

**Make a creepy  
crawly wormery!**

**10 things childminders  
should tell parents**

**Why reading to kids  
sets them up for life**

Working with  
**Early Years**  
children & families

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# Dad's the way

**How you can help fathers  
feel welcome and involved**



department for  
children, schools and families



WIN

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The best letter printed in Inbox in the June issue of *Early Years* will win an iPod Shuffle

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The editor's decision is final.

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WINNER

#### NVQ3 IS THE BUSINESS

*Dear Editor*

I wanted to say how I related to your story on childminder Nicola Lord [December 2007]. I have just completed an NVQ3 in children's care, learning and development, and I have such a better insight into what I am doing. I considered myself to be a good childminder anyway, but it just helps put your whole business in order: I do children's weekly plans every Sunday, and enjoy doing the observations and recording my findings. I find it much easier to keep my paperwork in order, and that means I spend more time with the children in my care.

I am also about the same age as Nicola, turning 45 in April. And I really feel as though I have found my career at last! Now I am working to improve my Ofsted report from 'good' to 'outstanding' too, and I am continuing to improve my setting.

**Jo-anne Keenan, Northampton**

#### MUSIC SESSIONS FOR ALL

*Dear Editor*

I am the leader of a music project at Bedwell Children's Centre in Stevenage. Funded by Youth Music, the project has allowed us to bring more music into children's lives. We ran training sessions for staff at the Children's Centre, music groups for parents, and Homestart family groups. And, along with the help of musicians and our local music service, we have offered children, their parents and carers the opportunity to listen to beautiful music, try out our musical instruments and meet musicians. The effect has been wonderful and has certainly made a difference to the lives of all those involved. It has allowed me to help settings offer a more children-centred approach to music-making, with free-play music areas popping up all over the place.

**Linda Bance, Stevenage**



## Welcome...

... to the second edition of *Early Years*, the magazine for everyone working with children up to the age of five. Healthy eating is now high on the national agenda, and members of the early years workforce will be more aware than most of the impact that a good diet can have on a child's appetite for play and learning. But how easy is it to put the idea into practice – to get children to tuck into fresh fruit and vegetables? Rest assured it *is* possible... and we feature a north London nursery that not only gets children to eat their greens, but puts healthy eating at the heart of learning. Other topics in this issue include the benefits of free play, how to read with young children and why dads' involvement is vital to their children's upbringing and development. Also, look out for our special supplement on working with black and minority ethnic families – full of practical insights on what works best when trying to make your children's centre more inclusive for the entire community. We'd love to hear your comments on this magazine, and any ideas you may have about the subjects that matter to you as a member of the early years workforce – please email us at [feedback@eymagazine.co.uk](mailto:feedback@eymagazine.co.uk)

### Sheila Scales

Director Early Years, Extended Schools and Special Needs Group DCSF



**Early Years on tape:** visually impaired teachers can receive

*Early Years* on audio tape. Contact **Susie Fisher: 0117 973 6013** or [susie.fisher@a2i.co.uk](mailto:susie.fisher@a2i.co.uk)

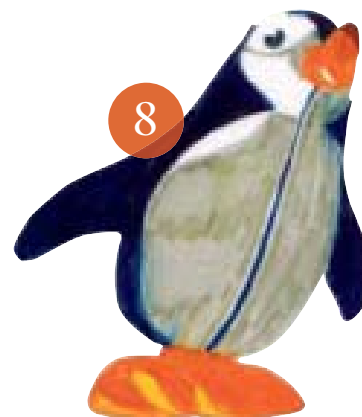
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# what's inside?

## Features

Cover Stories

- 6 **Hungry to learn**  
Teaching kids about good food can be fun
- 8 **Let's play!**  
Expert advice on how creative play  
boosts children's development
- 10 **Raise the standard**  
Your guide to the new role of Early Years  
Professional - and how to become one
- 12 **Get kids reading**  
Inspire them to read with our page-turning tips
- 14 **Dad's the word**  
Great ways to engage fathers in early learning
- 16 **Childminders and parents**  
How to ensure harmonious relationships
- 17 **New childcare duties**  
What the new legislation means for you
- 18 **All together now**  
How Sure Start Children's Centres are meeting  
the needs of disabled children



## Regulars

- News** 4  
The latest early years news
- Children in my Life** 11  
The dedication of speech and  
language therapist Rebecca Shirt
- Diary** 21  
What's on in the coming months
- Playthings** 22  
Sensory toys are put to the  
test by nursery children
- Book corner** 24  
We round up the best early  
years books about journeys
- Try it!** 26  
Make stuff with the kids -  
this issue it's a wormery!
- Q&A** 26  
Expert answers to your  
professional queries
- Postcard from...** 27  
Behind the scenes at  
Ashington Children's Centre  
in Northumberland



### DCSF

Communications Directorate: Deputy Director **Karen Smalley** Managing Editor **Derek Carpenter** Early Years, Extended Schools and Special Needs Group: Policy Adviser **Duncan Aitchison** DCSF enquiries: 0870 000 2288. *Early Years* is published for the DCSF by John Brown.

### John Brown

Editor **Siân Phillips** Deputy Editor **George Theohari** Acting Managing Editor **Andrew Neish** Commissioning Editor **Kim Sullivan** Art Director **Richard Spellman** Acting Art Director **Adrienne Pitts** Designer **Rachel Creane** Editorial Assistant **Katy Ward** Picture Editor **Graham Harper** Picture Researcher **Meike Albrecht** Chief Sub Editor **Stuart Maddison** Deputy Chief Sub Editor **James Debens** Promotions Co-ordinator **Naomi Arbon** Senior Production Manager **Simon Gandy** Group Account Director **Rachel Butters** Account Manager **Christine Cavaleros** Strategic Planner **Claire Benson** Enquiries T: 020 7565 3000; F: 020 7565 3060; E: feedback@eymagazine.co.uk

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# News

What's going on in the early years sector



## STAY SAFE

The Government launched its Staying Safe Action Plan in February. The plan lays out the Government's commitments to keeping children safe at home, outside, in school and online. It recognises that safety is fundamental - if children are not safe, they cannot be happy or healthy, achieve, or reach their full potential.

The Action Plan includes the creation of a child safety education coalition to advise teachers, parents and carers on how children can keep safe while enjoying outdoor play and challenging activities.

There will also be new guidance on bullying, and a review of safety education materials for Personal, Social and Health Education. The plan will also make it easier for teaching staff to take children on trips, by offering more help and advice, less bureaucracy and 'quality badges' for popular destinations.

[www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/stayingsafe](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/stayingsafe)



## New era arrives

Early years organisations have welcomed the Government's plans to usher in what it describes as a 'new era' for children's education.

The Children's Plan is a long-term vision to improve primary education and radically change the way parents are supported by schools.

Key measures outlined in the plan include:

- Free childcare for 20,000 two-year-olds from disadvantaged families
- A £117 million investment in the early years workforce including funds to supply cover for CPD
- A comprehensive review of the primary curriculum, aimed at easing transition from early years to school
- A £225 million scheme to build or upgrade more than 3,500 playgrounds over the next three years
- Extending the principle of the NHS 'red book' so that parents can track their child's development through early years and into primary school

The Children's Workforce Development Council says the Plan "acknowledges the vital contribution and achievements of the children's workforce" and "highlights the importance of supporting and developing the children's workforce".

For more information about the Children's Plan, go to [www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/childrensplan](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/childrensplan)

“Children deserve the best start in life and nursery education helps them in the long term by boosting their communication, language and social skills. It is available to all those who want it and I hope to see even more children benefiting from the free hours.”

Children's Minister Beverley Hughes on plans to extend free early education for three- and four-year-olds to 15 hours a week





## DAD's a nice idea

The Fatherhood Institute (formerly Fathers Direct) has established a new national information service for dads.

The DAD service is designed to help nurseries and Sure Start Children's Centres respond to fathers' needs. It features a website ([www.dad.info](http://www.dad.info)) that aims to cover the whole experience of parenting from a father's point of view, with content arranged in categories such as babies and children, work and money and health.

Fathers can register for free emails linked to their child's birth date - keeping them informed about the key stages of their development.

Inexpensive DAD wallet cards, with fatherhood advice, are also available for family services to give to fathers. For pricing and orders, email: [duncan@dad.info](mailto:duncan@dad.info)

**£372m**

Budget for the Government's new strategy to combat obesity, promoting healthier food and lifestyle choices for children and their families



Disabled children at nurseries and Sure Start Children's Centres across England are to benefit from an innovative play scheme backed by the Big Lottery Fund's Playful Ideas programme.

AbilityNet's 'Play AT IT' scheme, which has been awarded almost £250,000 over two years, aims to ensure disabled pre-schoolers don't miss out on the benefits play can bring to their development. Two nurseries or Sure Start centres in each of the nine English Government Office regions will be chosen as locations for the project.

They are to receive a computer system with special equipment for disabled children - including touch screen, accessible keyboards, trackballs, joysticks, small mice and switch access. They will also be given fun educational software, such as games, jigsaw makers, music and stories.

[www.abilitynet.org.uk](http://www.abilitynet.org.uk)



## Need to know

Former Olympic sprinters Colin Jackson and Linford Christie back a campaign that aims to **ensure children have the energy "for play, learning and fun"**. The National Day Nurseries Association's 'healthy body, happy me' week takes place 10-14 March ([www.ndna.org.uk](http://www.ndna.org.uk)).

The children's services charity **4Children** launches a new training module: **Integrated Practice: A Programme of Learning for Early Years and Childcare Practitioners**, consisting of two-unit modules for Level 3 practitioners ([www.4children.org.uk](http://www.4children.org.uk)).

Ofsted hosted the first conference to **celebrate the achievement of outstanding early years providers**. More than 500 staff from nurseries, Sure Start Children's Centres and schools attended the London event to share best practice.

Children with summer birthdays could be **allowed to start school up to a year later**, in an attempt to counter underachievement, under a review instituted by the DCSF.

The National Day Nurseries Association publishes **guidelines on good practice when managing physical contact** between childcare workers and children. For a copy, email: [jessica.hamilton@ndna.org.uk](mailto:jessica.hamilton@ndna.org.uk)

A range of training courses and resources have been developed by PEAL (Parents, Early Years and Learning) to help practitioners **encourage parents to be involved in early learning**. For details of April training events, visit: [www.peal.org.uk](http://www.peal.org.uk)

A conference for local authority parenting and children's services commissioners on the **Early Learning Partnerships Project** is planned for 25 June. Details: [www.familyandparenting.org/ELPP](http://www.familyandparenting.org/ELPP)



# Hungry to learn

Teaching young children where food comes from, ways to prepare it, and how tasty a variety of dishes can be, is the best way to establish healthy eating habits. We take lessons from one London nursery

By **Jerome Monahan** Photography **Claire Davies**



## RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

- Build children's confidence in unfamiliar foods by introducing new tastes gradually.
- If offering a choice of foods, ensure all options are healthy – carrots or courgettes, apples or raisins.
- Take time to eat with children and make meals an enjoyable experience.
- Show parents that healthy eating need not be difficult or expensive.
- See Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives, the Government strategy to fight obesity, which focuses on establishing good dietary and exercise habits from an early age. Visit [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)



It's 2.15pm at Hopes and Dreams Montessori Nursery in Islington, north London, and a group of three- and four-year-olds are getting ready to prepare a mid-afternoon snack for their friends. "Getting children at this age handling and preparing healthy food is a key way to ensure they'll become used to a variety of food and eager to eat it," says senior Montessori teacher Lek Teo.

Childhood obesity is rightly at the top of the health agenda: in 2006, 16 per cent of two- to 15-year-olds were obese and a further 14 per cent were overweight, reports the latest Health Survey for England. So Lek Teo's advice could not be more timely. And there is increasing evidence of how important early, positive experiences of nutritious food can be for children's later dietary choices and overall health.

In short, healthy eating, with exercise and active play, is essential for young children's development, and nurseries are on the front line of the campaign against obesity. As National Day Nurseries Association chief executive Purnima Tanuku puts it: "Day nurseries play a key role in ensuring children enjoy the benefits of nutritious foods and exercise through play. Getting it right in a child's formative years can help make sure they learn healthy habits that last a lifetime."

### FINGERS ON THE PULSES

Hopes and Dreams children are used to focusing on food. They enthusiastically wield their knives, dicing up carrots and cutting wholemeal pitta bread into pieces. "This is a daily task, with a different third of the group taking part each time," explains Lek Teo. "It's also an ideal way to reinforce messages about cleanliness."

A quick glance around the room reveals how healthy food has been imaginatively incorporated into a range of activities. Bowls of pulses and grains are lined up for counting and sorting exercises, while a tray of spices is laid out for children to sniff before they try to match them to drawn outlines.

Hopes and Dreams, which has 35 staff and 123 children, has built a good reputation for its approach to food, especially as parents become more aware of what their children eat. Ruth Brown, the chef at Hopes and Dreams, says: "I am committed to providing a balanced diet and we offer vegetarian menus alongside the main ones. On top of this, I always make the food colourful and interesting in terms of shape and texture. On the

other hand, we keep puddings simple and healthy, offering fruit every day. And there's only ever water for the children to drink."

The nursery was commended in the 2007 Organix Nursery Food Awards. As well as scrutinising the nursery's menus, the judges investigated the extent of the children's participation in cooking and food preparation, and how effectively the nursery engaged with parents about food.

"Our menus are displayed outside each room, in reception and on our website," says managing director Susan Bingham. "We are very open to parents' views. We conduct a survey twice a year, inviting comments about all we do, including the diet we provide."

### GETTING PHYSICAL

Nursery staff keep a careful watch on the children during meal times, recording how much they have eaten for detailed feedback to parents. "It's good to know what they have eaten," says dad Steve Bentley as he collects his daughter. "Recently, my daughter had lentil soup for lunch, which is not something it would have occurred to me to give her."

Physical activity is also essential here, with physical games, movement sessions, walks and trips to the park all part of the day. Senior Montessori teacher Mehtab Fazel explains: "We emphasise the importance of movement and exercise. We believe a healthy body promotes a healthy mind."

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Healthy Body, Happy Me promotes healthy lifestyles for young children. Visit [www.ndna.org.uk](http://www.ndna.org.uk)
- For '5-a-day' ideas, see [www.5aday.nhs.uk](http://www.5aday.nhs.uk)
- See [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/eyfs](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/eyfs) – click on Resource Index, then Unique Child for a Health and Wellbeing guide



# Let's play!

By **Elizabeth Holmes** Illustration **Holly Wales**

Play is at the heart of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) – it underpins all development and learning for young children. The expert tips here, for making play enjoyable and productive, reflect EYFS principles, work well in practice, and make a positive difference to youngsters

stories and offering 'stay and play' sessions where we model play as learning. A good example is junk box modelling. Children make models out of junk with their parents, turning the play into something creative and a learning opportunity."

**Word of advice:** Parents are partners in helping children to play – it's particularly important for fathers to take an active role

**Diane Jones**  
**Children's Centre Cluster**  
**Manager, Durham**

"Good play comes from creating a positive early learning environment, and providing time and opportunity for it. Play is about sharing, negotiating, making choices and resolving conflict. Children need to make play decisions for themselves. Make sure children have access to quality natural

toys with a good feel and texture. Themed boxes are useful for play and can help ensure it is child-centred."

**Word of advice:** Invest in quality toys with good feel and texture

**Patrick Myers**  
**Sure Start Strategic Support**  
**Manager, Dorset**

"We help parents to continue at home what is happening in the centres by sharing learning

**Issy Cole-Hamilton**  
**Policy and Research**  
**Manager, Play England**

"Play is about letting children do what they want to do with their imagination, and stepping back so they can get on with it. Children play in the way that is satisfying to them. Adults should think carefully about why they might suggest changes. We need to trust our judgement when, for example, children are playing

Holly Wales/zeegenrush.com





with ‘weapons’, and realise that children playing in this way does not mean they are violent or aggressive. If children are becoming violent, and someone might get hurt, the adult is of course in charge at all times and should intervene.”

**Word of advice:** Trust your judgement when it comes to moderating children’s play

**Karen Daniels**  
Foundation Stage  
Co-ordinator, Herringthorpe  
Infant School, Rotherham

“We aim for child-initiated play with adults modelling learning. Every space that the children use has ‘vehicles for learning’ – sand and water, role-play areas, writing tables, a construction area and a workshop – and the children have access to them all. Planning is key for good play. We use themes, too. For example, in our story theme the children

retell stories through drama techniques and play. They make puppets and take them home to tell the story to their parents.”

**Word of advice:** Try themed play sessions for maximum learning

**Ruth Brooks**  
Childcare Development  
Manager, Blyth Valley Children’s  
Centre, Northumberland

“Allow children to develop their own play and build on what they are doing. For example, we had a girl pretending to be a butterfly so we did a lot of learning about butterflies, and even invited the parents to a butterfly party. It’s important not to pre-empt how children play. We have outdoor areas for them to use in whatever way their imagination takes them, rather than a set of fixed structures.”

**Word of advice:** Let children develop their own play and build on it

## PLAYING TIPS

### Creating the right environment

Children need access to indoor and outdoor play to develop intellectually, creatively, physically, socially and emotionally. Go for a rich variety.

### Play resources

Play materials don’t have to be fancy to promote creativity. Use what you have – fabric for dressing up, or cardboard boxes to make a den.

### Play for parents

Encourage parents, particularly dads, to talk about play. This creates a common bond. Play experts say adults don’t always know how to play. Let parents participate in play in your centre so they can continue playing at home with their children.

### Supporting play

Role-play is essential to give children the chance to ‘work through’ events and experiences, as well as to be someone or something else for a while.

### Build on spontaneous play

Link it to books for further learning and to develop language skills.

### Watch those who find it hard

Gently encourage those who find it hard to join in. Solitary play can be a great stepping stone for reluctant children.

### Keep your eyes open

The EVFS emphasises the need to observe children and think of ways to challenge them so they develop abilities. And watch for learning opportunities. For example, if children are playing with ‘weapons’, don’t automatically stop them. Use their ‘aggressive’ play to talk about values and standards of behaviour.

# Raise the standard

New plans to lift the standard of care and education for children up to the age of five will see an Early Years Professional (EYP) in all full daycare centres by 2015. This new role is designed to enable graduates working with children to further develop their careers and to attract graduates from other professions. Early Years Professional Status (EYPS), a graduate award like qualified teacher status, signals a major change for the early years sector, and receiving the status can be highly rewarding for you and beneficial to your work setting.

By **Simon Vevers**

## What is EYPS?

Those achieving Early Years Professional Status will be responsible for leading practice across the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which is being introduced in September 2008. They will support and mentor other early years workers, helping them to develop their skills and to improve outcomes for children. The Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) and its partners have developed national standards set at graduate level. These outline what candidates must know, understand and demonstrate to achieve EYPS.

## Case study

**Sam Higgins, deputy supervisor at Rainbow Pre-School in Handforth, near Manchester, completed the three-month validation pathway (it's now four months) through the National Day Nurseries Association and the Open University. The former secondary school teacher and childminder says: "I wanted EYP status to move my setting forward. It was fairly straightforward but demanding, with a number of written tasks and assessment of my skills. It was definitely worthwhile, and I am already exchanging ideas with people I met on the course."**

## Who can apply?

Groups eligible for EYP training include: candidates from full daycare providers in the private, voluntary and independent sectors, Sure Start Children's Centres, sessional care providers and childminders. Candidates can also come from maintained sector full daycare settings such as social services family centres. Early years staff in maintained schools are not eligible unless they work in a children's centre for at least half of their working hours.

## What are the routes to EYPS?

- All candidates must have at least a Level 5 qualification and GCSE grade C (or equivalents) in Maths and English to start one of these pathways:
- ● Four-month part-time validation – for those with a degree who are near to meeting EYPS standards
- ● Six-month part-time extended professional development – for those meeting standards to work with babies, toddlers or young children, but not all three, or for those needing to 'top up' their knowledge
- ● Part-time extended professional development over 15 months – for those with a Level 5 qualification, such as an early years sector-endorsed foundation degree, or those needing further training
- ● Full-time 12-month course – for graduates with limited experience of working with children up to age five

## How is it funded?

- A financial support package for candidates – covering course fees, bursaries, mentor and supply cover costs – is available through the 35 training providers in England.
- For advice on funding options for your nursery or early years setting to employ or train an EYP, contact your Local Authority for help from its Graduate Leader Fund.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Details of how to become an EYP, and a list of training providers, can be found at [www.cwdcouncil.org.uk](http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk). The CWDC has also produced a DVD showing what an EYP might do and featuring interviews with some of the first professionals to be awarded EYPS. For a copy, email: [eyps@cwdcouncil.org.uk](mailto:eyps@cwdcouncil.org.uk)



# Language matters

Rebecca Shirt, a speech and language therapist, has been helping Salford's kids develop their communication skills for eight years. Here she explains why she wouldn't want to do anything else

By **Katy Ward** Photography **Richard Legge**



I've been a children's speech and language therapist for over 10 years. Children are the most amazing little beings. I love talking to them. It's fantastic to see them develop language.

I always wanted to be in a caring profession. I did a four-year BSc Honours degree in Speech Pathology and Therapy. I've worked in Salford for eight years and led a team of speech therapists and communication development workers for three.

Every day is different. Some days I go into Sure Start Children's Centres to run 'babbling baby' and 'talking tots' sessions. My role is to raise parents' awareness and understanding of the importance of early language.

Whether changing a nappy or reading a bedtime story, I think every moment can be a talking time. If parents watch what their child is interested in, and talk about it, they'll learn language far more readily. Turning off the TV and spending time talking to their child should be part of every parent's routine.

I also work closely with early years workers, putting together training packages and passing on my knowledge to the people who see children on a daily basis. Our team also offers



**"Children are the most amazing little beings. It's fantastic to see them develop language"**

home visits to try to reach families who are not yet using a children's centre.

The most common problem I encounter is delayed language development. This can result in a child not being able to follow spoken instructions and not interacting with their peers.

If a parent thinks their child has difficulties, they should observe them to understand how they are communicating. The nursery carer or childminder should contact a children's centre – with parental consent. If they don't work directly with a speech and language therapist, they'll tell you how to find one.

Getting help early makes a massive difference. I remember one mother and child who had home visits and also went to 'talking tots'. After the sessions, the mum was more aware of how to talk to her child and the child was happier. They were playing together and singing songs – their bond had clearly been strengthened.

**To learn more about speech and language, visit: [www.surestart.gov.uk/research/keyresearch/earlylanguagedevelopment](http://www.surestart.gov.uk/research/keyresearch/earlylanguagedevelopment) Want to tell us how you, or someone you know, support the children in your life? Email: [feedback@eymagazine.co.uk](mailto:feedback@eymagazine.co.uk)**





# How do you... get kids reading

As the National Year of Reading gets under way, we look at great ways to foster a love of books

By **Jenny McKibben** Illustration **Mark Beech**

**E**ncourage a child to read and you help them for life. Research shows the knock-on effects of literacy skills can affect health, income, employment and even housing in adult life, yet many children are not getting the start they need. One in 10 is never read a bedtime story, according to a recent study by charity Booktrust, and half of children rarely discuss reading at home.

The early years are critical and parents have an essential role to play in encouraging reading. Parental involvement in reading has more of an influence on children's achievement than any other factor, including how well-educated or rich their parents are, says the National Literacy Trust.

This year is the National Year of Reading and also sees the launch of the Family Reading Campaign to promote reading in the home. So, what can early years staff do to develop reading and encourage parental involvement? Here, six experts share their advice...

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Turn to page 24 for our regular round-up of fun and inspiring reads for young children, practitioners and parents

## THE CAMPAIGNER

**JULIA STRONG, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, NATIONAL LITERACY TRUST, AND DIRECTOR, NATIONAL READING CAMPAIGN**

"It is important to recognise that a child will want to read the same book over and over again – that's good because it's getting the pattern of language into the child, which can be really, really useful. Help parents to see that sharing books with their children is fun. Have a small session, for example, on how they can share books with babies, pointing out the pictures and getting the baby to babble. It doesn't matter what language the parent is doing it in, it's getting the child to see that books can be fun that's important."

## THE DAYCARE MANAGER

**MICHELLE HAY, DEPUTY DAYCARE MANAGER, BERWICK SURE START CHILDREN'S CENTRE**

"We let children have free access to all the books, all the time – they can help themselves whenever they want to read. We change the books regularly and make sure there's always a variety. Some of our children obviously don't get read to at home, so if they find a book they like we slip it in their bag for them to take home, and say to the parents: 'They really enjoyed this book. It might be nice to read it together at bedtime.'"

## THE CHILDREN'S CENTRE MANAGER

**NICOLA RAMSDEN, MANAGER, SWINTON MOORSIDE CHILDREN'S CENTRE, SWINTON, SALFORD**

"We're using an innovative resource called Baby Moves, which gives babies skills they will need for reading, such as training eye muscles to track a rolling ball, which leads to tracking print and scanning along a line when reading. Baby Moves encourages babies to babble in response to adult interactions and helps children begin to develop a rich spoken vocabulary and an understanding of words in context. Without these, reading is meaningless."





## THE PRE-SCHOOL LEARNING ADVISER

**STEPHANIE MATHIVET,  
CURRICULUM AND STANDARDS MANAGER,  
PRE-SCHOOL LEARNING ALLIANCE**

“Books need to be pitched at the child’s particular level of understanding, but they also need well-drawn colour illustrations that involve children in looking at detail. Both illustrations and text should promote social values that chime with what we want children to learn about the world, such as positive images and diverse characters. They should also deal with issues that are foremost on young children’s developmental agenda, such as overcoming fears.”

## THE PROFESSOR

**PROFESSOR CATHY NUTBROWN, SCHOOL  
OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD**

“Parents are central to early literacy development. Practitioners can help by providing more information about how parents can make literacy a shared pleasure at home. All children are different and develop at different rates. If they have a broad, rich grounding in their earliest years they will be better able to take advantage of more formal phonics teaching when they need it – and not at a predetermined time.”

## THE COMMUNITY LIBRARIAN

**RACHEL HARRISS,  
COMMUNITY LIBRARIAN,  
NORFOLK LIBRARY SERVICE**

“Young children go through phases where they’ll suddenly be really into something. Try to bring a book sharing element to that. Don’t save books for set times – make them a natural part of whatever you are doing. Letting children choose their own books is a great way to help them begin to make choices and build self-confidence.”

## MORE TIPS

■ **Join in with this year’s National Year of Reading. For activities, ideas and events, see [www.yearofreading.org.uk](http://www.yearofreading.org.uk)**

■ **Involve dads! Fathers can be important role models, particularly for boys. You can download the free toolkit Engaging Fathers from [www.publications.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.publications.teachernet.gov.uk)**

■ **Bookstart provides free packs of books for every baby, and guidance material for parents and carers. See [www.bookstart.org.uk](http://www.bookstart.org.uk) for details**

■ **Make use of free storytelling and rhyme sessions run at public libraries**

■ **Download free reading resources, such as activity card posters that you can edit to suit your audience, at [www.familyreading.org.uk](http://www.familyreading.org.uk)**

# Dad's the word

Encouraging fathers to be involved in looking after their children can have great benefits. Here are some ways to get them engaged

By **Victoria Neumark Jones** Photography **David Rees**



**W**hen fathers are involved in their children's care and development, a child's outcomes improve dramatically. With this in mind, many Sure Start Children's Centres provide father-friendly services, helping dads to explore the wonders of parenthood. Here are just a few examples...

It is Saturday morning, but the playground at Broadwater Farm Children's Centre in north London is buzzing with activity. Carl Lauder, here with his children Devante, three, and Carline, two, is among a group of dads playing football with their toddlers. To add to the sense of occasion, there are two coaches on hand from nearby Tottenham Hotspur Football Club. Centre



manager Fiona McRitchie is delighted with the turnout. She has been working hard to attract fathers to the centre. This has involved relatively simple measures, such as changing 'Dear parents' to 'Dear mums, dads and carers' on letters home. But the key element is the free two-hour Saturday morning sport workshop, part of Football Champions, a 12-week course run by Spurs and part-funded by Parents As Partners in Early Learning. Fiona says: "The Spurs brand has high status in its Tottenham heartland. Word is going to spread."

### FRESH LOOK

Tailoring children's services to involve fathers requires this kind of imaginative, and sometimes radical, approach.

Sarah Forester, locality co-ordinator for Rochampton Sure Start Children's Centre, says that men are put off by the traditionally female focus of early years provision. "You need to think about how everyone in your team talks to men, take a look at the images on the walls, think how fathers are treated when they do come to the centre."

Some dads drop in during the week at the centre, but Sarah and her team have successfully piloted Saturday sessions aimed at working parents – specifically fathers.

"We know that dads tend to go for hands-on, activity-based sessions. Our Saturday sessions help us to identify exactly what fathers want from our range of services," she says.

There's a lot of value in exploring how fathers and male carers can best open up and share their experiences and ideas. And courses led by men aren't by any means the only way to involve or encourage dads. "You don't have to wait for male workers in order to engage dads," says Duncan Fisher, CEO of the Fatherhood Institute. "Some of the most successful work with fathers is done by women and many fathers feel more comfortable in mixed-gender groups."

At St John's Little Learners Nursery, part of Huntingdon Town Children's Centre in Cambridgeshire, manager Julie Grinstead is delighted at how initiatives to get fathers involved have paid off: "We started our Saturday morning group



## WAYS TO GET DADS INVOLVED

**START EARLY** Engage fathers as early as you can. Direct them from antenatal clinics, where they are encouraged to be involved, on to nurseries so they can feel part of their child's development.

**LOOK AT THE ENVIRONMENT** Look at your centre from a man's point of view, too. Decorate the interior so your setting looks less like it's only for women.

**KEEP COMMUNICATING** Make sure letters are addressed to dads, too.

**BE APPEALING** Run dads' days to attract fathers. Anything active is popular – sport or special trips, for example.

**BE INCLUSIVE** Involve fathers in the running of the centre and make them feel valued.

for fathers with under-fives, called Men Behaving DaDley, and we now have a regular group of around eight fathers and their children who come."

Initially, the staff designed activities for the group, but now the fathers have a more proactive role in running the programme. Julie says: "We need to acknowledge that men function in different ways to women. They want factual information before they attempt to do something new."

### GOODBYE TO PINK

Addressing some common differences between men and women was also at the forefront of planning at the Compass Children's Centre in Ockenden, Thurrock, Essex. Staff surveyed 130 families to find out what men wanted from the centre; so out went the pink walls and flowery cups, and in came a range of initiatives aimed at dads – including debt counselling, first aid and IT courses.

"We have seen a significant increase in the number of dads who come to the centre," says deputy manager Kerry Pasquale. "We have a midwife who attends the centre – she books in couples for their first antenatal check – so we automatically have the dad's details, and they are aware of what we have to offer from the start."

Getting fathers involved early is a common theme. Roger Olley, Head of Service (Father Work), at Children North East Fathers Plus, has been

working with dads for 10 years: "The challenge is to get fathers involved even before their baby is born. Children's centres need to focus on expectant fathers as much as expectant mothers to create supportive families."

Duncan Fisher of the Fatherhood Institute agrees: "The key is for all engagement with families to be father-inclusive. It must be a routine part of everyone's job – and that requires information, training and real leadership for the whole team."

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

- The DCSF's national recruitment campaign, *Working in Early Years – It's not just Child's Play*, sets out to inspire people, particularly men, to take up a career in the sector. If you know someone who's interested, tell them they can find out more by calling 0800 99 66 00 or visiting [www.childcarecareers.gov.uk](http://www.childcarecareers.gov.uk)
- The Fatherhood Institute (formerly Fathers Direct) offers advice, resources and training, including help with the Fatherhood Quality Mark. Visit [www.fatherhoodinstitute.org](http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org)



When a parent comes to visit, it's your chance to explain all the benefits of your home-based setting, and to map out how you organise your day and what you can offer them and their child. We spoke to the experts to find out what parents want and need to know, and how you can best convey the message that their child will be in good hands

**1 Why childminding works so well**

For the initial visit, invite the parent to come when you have other children in your care, so they can see you in action and get a feel for the group in your charge. A warm welcome from you, and the activities going on when they walk in the door, will immediately illustrate the atmosphere their child will enjoy in your home-based setting. Take the opportunity to point out the advantages to children of being cared for in a setting with mixed age groups, and how they will learn through play and the home- and community-based activities such as cooking, gardening and shopping that you offer as a carer.

**2 The care you will give their child**

Parents need to see how you will get along with their child. Show them your policy documents, and make time to talk to their child and get them involved in an activity. Let parents know you will welcome any subsequent visits they may want to make, and talk about how you'll handle their child's settling-in period.

**3 How you work, and why**

Explaining your policy in detail will take time, so you may want to do this at a second meeting. It's important parents understand everything: from managing their children's

**10 things**

# Every childminder should tell parents

By **Jenny Hulme**



# NEW CHILDCARE DUTIES

behaviour to record-keeping. You can give them a summary of your policy to read, possibly using the National Childminding Association's quality standards as a framework – although welfare and learning requirements will change under the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) from September. Wherever possible, use the first meeting to bring your policies and procedures alive by illustrating key issues with everyday examples. For instance, when you discuss nutrition tell them what you're serving for lunch and why. Or if one of the children in your care is acting up in some way, address the problem and explain what you are doing – emphasising the very positive approach childminders take to managing behaviour issues. Invite comments on this – they need to know they have a say.

## 4 Safety comes first

Safety is a priority for parents. Walk them around your home, show them where the children eat, play, nap, use the toilet or have their nappy changed, highlighting every measure you take to keep them safe. Emphasise that safety is always a priority when travelling in the car or supervising the children when you're out. Explain what procedures you would follow in the event of an accident.

## 5 What children learn while they're with you

Many parents may have read about the EYFS but may not understand what it means in practice. Take the opportunity to reassure them that the aim is to ensure the best kind of learning through play, to meet the needs of individual children. Explain how activities and games are part of a quality learning process and how you would like the activities you offer to complement those the children enjoy at home. Point them to the 'Learning and Growing Together' wall chart, which is aimed at supporting parental involvement in early learning, at [www.direct.gov.uk/earlyyears](http://www.direct.gov.uk/earlyyears)

*Thanks to Andrew Fletcher at the National Childminding Association, and parents Patsy Cooper and Joanne Rhys Williams*

## 6 Why you're inspected by Ofsted

Discuss the benefits of being Ofsted-registered, their standards and the role of inspections in assuring optimum care. Don't forget to mention the financial benefit, as using Ofsted-registered facilities makes parents eligible for tax credits.

## 7 Your experience and its value

The Ofsted message is important, but communicate it in the context of all your training, qualifications and participation in quality assurance schemes such as NCMA Quality First.

## 8 Your place in the community

Parents often assume that childminders work in isolation. Tell them about your links with others in the area, such as a library, park or play scheme. Also mention your connections with other childcare workers through training groups, childminder networks or children's centres and schools.

## 9 Contract and charges

It can be hard to switch from chatting about the activities of the day to discussing the details of a contract. But it's best for you and the parents if everyone understands the terms of the service you offer. Take them through all the relevant topics: payment, holidays, notice, timekeeping, the cover you have in place if you are unable to work, and so on. Make them aware of what they can claim towards the costs of the childcare through tax credits or childcare vouchers.

## 10 Reassure parents

Parents may be anxious about leaving their child at first. Recognising their anxieties, and reassuring them that you want to have ongoing communication about their child's development (as well as acknowledging that *they* are the experts when it comes to their child) will give parents even greater confidence in the service you offer.

The new duties on Local Authorities (under the Childcare Act 2006) are steadily coming into force, and by the end of this year will have a big impact on everyone working with under-fives, parents and carers.

## What your Local Authority must do to support under-fives:

**Make sure (as far as possible) that there's enough childcare...** so parents can work or take advantage of training opportunities. Families on low incomes and those with disabled children are a priority.

**Ensure there's free early years provision for all three- and four-year-olds...** which will be extended (from 12.5 hours) to 15 hours of flexible childcare by 2010.

**Identify gaps in childcare provision...** LAs must assess the supply of, and demand for, childcare in their area and ensure information, training and advice for all those working with young children.

**Act as childcare 'market managers'...** through planning, supporting and commissioning childcare provision by working with the maintained, private, voluntary and independent sectors.

**Pull together early childhood services...** by working with other agencies to bring professionals with different skills to children's centres. There will be a Sure Start Children's Centre for every community by 2010.

**Keep parents in the know...** about childcare provision in their area and any other services that can benefit them. From April, each LA must do this through its Families Information Service (currently the Children's Information Service).

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Several councils have taken part in pilot exercises to prepare for the new duties through the Childcare Implementation Project. Visit [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/earlyyears/implementation](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/earlyyears/implementation) For more on EYFS, see [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/eyfs](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/eyfs)

# All together now

By **Hazel Davis** Photography **Jo Mieszkowski**



Meeting the needs of disabled children is a top priority for Sure Start Children's Centres. We visit an inspiring centre that offers the very best early years care for all

It's barely five minutes into the session and already there's a rousing chorus of *Incey Wincey Spider*. In the sensory room at Sheffield's Early Days Children's Centre, singing seems to be compulsory, as is a spot of ribbon-dancing, to which two-year-old Amy is treating the group. It's Amy's first time in here, and she's taken to it with gusto, pressing buttons that go 'moo' and marvelling at a giant lava lamp. Michael, two-and-a-half, isn't so keen on the lava lamp, but he's certainly taken a shine to the night-sky installation, complete with twinkling stars.

With them are programme manager Jo Zasada and senior early years worker Michele Daly. Everyone's enjoying

themselves, especially little Michael, who is toddling about while his father Malcolm looks on. Michael has been coming to the centre for nearly a year (his specific needs are still under investigation), and the smile on Malcolm's face says it all. Michael received home-visiting educational service for pre-school children before being referred to the centre. "When we came here, he could only shuffle around on his back. But here he's come out of himself emotionally and developed mentally, too. It's wonderful," enthuses Malcolm.

### Can-do attitude

It's easy to see why the Council for Disabled Children (CDC) has included the Early Days Centre in its report as an example of best practice. The CDC report focuses on improving access to children's centres and extended schools services for disabled people.

Early Days opened in 2006 with support from National Children's Homes (NCH). The main reason its approach works so well is the can-do attitude of all the staff, explains Jo. "It might not be the right thing to say, but our priority is the child, and the paperwork can catch up."

The centre holds up to 70 children between 8am and 6pm each weekday, with 103 enrolled. In all, 14 Early Days staff members work directly with an inclusive mix of non-disabled and disabled children. The children's additional needs include

## DISABILITIES: COMING UP

● The Council for Disabled Children (CDC) launches a major report, *Extending Inclusion*, in April. The report will identify and share practice that helps Sure Start Children's Centres and extended schools provide access and care for disabled children and young people. For more details, visit [www.ncb.org.uk/cdc](http://www.ncb.org.uk/cdc)

● Disabled children are at the heart of the Every Child Matters agenda. In January, the Prime Minister announced that there will be new funding for short breaks and family support. To find out more, visit [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk)

● The Government review, *Aiming High for Disabled Children: Better Support for Families*, offers a £340 million funding package to boost provision of short breaks, pilot accessible childcare, help more parents get involved in shaping services, and develop projects to improve access for disabled children. For details, see: [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/socialcare/disabledchildren/aiminghigh](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/socialcare/disabledchildren/aiminghigh)

● The Early Support programme offers a good model for integrated support for disabled children through Sure Start Children's Centres, which is fully complementary with the CDC's *Extending Inclusion* Guidance.



autism, physical disabilities and family problems. Onsite teams cover health and outreach, family support, midwifery, breastfeeding support and training.

### Integrated support

It's this multifunctionality, says Jo, that makes Early Days so special. "Because we are a fully integrated children's centre, it makes it much easier to support the families. Having early health services makes a massive difference to the parents." Children at Early Days are frequently referred from external services, while other families may have discovered the centre themselves. Children attend alone or accompanied.

The overall wellbeing of the children is the obvious focus of the staff at Early Days, and four-year-old Charlie is one of many who have blossomed at the centre. He is autistic and also has curvature of the spine.

"Charlie has come here since he was a baby, and he's ready for school in September, something which we are working on with his mum," says Carly Redgate, the Early Days SENCO. "Charlie's main form of communication is Makaton sign language, but all our children and staff also use it and we use it in our daily singing as well. When he's feeling upset, he now has a friend who comes up to him and asks if he's all right in Makaton." Charlie's mum Yvonne cannot ▷





praise the centre enough. “I want them to create a five- to 18-year-olds’ room here!” she says.

Diagnosed with autism and cystic fibrosis, Aaliyah, four, is rushing happily around the garden. Her mum and dad didn’t have a lot of confidence when she arrived a year ago. But after working with Early Days staff, they feel more positive about her development. Aaliyah has discovered a love of music, and much of her provision is delivered through it. “She wasn’t keen on going outside at first,” Carly explains, “but we lured her out with musical instruments.”

### Natural environment

The staff’s commitment to ensuring all children can participate in all activities is clear. Each of the nursery’s three rooms houses an activity oriented round natural materials such as pine cones, shells and sand. “Funding can come in quite a way down a child’s journey, so we use everyday resources and embellish them for the child’s additional needs,” says Jayne Ward, the centre’s enthusiastic manager.

At Early Days, says Jayne, it’s not about removing the child for special treatment, it’s about ensuring that you already have what they need to participate. “That’s why all our staff use Makaton, our rooms contain naturalistic environmental resources that can be easily replicated outside, and why we make sure that, if one child doesn’t like dancing lights on the walls, we remove the lights rather than the child.”



## MAKE YOUR CENTRE MORE INCLUSIVE

### Tips from Helen Wheatley, principal officer at the Council for Disabled Children

- Spend time planning how the needs of disabled children will be met in the centre and what has to be in place to do this.
- Is your centre accessible? Carry out a basic access audit with the help of local parents and their children. You will need an up-to-date risk management policy.
- Check that any images you have of children (on walls or in books, for example) include some featuring disabled children.
- Are staff confident and well supported to meet the needs of all children? Make sure all staff at your centre have access to disability equality training. Do you have identified staff with specialist knowledge?
- Have a clear system in place for sharing information about a child’s condition. Ensure staff and parents know who the link person is for each child.
- Ask parents of disabled children who currently use your service what is helpful to them – and make sure others know this is available. Gather the views of disabled children and their families on what they like about the centre, and what could be better.
- Make the most of existing resources and networks – expertise from local special schools, for example.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Early Support programme  
[www.earlysupport.org.uk](http://www.earlysupport.org.uk)  
 Together for Children toolkit  
[www.childrens-centres.org](http://www.childrens-centres.org)  
 Disabled children charity Kids  
[www.kids.org.uk](http://www.kids.org.uk)  
 Sure Start Practice Guidance  
[www.surestart.gov.uk/improvingquality/guidance/practiceguidance/](http://www.surestart.gov.uk/improvingquality/guidance/practiceguidance/)



## Who, What, Where & When

### 14-16 March

#### Sport Relief

Raise money for Sport Relief's good causes as a part of this sporty national campaign. Sport Relief's official website is full of tips and resources for early years workers to involve children in their care.

[www.sportrelief.com/schools/teach/early-years](http://www.sportrelief.com/schools/teach/early-years)



### 17-20 March

#### Splash!

Interactive science show at Eureka! children's museum in Halifax, West Yorkshire, where visitors can find out everything about water – and how to save it. Repeated 14-18 April.

[www.eureka.org.uk/events](http://www.eureka.org.uk/events)



### 1-31 May

#### Walk in the Woods

The Tree Council's month-long festival of walks and talks designed to promote enjoyment and exploration of trees and woods in the spring.

[www.treecouncil.org.uk](http://www.treecouncil.org.uk)



### 1 June

#### Open Farm Sunday

Hundreds of farmers across Britain open their gates to the public as part of a campaign to encourage people to get out into the countryside and learn more about where their food comes from.

[www.farmsunday.org](http://www.farmsunday.org)



## The List

Your at-a-glance guide to more highlights on the early years calendar in the coming months...

#### MARCH

### 11

#### Family Road Safety Training, Leicester

One of a series of free half-day courses giving advice on how to deliver road safety presentations to parents with young children, backed up by free resources. For details of more course dates in other cities, or to arrange in-house training, email: [hwood@brake.org.uk](mailto:hwood@brake.org.uk)

### 18-19

#### ContinYou Annual Conference, Birmingham

Exploring how schools and Sure Start Children's Centres can put children, families and communities at the centre of their work. Keynote speakers include the Minister for Children, Young People and Families, Beverley Hughes. [www.continyou.org.uk/championing](http://www.continyou.org.uk/championing)

### 28

#### Early Intervention for Families at Risk, London

One-day conference offering practical advice and support on dealing with vulnerable and hard-to-reach families. Gill Strachan, assistant director of the DCSF Families Group, will be among the main speakers. [www.capitaconferences.co.uk/ourconferences](http://www.capitaconferences.co.uk/ourconferences)

#### APRIL

### 2

#### International Children's Book Day

Annual celebration designed to promote children's love of reading and literature. [www.ibby.org](http://www.ibby.org)

### 18-19

#### Early Years and Primary Teaching Exhibition, Manchester

Resources and ideas for early years settings,

held at Manchester Central. Entry to the resources exhibition is free, with the option of attending paid-for CPD seminars. [www.teachingexhibitions.co.uk](http://www.teachingexhibitions.co.uk)

#### MAY

### 11-17

#### National Breastfeeding Awareness Week

Campaign co-ordinated by the Department of Health to highlight the

benefits of breastfeeding for mother and baby. [www.breastfeeding.nhs.uk](http://www.breastfeeding.nhs.uk)

### 15

#### Using Stories to Support Science Learning, London

This course, at the Science Museum, focuses on storytelling techniques that can help introduce science concepts in the early years. [www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/educators](http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/educators)

# Playthings

Our little testers check out: **SENSORY TOYS**

We asked the children at Charford Children's Centre in Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, to put three sensory-learning toys through their paces. **Family support worker Juliet Smith reveals their verdict...**



**3+**

## Dark den and light kit

(Dark den: £39.99/Light kit: £37.50, 3yrs+)

Children can crawl into the den to explore the dark environment. It's portable and easy to assemble (eight plastic poles with corner joints), and folds away into its own bag. The den is great for use with torches, glowing objects and fibre optics. Light kits are available separately, such as the one pictured (selection of full contents only). The nylon double skin blocks out the light, while side flaps can be opened for observation by staff.

## Juliet says:

"The den was quick and easy to put up, and very effective for sensory play. With adult supervision, we found the den and the lights suitable for children aged one and up. The older children loved helping to put the tent together, which encouraged great teamwork, problem-solving and language skills."

**The children say:**  
**"We loved exploring in the dark"**

**Melody Mix**

(£38.99, 3yrs+)

3+

This wooden music station is the perfect way to get a group of children working together to explore a variety of sounds. It comes complete with 10 instruments, including xylophone, tubular chimes, triangle, cymbal, bells and maracas.

**Juliet says:**

"The children at the 'stay and play' enjoyed making sounds and played with all the instruments, particularly the xylophone and tubular chimes. We found it suitable for ages two and up. Parents were impressed by the quality and variety of instruments."

**The children say:**  
**"We enjoyed the bright colours and different sounds"**

**Washable sensory blocks**

(£32.95, 0-3yrs)

0+

These super-soft, machine-washable blocks feature a variety of stimulating textures, colours, shapes and sounds. Children can feel the velvety bumps and ridges, or shake them to make them jingle, squeak and rattle. The lightweight shapes are easy to grab and stack. The pack contains 24 blocks, with a maximum length of 15cm.

**Juliet says:**

"It was easy even for a three-month-old baby to hold (and chew!) the blocks, and a 13-month-old found them easy to pick up and managed to stack two of them. They also discovered that some of them made a sound and shared this with an adult. I like the fact that the blocks would be easy to keep clean."



The toys on review were provided by TTS – a supplier of quality educational resources to schools and parents across the UK. Its website features products across all curriculum areas for early years and primary school children and teachers.

For more details or to request a new 2008 catalogue, visit the TTS website at [www.tts-group.co.uk](http://www.tts-group.co.uk), or call (freephone) 0800 318 686.

**OVER TO YOU:** Do you want to road-test toys and resources in your setting? Email: [feedback@eymagazine.co.uk](mailto:feedback@eymagazine.co.uk)

## Top websites for RHYMES

➦ [www.bigeyedowl.co.uk](http://www.bigeyedowl.co.uk)

Click on 'songs and rhymes' for access to more than 100 lyrics, listed according to theme. Subjects covered include the seasons, mini-beasts, action rhymes, animals, festivals, counting and food. There is also a good selection of traditional rhymes.

➦ [www.gardenofsong.com](http://www.gardenofsong.com)

US website featuring a large collection of nursery rhymes with musical accompaniment – simply click on the play button below each rhyme to hear an audio file of the relevant tune being played on a piano.

➦ [www.literacytrust.org.uk](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk)

/talktoyourbaby/quicktips.html#songs Part of the National Literacy Trust's series of bilingual tip-sheets, available as free PDF downloads. This one gives parents and carers easy-to-follow advice on singing rhymes with their babies.

➦ [www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies](http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies)

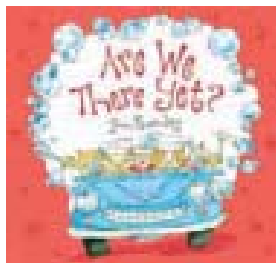
/teletubbies/nurseryrhymes Traditional rhymes spiced up with 'flash' animation, featuring the Teletubbies from the BBC's CBeebies.

# Book corner

This issue – great reads all about **JOURNEYS**

Every issue, we scour the world of children's publishing to bring you the best books on a variety of themes, helping you to build a great early years library

## NEW TITLES

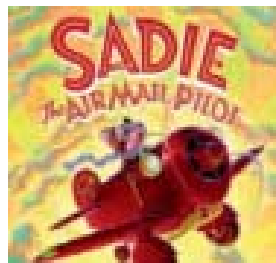


### **Are We There Yet?**

by Jan Fearnley

(HarperCollins, £5.99) 4-8yrs

Think car journeys with your family are bad? Wait till you take a ride with the Tibbles, a clan of cats for whom everything can – and does – go wrong on a trip to see gran and grandad. Great fun for more advanced readers.

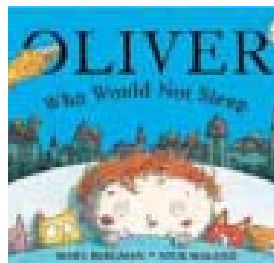


### **Sadie The Air Mail Pilot**

by Kellie Strom

(Corgi, £5.99) 0-5yrs

Full of adventure and richly illustrated, this is the quirky story of a hard-pressed flyer. The detail in the drawings ensures it appeals to adults as much as children – a great book to enjoy together.

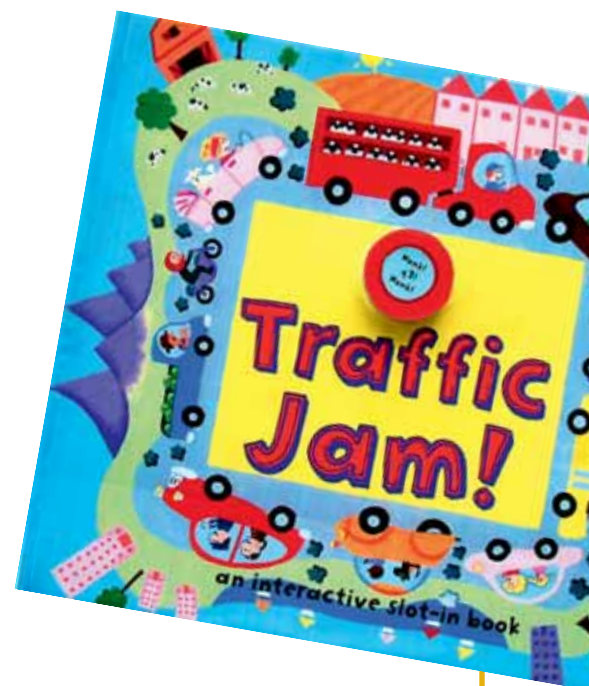


### **Oliver Who Would Not Sleep**

by Mara Bergman and Nick Maland

(Hodder, £5.99) 3yrs+

This witty tale about a bedtime explorer uses rhythmic, rhyming couplets that roll off the tongue. Shortlisted for the Booktrust Early Years Awards in 2007.

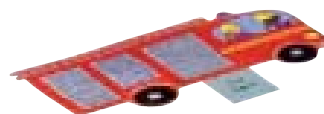


### **Traffic Jam!**

by Katy Taggart

(Tango Books, £10.99) 3yrs+

A hard-cover, interactive book designed to appeal to motor-mad toddlers, with bright, bold illustrations featuring removable 'slot-in' cars and other vehicles. These can be taken out of their scenes in the story and placed in the gatefold slots at the end to make up the traffic jam.





# WORKBOOK

## Leading and Managing in the Early Years

by Carol Aubrey

(Sage Publications) £22.99

This book is based on work done by Carol Aubrey and her



colleagues with early years leaders from Sure Start Children's Centres, Foundation Stage Units, nurseries and daycare centres. It is a

small-scale study based on 12 settings, and highlights similarities and differences in the leadership role, and expectations across the settings involved.

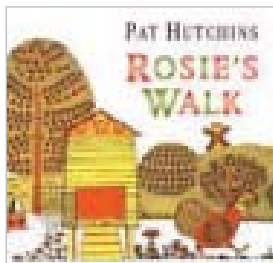
This book is not a manual for leaders, as may be assumed by the title; rather, it is a detailed survey of management issues and leadership practices in a time of change, and therefore will be more suited to those studying at degree level or towards a specific management qualification.

As the author concludes, there is more to be explored about the leadership process in early years settings and what constitutes effective leadership. Such a small study cannot fulfil this wider, practical aim – but it does pose useful questions and provides a good range of examples from the settings involved.

Sue Fisher, early years and SEN training consultant, Hull

Would you like the chance to review the latest books for early years workers? If so, email: [feedback@eymagazine.co.uk](mailto:feedback@eymagazine.co.uk)

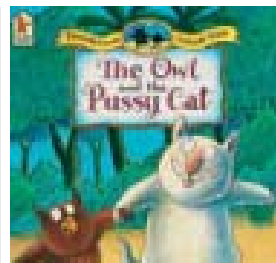
## CLASSICS



### Rosie's Walk

by Pat Hutchins

(Random House, £5.99) 2-5yrs  
Rosie's walk around the farmyard, pursued by the hungry but clumsy fox, has become a beacon in the world of children's picture books, an ever-popular (and near-wordless) story.

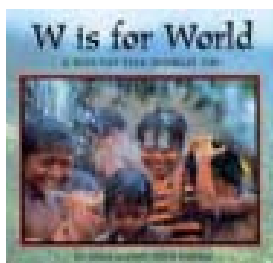


### The Owl and the Pussycat

by Edward Lear

(Walker, £5.99) 4yrs+  
Louise Voce's sparkling artwork helps to bring out the comic side of Edward Lear's well-known nonsense poem. Ideal for older readers.

## INFORMATION BOOKS

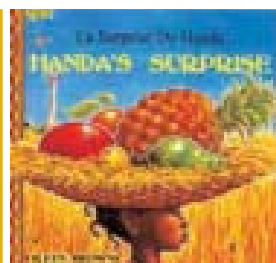


### W is for World: A Round-The-World ABC

by Kathryn Cave

(Frances Lincoln /Oxfam, £5.99) 4yrs+  
Explore the planet with this photographic alphabet. Larger version has teachers' notes for group sessions (£15.99).

## BILINGUAL



### Handa's Surprise

by Eileen Browne

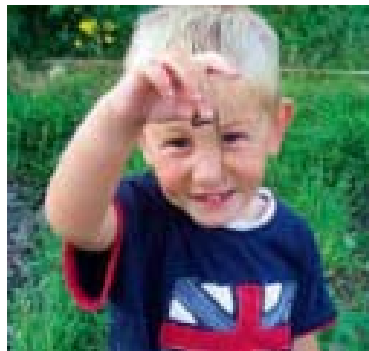
(Mantra Lingua, £7.50) 3yrs+  
Eileen Browne's exuberant tale of one girl's journey through an African landscape is now available in 16 dual-language editions, including Arabic, Bengali, Chinese and Turkish.

# Try it!

Creative fun for little hands

## CREEPY CRAWLY WORMERY

Your little charges will dig looking for worms and building them a home with this down-to-earth project from the book *Making Stuff for Kids*. And you can buy this treasure trove of craft ideas at a discount with our special reader offer...



### INSTRUCTIONS

**1** Before you find any worms you need to prepare their home, and a jam jar is ideal. Worms need to breathe, just like us, so use a hammer and nail to make five or six holes in the lid.

**2** Use a spoon to fill the jar with a layer of sand about 2.5cm thick. Follow with a similar sized layer of soil. Keep adding alternate layers of sand and soil until you reach roughly 2.5cm from the top.

**3** Worms like it if the ground is damp, so add a little bit of water to the jar. The sand and soil should be soggy, but don't flood the jar. Worms can't live underwater!

**4** Put some grass and dead leaves on top - this is what the worms will eat. You could also add vegetable peelings.

**5** Now for the fun bit - finding some worms in the garden! You will find more worms on a rainy day, and good places to look are under plant pots and in compost heaps. If you can't find any worms at all, you could buy some from a fishing shop instead.

### MATERIALS

Worms!  
Big clean glass jar with a lid  
A nail and hammer (to make holes in the jar lid)  
Sand  
Soil  
Grass/leaves  
Spoon  
Thick black paper



**6** When you have about 10 worms, put them into the jar and make sure you put the lid on tightly - this is very important unless you want worms all over your house!

**7** Worms like it best when it is dark, so wrap some thick black paper round the jar to trick them into thinking it is night. Leave the jar in a cool, dark place for about a week.

**8** Take the paper off so the children can see what the worms have been doing. Draw their attention to the tunnels that the worms have made through the sand and soil. The food that you left on the top of the soil will have disappeared, as the worms should now have taken it back down into their tunnels.

**9** When you have finished looking at the worms, you can explain to the children that it's a good idea to return them to their natural environment - into the garden, or on the compost heap.



### Your professional queries answered

**Q** Although there is no smoking in our children's centre, we have a problem with parents smoking when they are waiting at the gates. How can we encourage them to set a better example for their children's health? Name supplied

**A** This is a difficult situation as you need to strike a balance between parents' rights and your responsibility to protect the welfare of children in your care.

Although people are more conscious now of the health impacts of smoking, awareness of the impact of second-hand smoke is still quite low, so one way of engaging with parents who smoke would be to explain this hazard, especially as it affects children.

Secondly, given that most smokers say they would like to stop smoking but need encouragement and support to do so, you may wish to find out if any of the parents would like help in quitting (contact your local PCT to see if it can help).

You could also extend the no-smoking rule to the area immediately outside the perimeter of the centre, if possible. You should check with the Local Authority to see if that is feasible.

**Amanda Sandford**  
Research manager, ASH

Send your queries to:  
[feedback@eymagazine.co.uk](mailto:feedback@eymagazine.co.uk)

'Wormery' was supplied by Camilla Stacey, artist and former playworker. For more ideas for craft activities for young children, read *Making Stuff for Kids* (Black Dog, £16.95). The publisher says: "It's a treasure trove of inspiring ideas that will appeal to early years professionals and parents."

To order *Making Stuff for Kids* at the special *Early Years* offer price of £12.95, call 01235 465577 or email: [direct.orders@marston.co.uk](mailto:direct.orders@marston.co.uk) (quoting code KIDS08)

**READER OFFER**



**Ashington Children's Centre**  
**Ashington, Northumberland**

# Postcard from...

Every issue, we take a peek behind the scenes at early years settings around the country, to find out what makes them tick

## A quick tour of the building:

The children's centre, based round an inner courtyard developed with funds from the parents' forum, is run by the children's charity NCH. Services are provided by a coalition of partners including the local NHS trust and RASCALS, a childcare co-operative, which oversees the 62-place nursery.

## Meet the staff:

Centre co-ordinator Gill Physick oversees a cluster of Sure Start Children's Centres along the Northumbrian coast. The 70-strong Ashington team is made up of health visitors, family support, community

development and family learning, speech and language, midwifery services, dietetics, early years, childminding networks and admin.

## What we provide:

As well as individual family support, there is a range of groups such as parentcraft, baby massage, breastfeeding support and Makaton baby signing. Dads are encouraged to come to all these events.

## Why we love working here:

**Val Randal, health visitor:** "We are able to provide an immediate response to parents in need."

**Helen Cain, primary mental health worker:** "Staff have shown a high level of commitment to

the mellow parenting programme, both those involved directly and those working behind the scenes. It was a pleasure to work with such skilled professionals."

## Michelle Speed, oral health promotion:

"I have always been very impressed with the staff's commitment, drive and motivation in aiming to reduce oral health inequalities for children and their families."

[www.nch.org.uk](http://www.nch.org.uk)

**OVER TO YOU:**  
To see your school, nursery or children's centre featured here, email: [feedback@eymagazine.co.uk](mailto:feedback@eymagazine.co.uk)



# WIN!

## A complete nursery suite



Subscribe for free to *Early Years* magazine for a chance to win this three-piece wooden furniture set for your nursery, worth £1,000

**T**his suite, from Galt Educational, is part of a new range of products designed to help you create the perfect nursery environment for your children's centre, school, or childcare setting. It consists of:

■ **TABLE AND CHAIRS** Seat six children round this beautiful beech table. Easy to clean, with rounded edges for safety.

■ **STURDY SEE 'N' STORE** Manufactured from solid beech with a plywood base, this is ideal for storing small books and toys. The Perspex side panels make it easy to see what's inside.

■ **WICKER 12-TRAY UNIT** The 12 wicker storage boxes create a natural look, and make a great alternative to the standard plastic tray. The prize has a total value of £1,000. For more information on these and other educational products, visit: [www.galt-educational.co.uk](http://www.galt-educational.co.uk)

For terms and conditions, see: [www.teachernet.gov.uk/nursery](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/nursery)

### HOW TO ENTER

For your chance to win the nursery suite, join our home mailing list by emailing: [competition@eymagazine.co.uk](mailto:competition@eymagazine.co.uk) and putting 'Galt' in the subject field. The email must include your name, home address, daytime phone number, job title and setting name/address. You must also indicate whether you wish to join our Reader Panel – the group of readers that ensures *Early Years* is an inspiring, informative read. The closing date for entries is 1 May 2008. The winner will be picked at random from all entries once the closing date has passed.

For inspiration and expert advice on early years practice, including the latest news on Government policies and programmes, *Early Years* magazine is your best source of information.

**SUBSCRIBE TODAY – IT'S FREE!**