

# Training | Research | Consultancy

Working to provide equal chances, challenge disadvantage and achieve best practice in services for children and families

## Creating childcare sustains childcare

Early years and childcare strategies must continue to create childcare places in order to maintain a sustainable sector, ensure sufficiency, meet the challenges of the Childcare Act (2006) and increase the stock of childcare places which meet modern and changing needs.

Without creating new childcare provision, the sector may become stagnant and is in danger of contracting to such an extent that sufficiency will be seriously compromised.

Closure rates across the country are currently varied, and influenced by a range of factors. There may be an over supply of full day care, or childminders may be leaving in swathes, caused by the demands of inspection or the economic challenges of balancing the management of a small business and the affordable childcare needs of local families.

Childcare provision, on average, appears to fare better than other small businesses in terms of closure rates. This is due in part to the excellent support, training and development work that early years and childcare teams provide. If we were to assume that every year 15% of places close, then the sector could be half the size it is today within five years. This is not good for choice or diversity, bringing new services to the sector or indeed meeting Public Service Agreement targets such as PSA target 2 – increase the stock of Ofsted registered childcare by 10%.

The interpretation of the Childcare Act (2006) which places a new duty on local authorities to ensure a sufficiency of childcare is key. Sufficient childcare is sustainable childcare, provided where it is needed, at times that are required, and at an affordable price that provides enough income for a setting to achieve quality.

Sufficiency is delivered by childcare providers and if local authorities are going to meet their duty, partnership working with all providers, including childminders is essential.

Round table discussions must continue, supported by childcare development work which is combined with sound business and marketing input.

Childcare provision where it is not naturally sustainable can be transformational and regenerative; it can raise expectations and support families to access childcare, training and employment. This is especially important for areas of disadvantage (PSA target 2 – increase the take-up of formal childcare by lower income families).

These transformational benefits have to be carefully balanced with the special demands made by creating and sustaining childcare in disadvantaged areas. Sustaining childcare in this case requires a persistent and comprehensive childcare development and support strategy. This is a key issue for childcare provision in children's centres.

For more information contact  
**James Hemsall, Director**

### Sponsorship of Children Now Children's Centres conference

We were delighted to be the sponsors of the Children Now Sustainable Children's Centre conference in Birmingham on 17th and 18th October 2006. The conference aimed to enable successful governance and partnership arrangements to deliver sustainable children's centres that are accessible for all.

### Early Support

Helping every child succeed  
Read about our approved trainer status for Early Support accredited and non-accredited training on page 2.

# Early Support

## Helping every child succeed

We have recently become approved Early Support training providers for the following training programmes to support the use of Early Support materials, and the process of multi-agency service development at local level:

- Using the service audit tool
- Working in Partnership through Early Support (accredited)
- Working in Partnership through Early Support (non-accredited)

“All children’s centres are expected to use Early Support approaches and materials including the Family Pack.

In particular the Early Support Service Audit Tool should be used by children’s centres to jointly review and evaluate the standard of service they are providing”

Sure Start Children’s Centres Practice Guidance November 2005

Early Support is the national, central Government mechanism for achieving better coordinated, family focused services for young disabled children and their families across England.

With parental involvement at its core, Early Support is integral to the restructuring of children’s services in response to Every Child Matters and associated new assessment, information and inspection frameworks for children’s services.

The programme facilitates the achievement of objectives set by a broad range of Government objectives for young disabled children and their families.

We expect Early Support to be a major focus for our training team over the next year, and we are currently developing our programme of training costs and commissioning arrangements.

Early Support training can be funded by the Transformation Fund.

To discuss the possibility of us providing Early Support training for you, please contact **Anne Robertson**, Head of Training.

## Assessing the sufficiency of childcare

The Department for Education and Skills is consulting on how local authorities will undertake childcare sufficiency assessments to inform strategies to meet the new legal duty for ensuring a sufficiency of childcare. Every local authority will need to carry out an assessment from April 2007 and repeat them every 2 to 3 years.

We welcome the proposals to accurately assess and analyse existing childcare services and what parents want. However a potential oversight is the detail on estimating future childcare needs, by considering mapping trends, forecasting and anticipating future demand and need, given that assessments will occur every 2 to 3 years and allowing for the time it takes to initiate childcare development work and open new or extended places.

We recommend:

- An analysis of current **supply** and the capacity or issues affecting the supply. Data on supply should come from a range of sources, both qualitative and quantitative, and should be collated to provide an assessment of the current level of provision and the take-up of available provision.
- A collection of expressed **demand** of parents/carers, children/young people, employers and any other.
- A **forecast** of future needs/market, and an analysis of trends informed by planning and other local and national strategies, analysis of socio-demographic factors and an exploration of barriers to using existing childcare.

- A professional assessment of **need**, based on supply, expressed demand and forecasting for extended, new or different provision.

The childcare sufficiency assessment should provide the baseline information to support the local authority in its duty to provide a sufficiency of childcare and to measure performance in this aim.

The assessment should:

- produce a geographical map of current provision
- assess childcare needs amongst specific populations
- investigate preferred childcare use and barriers to using childcare
- assess future childcare needs to inform the development of provision
- consider the views of employers regarding the impact of childcare, or a lack of childcare.

We are currently undertaking the childcare sufficiency assessments for Cornwall County Council and Northumberland County Council.

# Children's Centre case study: Parents' consultation with Bluecoat Children's Centre in Stamford, Lincolnshire

Bluecoat Children's Centre commissioned us to undertake an independent community consultation that aimed to identify services that local parents/carers feel would be helpful to them, and would improve outcomes for their families in line with the Every Child Matters five outcomes.

The consultation provided the partnership board with recommendations for service provision to inform the:

- delivery of services that meet the expectations and needs of the community
- provision of accessible services that parents are able to and want to access
- removal of barriers to enable parents to access services
- provision of services with a minimum of stigma attached to them
- provision of services that parent/carers have trust in.

The Partnership Board was keen to involve local parents or carers in the community consultation questionnaire survey, and the methodology was designed to involve local parents/carers who were recruited as community consultants. Training and confidence building was provided to undertake the interviewer-led questionnaires safely and ethically with other parents/carers living in the Northfields area. The survey questionnaire was produced with input from the children's centre manager, the partnership board and the community volunteers.

Community volunteers attended scheduled service provision, the local school and community events (eg the school fête) to ask other local parents/carers to complete the interviewer-led questionnaire. Community volunteers also interviewed other family members, friends and neighbours to ensure that as many people living in the local area as possible had an opportunity to express their views.

The consultation report outlines the key findings and recommendations based on the responses from a representative sample of 176 local parents/carers, exceeding the target of 160, providing a robust source of consultation responses. The consultation was initiated in May and was completed in July 2006.

Please contact **James Hempsall** or **Barbara Wilson** for further information.

## Our children's centre programme

We have a range of training, research and consultancy to support individual children's centres, clusters or networks of centres, and local authority wide children's centres strategies, including:

- Parents' consultation
- Team building
- Planning and strategy
- Annual planning
- Managing change programmes
- Impact assessment collection and presentation
- Evaluation
- User satisfaction surveys
- Management capacity building and structures
- Parental involvement strategies



## Not 'non' but 'anti'

The Children Act (1989) placed a responsibility on early years and childcare providers to promote anti-discriminatory practice.

This watershed legislation shifted the emphasis from equality of opportunity and operating a non-racist/sexist etc. framework to one that proactively counters the discrimination in society that shapes the views, behaviour and learning of our children.

The importance of promoting anti-discriminatory practice in childcare remains after the Children Act (2004), and it is vital that we support practitioners to implement anti-bias practice as it supports children and their families to achieve the Every Child Matters five outcomes.

Our training, research and consultancy programme includes:

- Introduction to equality of opportunity training (for beginners and refresher)
- Equality of opportunity for leaders and managers training
- Training and consultancy for writing and developing equal opportunities policies
- Training and consultancy for equal opportunities strategies
- Promoting anti-discriminatory practice training
- Practitioner consultation, surveys and training needs analysis
- Practice audits, reviews and research

For more information contact **Anne Robertson**, Head of Training.

# About us

Training, research and consultancy for everyone working with children and families

Hempsall Consultancies is an independent partner and provider of training, research and consultancy; working with local authorities, Sure Start programmes, children's centres and extended services, with anti-discriminatory practice at our core.

## Training

- bespoke continuous development training
- a growing range of accredited training
- practitioner and development worker training
- leadership and management training

## Our current clients

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council  
 Birmingham City Council  
 Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC)  
 Cornwall County Council  
 Derby City Council  
 Derbyshire County Council  
 Hertfordshire County Council (Young in Herts)  
 Leicester City Council  
 Leicestershire County Council  
 Leicestershire Learning and Skills Council  
 London Borough of Enfield  
 London Borough of Havering  
 Northamptonshire County Council  
 Northumberland County Council  
 Nottingham City Council  
 Rugby Early Years Education and Childcare Centre  
 Rutland County Council  
 Sure Start Edmonton  
 Sure Start Hartlepool North  
 Sure Start Hartlepool South  
 Sure Start Lescudjack  
 Sure Start Townfield  
 Thomas Cook  
 Thurrock Council  
 Warwickshire County Council

## Research

- childcare sufficiency assessments
- Sure Start children's centre and project evaluations
- partner, parent/carer and children/young people's consultations
- impact assessments and feasibility studies

## Consultancy

- children's centres and extended services
- children and young people's plans
- children's workforce development plans
- early years and childcare development and strategy

# Our new website

Visit our updated website to download our newsletters, access our news monitor archive and to find out more about our work and team.

# Our team

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