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childwise

CHECK OUT CHILDCARE: NEWS AND VIEWS FOR PARENTS FROM DAYCARE TRUST

NATIONAL CHILDCARE WEEK SPECIAL ISSUE



Childcare Benefits for Life!

Early Years
Foundation Stage:
what it means for
your child



National
Childcare
Week
11-15 June 2007
Childcare Benefits for Life

Visit Daycare Trust's website:
www.daycaretrust.org.uk
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Welcome to Childwise

Welcome to the latest edition of *Childwise*, Daycare Trust's newsletter for parents.

In this issue we are celebrating the benefits of childcare for children, parents and carers, with a National Childcare Week 2007 special edition. We bring you information about how childcare can be a benefit for life!

We have details of what we are doing during National Childcare Week, which is being held between 11–15 June 2007. We hope that lots of you will want to get involved and provide you with information about how you could participate in one of our events during the week.

Many childcare providers will be holding local events, which you may want to attend. We have an example of what one provider is doing to celebrate childcare and you can look out for similar events in your area.

You may have heard about the Early Years Foundation Stage in the media recently. We give you an insight into what this will mean for you and your child and give you some general information about the new framework, which will be introduced in September 2008.

We are always interested to hear your views about childcare, so feel free to continue to give us your feedback.

Please keep in touch!



Emma Knights
Joint-Chief Executive

Daycare Trust is a member of the campaign to End Child Poverty.



For more information about the campaign, visit
www.endchildpoverty.org.uk.

Childcare Benefits for Life

The theme of National Childcare Week this year is celebrating the many benefits of childcare. Childcare benefits all of us: parents, carers, employers, communities and most importantly, children. Improving local childcare services is providing real advantages for everyone in the community.

Childcare comes in many forms – day nurseries, childminders, pre-schools, playgroups, nursery classes, holiday playschemes and out-of-school clubs – and there's increasing evidence to show the benefits for everyone involved.

High-quality care improves the life chances of all children – especially disadvantaged children, for example children from poorer homes with fewer opportunities. It boosts children's learning and gives them the chance to develop social skills, mixing with others from a wide variety of backgrounds, while enabling parents to work and increase the family income.

Good childcare gives children a great start in life, both educationally and socially. Research shows that children's achievements in language, reading and numeracy increased in proportion to the number of months they spent in pre-school. At age five, children who had attended pre-school were between four and six months ahead of those who did not attend pre-school.

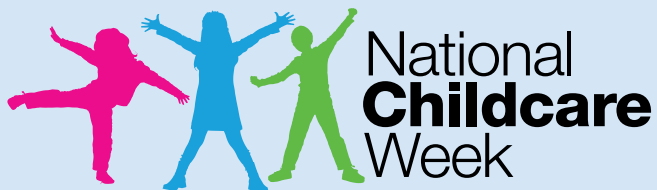
Disadvantaged children, in particular, benefit from good-quality pre-school experiences, which make them more likely to succeed when they start school. Children who have been to a pre-school or nursery are less likely to have special educational needs when they start primary school.

Families use childcare for many reasons – to help parents work, look for jobs, train or study, to just take time out and, of course, to help their child make friends and learn. Every family has its own set of circumstances, but everyone can benefit from access to childcare services. By using local childcare, parents are improving their children's development and potentially also their own.

Investing in quality childcare benefits children, their parents and the wider community. It brings improvements in children's learning and behaviour, leading to a happier family life – and even a healthier national economy.

This information was taken from *The benefits of good-quality childcare – A guide for parents and carers*, produced by Daycare Trust for National Childcare Week. It is available to download from our website www.daycaretrust.org.uk

For information about how to find good quality childcare in your area, contact your local Children's Information Service; each local authority area has one. For contact details of your local service call ChildcareLink on 0800 234 6346.



11-15 June 2007

Childcare Benefits for Life

Join us in celebrating the benefits of childcare, in this our tenth year of National Childcare Week. We will be holding a number of activities between 11–15 June 2007, and there will also be local events that you can attend, which will be hosted at local childcare settings.

Local events

A number of childcare settings have registered to host events in local areas. This might be in the form of a fun day in a crèche, an open day at a nursery or a healthy food tasting day at a children's centre, for example.

Rawmarsh Children's Centre, in Rotherham, have decided to hold a series of events throughout the week. They have planned a Road and Sun Safety Day on 11 and 12 June, where road safety officers will visit the centre and take the children out in small groups with staff and parents and teach them how to cross roads safely. There will also be information about staying safe in the sun. Other activities include a recycling day, a healthy food tasting day and a Pink Day on 13 June, which is a day dedicated to raising funds to support breast cancer, where all children go to the centre dressed in pink and all money raised is donated to support breast cancer.

MPs are also getting involved in local events and are visiting childcare settings throughout the UK. Visit our website www.daycaretrust.org.uk for details of events being held in your area.

Children's Competition

The closing date for our children's competition was 18 May and we had a panel of individuals judging entries including Sonali Gudka from CBBC's Newsround and Kirtsten O'Brien, presenter on CBBC's SMart programme. Sonali will also be presenting winners of the competition with their prizes at an awards ceremony, which will be held on 11 June at Discover, a colourful children's activity centre, in Stratford, East London. At the event, children will be able to play freely in the centre and its gardens following a buffet lunch. Visit www.discover.org.uk for details of the venue.

The Docklands Light Railway (DLR) is kindly supporting us with this event and people will be able to travel to Discover on the DLR on the day.

National Childcare Week Conference

We still have a few free parent places available for our National Childcare Week Conference on 13 June, which is being run in partnership with Working Links, www.workinglinks.co.uk. To take advantage of one of these places, contact our Events and Marketing Officer Celia Joseph on 020 7840 3350, or email cjoseph@daycaretrust.org.uk

Our conference this year has the theme 'Childcare and child poverty - delivering solutions'. By attending on the day, you will be able to take advantage of our 'Learning from Practice' sessions, which include: 'Information and Outreach'; 'Supporting parents into work'; and 'Help with Childcare Costs'; amongst others. You will also be able to visit our Information Fair, where you can gather further information and resources from those working in the sector.

National Childcare Week 2007 Launch



We launched National Childcare Week 2007 on 11 April 2007, at the London International Gallery of Children's Art –www.ligca.org– based at the O2 Centre in North London.

Children from the Hampstead Community Centre Holiday Scheme helped to kick off the event by attending an art workshop at the gallery, where they got working on their entries to the National Childcare Week children's competition – Me and my childcare.

With help from a professional artist, children got off to a colourful start and made cards for their childcarers, to thank them for the hard work that they do.

Further details about National Childcare Week activities will be available from www.daycaretrust.org.uk. If you have a query regarding National Childcare Week, please email nationalchildcareweek@daycaretrust.org.uk.



Top childcare tips

Good quality, affordable and accessible childcare is invaluable and beneficial to children's development. However, finding and using childcare can be a struggle for some parents. As we are celebrating the benefits of childcare during National Childcare Week, here are our tips to help you to take advantage of childcare services.

- **Benefit from the outcomes of childcare.** Childcare can be very beneficial for both children and parents. It can help children to develop more effectively, giving them a better start in life, and can open up opportunities for parents and carers allowing them to work, train or study. Make sure you're not missing out!
- **Find out about local childcare.** Contact your local Children's Information Service (CIS) to find out about registered childcare in your area. There is a CIS in each local authority area and their function is to provide information to parents, carers and others about local childcare and children's services. For contact details of your local CIS, ring ChildcareLink on 0800 234 6346, where you will be redirected to your local service.
- **Get help with childcare costs.** Make sure you are getting all the financial assistance available to you to help you pay for your childcare costs. If you are a working parent you may get help through Working Tax Credit or employer-supported childcare, or if you are studying there may be help available from your college or training provider. Call our information line on 020 7840 3350, or visit our website, www.daycaretrust.org.uk, for information.
- **Think about your childcare needs during holidays.** You may find that you need to use additional childcare during holiday times, such as the long summer break, especially if you have school-aged children. With the summer holidays approaching, if you want to use a holiday playscheme make sure you look into these as soon as you can, as places can often get booked up quickly. Your local CIS (see above) will have details of local schemes.
- **Remember that your childcare costs may alter through the year.** If you are claiming Working Tax Credit and your childcare costs increase by £10 or more per week for at least 4 weeks in a row, your tax credit award is likely to change. Contact the Tax Credit

Helpline on 0845 300 3900 and notify them of the change in your circumstances.

- **Don't miss out on free childcare.** If your child is three- or four-years old, they are eligible for a free part-time early years place of 12.5 hours per week. If you live in a pilot area, this will be 15 hours per week. To find out about places and to see if you live in a pilot area, contact your local Children's Information Service (see above).
- **Share the cost.** Some parents share childcare with family members or friends. This applies especially to parents who use nannies, which can be an expensive form of childcare. But remember, you can only claim help with childcare costs if your nanny is approved under the Childcare Approval Scheme www.childcareapprovalscheme.co.uk or registered on the new Voluntary Ofsted Childcare Register, see www.ofsted.gov.uk for information.
- **Make sure it is suitable.** It is important that the childcare you choose meets your own, and your children's, needs. For an idea of the type of questions you should think of asking when visiting potential childcare providers, request a copy of the booklet *Looking for Childcare?*, free from the Department for Education and Skills Publications Line on 0845 602 2260 or email dfes@prolog.uk.com and quote ref: SESC06-17. This booklet also has lots of other useful information about childcare. You can also call our information line on 020 7840 3350 to discuss your childcare options or visit our website for useful information.
- **Start looking early!** Many parents are able to find suitable childcare as soon as they need it, but for others it may take several months of searching before you can find somewhere that accommodates both your own and your child's needs. Give yourself enough time to research, seek advice from other parents and check registration certificates and references.
- **Time to settle in.** Your child may take some time to settle into any new childcare setting that you start them in, so allow them time to adjust to their new surroundings, especially if this is their first time in childcare. Remember that most childcarers will offer a 'settling in period', where you have an agreed length of time to assess whether the setting is the right one for your child and that they are happy there.

Getting the best start

An introduction to the Early Years Foundation Stage

After one of the most extensive consultation periods with early years' practitioners, parents, children, advisers, experts and campaigners, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) has been launched – and the response so far has been very positive.

The Early Years Foundation Stage, published in March this year, will come into force in September 2008. All childcare providers, for children from birth to five, across the maintained, private, voluntary and independent sectors, including day nurseries, childminders, playgroups, children's centres, pre-schools and maintained and independent schools will have to provide the EYFS.

Between now and September 2008, people responsible for early years in local authorities will be ensuring that everybody relevant is made aware of the EYFS and has the appropriate support to help them implement it. Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) will rewrite their inspection arrangements to tie in with the new EYFS.

So what is the Early Years Foundation Stage?

It sets the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth until the end of the reception year of primary school. It brings together two frameworks that, until now, have been separate: Birth to Three Matters and the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage, with the National Standards for daycare. Combining these documents means it will be easier for childcare practitioners to plan a good range of activities for children and assess their progress.

The central role of parents

The introduction to the Early Years Foundation Stage states: 'Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support to fulfil their potential. A child's experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right, and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up. When parents choose to use early years' services they want to know that provision will keep their children safe and help them to thrive. The Early Years Foundation Stage is the framework that provides that assurance.'

So, the EYFS is designed to ensure that children, at the most influential time in their lives, receive a consistently stimulating, caring, play-based, communication-rich experience, whatever setting their parents choose.

The central role of the parent as the child's first and most stable teacher is stressed throughout the EYFS. And, it describes how early years' practitioners should work with children and their families to support their development and learning.

Including all children

The EYFS is, importantly, for all children in settings outside the home. It emphasises the right of all children and their families to be included and welcomed in all settings and requires practitioners to promote positive

attitudes to diversity and difference. This approach can be seen in the following four important, combined principles at the heart of the EYFS:

- **A Unique Child:** Every child is a competent learner from birth, who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- **Positive Relations:** Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person.
- **Enabling Environments:** The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning.
- **Learning and Development:** Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates, and all areas of learning and development are equally important and inter-connected.

Putting these principles into practice is what all early years' workers should be doing as they work with, and respond to, children, whether they work at home as a childminder or in a private, voluntary or independent nursery or pre-school. The way that they do this will vary according to the age of the child and their stage of development.

The EYFS provides guidance about these different ages and stages, on what practitioners might observe children doing, and gives examples of effective practice and appropriate planning and resourcing at each stage.

How will things change?

There is still over a year to go, but as the EYFS brings existing guidance together, it will not mean huge changes for children, parents or practitioners. For settings that are already achieving well, what is required will only confirm and build on what is already in place. The EYFS provides the basis of a logical approach to ensuring appropriate care, development and learning for our youngest children. If your child is already attending a setting where the care meets the standards set in the new EYFS, you are unlikely to notice much change when the new framework is introduced. However, for some providers the levels of care will increase, which will benefit children and their parents or carers.

Further help and information

If you have questions about the Early Years Foundation Stage, in the first instance you can speak to your childcare provider, alternatively you can contact your local Children's Information Service (via ChildcareLink on 0800 234 6346) or local authority. Further resources for parents, including projects that will help parents engage in their children's learning, will be made available during the time leading up to the introduction of the EYFS, so look out for them. These will be specifically aimed at providing you with information about helping your child get the best start in life and how you can best support your children's learning at home. We will also bring you any new information in future issues of *Childwise*.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is available online at www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/eyfs.

Every Parent Matters is a useful booklet for parents who want to help their children with learning and development, and is available online at www.direct.gov.uk/everyparentmatters.

Both publications can also be ordered from the Department for Education and Skills publications on 0845 6022260 or email dfes@prolog.uk.com.

Information is also available on the Teachernet website www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/EYFS including a briefing sheet specifically aimed at parents – Briefing Number 1, which can be located in the 'EYFS Briefing Pack for local authorities' section.

Listening to Families – what lone parents think about childcare

You may remember from the last issue of *Childwise*, that we are conducting discussion groups with parents around England to obtain their views about childcare, as part of our 'Listening to Families' project. The aim of the project is to find out more about families' experiences of, views on, and needs for childcare in England today.

We gave you an idea of what parents and carers had been telling us about childcare services in the last issue of *Childwise*: that most of you are already using or would like to use childcare; that the right childcare can open up many opportunities to parents, including working and studying; that finding appropriate and affordable childcare continues to be a problem for many of you, especially parents with disabled children; that having confidence in childcare workers is essential; and that most of you find out about childcare through other parents.

Since then, we have continued with our discussion groups and, in particular, have spoken with groups of lone parents to see what their views about, and experiences of, childcare services are. The discussion groups with lone parents were organised through Working Links (an organisation that helps long term unemployed and disadvantaged people back to work) so most of the lone parents we spoke to were trying to get into work, training or study. The key things that these parents told us were:

- Finding the right childcare is essential for lone parents, if they are to successfully move from benefits to employment, training or studying.
- Moving off benefits can be a stressful and scary time for lone parents who worry about the consequences of the job and/or childcare arrangements not working out.
- Lone parents, in particular, need flexible childcare arrangements in terms of hours of provision and some require quality childcare that is available at weekends and in the evenings.
- Cost is a big issue for lone parents, many of whom consider childcare unaffordable. The cost of holiday clubs is an issue and causes considerable difficulty for working lone parents, who in some cases are forced to take annual leave or try to find work during school-term only.

- There are numerous gaps in childcare provision for lone parents, in particular: settings that can provide care for all of their children; suitable care for older children who are still not old enough to be left at home alone (especially 12–14-year-olds); settings in convenient locations to their home and work; and settings that can provide one-off or emergency care for use from time to time.

What next?

The last of our *Listening to Families* discussion groups with parents are being conducted over the next few weeks and in these, we hope to speak with more lone parents. We also hope to speak with parents who are in full-time study to explore what the issues are for them, and to consider how the recently announced increased funding to help student parents with their childcare, might assist.

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Become a Parent member of Daycare Trust

Daycare Trust membership for parents is **free** in 2007. For your free subscription to *Childwise*, please fill in the form below and become a Parent member of Daycare Trust. Return completed forms to: Daycare Trust 21 St George's Road, London SE1 6ES, or fax it to 020 7840 3355. You can also download the membership form from our website: www.daycaretrust.org.uk.

I would like to become a free Parent member of Daycare Trust and receive free copies of *Childwise*.

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