Group. This funding allowed the group to recruit 6-8 new childminders offering 25-30 new childcare places, offer short training workshops, and develop a Childminding Support Group.

Partnership Working.....Continued

The Early Years Organisation for Young Children



The Childcare Partnership was able to support the Early Years Organisation for Young Children to implement a quality improvement programme through a consortium bid that included six Early Years Specialists and four Early Years Organisation Branch Chairs. The programme offered accredited training, information, skills and workshops to practitioners/parents within Early Years Settings, and within the Western Childcare Partnership Area. The training included:

- ◆ Out Door Play, OCN accredited
- ◆ Education through Movement Workshops
- ◆ Funding application development workshops

The propose was intended to encourage the Trust, CASS Department and Early Years Specialists to work together on designing accessible outdoor spaces using low cost or no cost resources. Also included were best practice visits and a showcase event at the end of the project, where participants could share their learning and accomplishments.



Exhibitions that took place as part of the project that was funded under the EYDF Small Grants Schedule 2010-11

ALTRAM

The Irish Language Sector saw several of their trainees achieve the Certificate in Irish Language Immersion training. The Childcare Partnership sponsored Early Years staff within the Irish Language Sector to undertake this programme during a previous Small Grants Scheme, and would like to extend its congratulations to the individuals featured in this photograph.



PLAYBOARD

During 2010-2011, Playboard agreed to review the training and quality development needs of the Out-of-Schools Sector with a view to securing support from the Childcare Partnership to implement a strategy during 2011-2012 to begin addressing these needs. The Childcare Partnership looks forward to working more closely with PlayBoard over the next year on these issues.

Staff from Altram that completed the Irish Language Immersion Training

Proposed Training Programme 2011-12

At the time of going to publication the Training Tender Process had not been completed . Rather than provide details of upcoming training as usual, the Childcare Partnership will be disseminating a proposed Training Booklet which will include course descriptions of all the courses that the Childcare Partnership intends to deliver over the upcoming academic year. Please review this booklet to ensure you are familiar with the courses and are in a better position to prioritise your training needs before invitations to register for individual courses are issued.

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