

## Getting involved



**National childcare week  
children's art competitions**

**Daycare Trust's Parent media  
panel – a new opportunity for  
parents to speak out**

# Welcome

Welcome to the Spring 2009 edition of *childwise*.

As parents, we know that you have the most important role in your child's learning and development – and finding the best childcare for him/her is just one part of this. That's why we've devoted this issue of *childwise* to looking at the ways you can get more involved with your child's childcare at whatever level you choose. We include tips to help you support your child to learn at home and examples of how childcare settings are involving parents in their work. We also highlight the work of Parent Champions who support parents in their local area to find out more about childcare by talking to Moymona who worked as a Parent Champion for a year about her experiences.

We hope that **National childcare week (6–12 June)** will also provide parents and childcare providers with opportunities to come together to celebrate childcare and the positive impact it has on children and their families.

On a wider level, with childcare costs still on the rise and many parents facing problems finding childcare for older children and children with disabilities, we also know that there is a greater need than ever for the voices of parents to be heard by the Government and other key policy makers. At Daycare Trust we regularly contribute to policy discussions and initiate projects to support the development and promotion of childcare and we want to make sure that the messages we are passing on reflect your views. We want to hear from you about how childcare costs and services affect you and your family. The easiest way to do this is to join our Parents network – see p6 for more information.

Our work campaigning for high quality affordable childcare for all is strengthened by your voice – we look forward to welcoming you to our network. Thank you for your interest.



Emma Knights and Alison Garnham  
Joint-Chief Executives



## National childcare week 2009 Foundations for the future, 6–12 June

Daycare Trust's National childcare week, now in its 12th year, promotes the importance of investing in childcare, out-of-school activities and early years provision for children to strengthen and contribute to children's play and learning, and provide a good foundation for their future. We very much hope that you will join with Daycare Trust to celebrate National childcare week through the various events and activities happening during the week.

### Children's Competition

Kindly supported by  
The Children's Mutual



We are asking children and young people of all ages to help Daycare Trust to celebrate childcare by entering our competition. The winner will receive a fantastic prize, and also be invited to our awards ceremony which will be held during National childcare week.

#### Art competition for children aged 2–10 years

Get your budding young artists to enter into our children's art competition. We want them to tell us what they want to be when they are older – entries can be drawings, paintings or collages.

#### Photography and design competition, 7–14 years

For older children we want to see their photographs, drawings or designs of their favourite outdoor space; this could be where they like to play at the moment, or their ideal outdoor space. To request an entry form call us on 020 7840 3350 or email [nationalchildcareweek@daycaretrust.org.uk](mailto:nationalchildcareweek@daycaretrust.org.uk) Our panel of judges, including children's television presenters Kirsten O'Brien and Sonali Gudka, look forward to seeing your entries.

### National childcare week events

Local childcare providers, settings and parents around the UK will be organising events and activities as part of National childcare week. To find out what is happening in your area, visit [www.daycaretrust.org.uk](http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk) or call us on 020 7840 3350. If you want to support the week by organising your own event or activity then please email us at [nationalchildcareweek@daycaretrust.org.uk](mailto:nationalchildcareweek@daycaretrust.org.uk) to request one of our organisers' packs – which include promotional materials – and we will add your event to our calendar of activities.

# Getting involved!

Do you wonder what your child does while they are in childcare? Would you like to be more involved?

We look at the different ways that you can be more involved in your child's early learning; first we visited Medway children's centres to find out how they have involved parents in their services.

## Getting involved with your child's childcare

Parents can get involved in their child's childcare in a number of ways, including participating in activities with your children, getting involved with the day to day work or even helping with the planning and running of the setting your child attends. Daycare Trust visited All Saints Sure Start Children's Centre in Medway and spoke to Jo Bunn Co-ordinator of the Community Development Team, who provided us with some inspiring examples of how parents get involved at their centre.

### Little Diggers

The centre has a healthy eating café and a kitchen garden where parents and children can have fun together learning how to grow, cook and eat fresh fruit and vegetables. The project encourages both parents and children to try new foods and children learn how food grows and where it comes from. This project has been so successful that the centre has now acquired a local allotment so that even more families can get involved.



*All Saints Sure Start Children's Centre Medway*

### Swimasong

In response to requests from parents to help their child gain confidence in the water, four Medway children's centres; Kingfisher, Lordswood, All Saints and Wayfield are taking part in a six week swimming programme for parents and their children based on songs, games and movement. Sarah Adams, manager of Kingfisher Children's Centre who has specific swimming teaching qualification to work with adults and children, explained that the idea is to teach parents how to hold their children in the water, increase their child's water confidence, exercise muscles and develop co-ordination.

### Parent volunteers

Parent volunteers offer their time and skills to assist with the centre's groups and activities. Eight parent volunteers who speak various community languages have translated information in the centre's quarterly information booklet for parents. They have also accompanied inclusion workers on home visits to encourage and support ethnic minority families to access the centre's groups and events helping to ensure services are accessible to all. Sue Toman from the Community Development Team said 'Our volunteers are of immense value to us and it is wonderful to watch them grow and develop during their time here'.

### Parent representatives group

All Saints Children's Centre have an active parent reps group who help them to deliver good quality services that meet the needs of local families. The group, called ASPIRE (All Saints Parents Investing in Real Energy), have formed a constitution which allows them to bid for funding the centre cannot access, which could open up new opportunities to develop the centre and its services. The group also run events to raise money for the centre. Claudia, one of the parent reps said 'Parents feel they can approach us if they don't want to talk to someone from the centre about any problems or issues they may have. We listen to parents' suggestions and what they would like to see at the centre'.

**As a reception volunteer, I can tell parents about the fantastic range of services at the centre because I know first hand what's available, because I'm a parent who uses the centre. Emma, parent volunteer**

*Left: All Saints Sure Start Children's Centre Medway*

**All around England, Children's Centres organise similar activities, to find out more, contact your local Family Information Service. Find them on [www.childcarelink.org.uk](http://www.childcarelink.org.uk) or call 0800 234 6346**

## Getting involved with your child's learning at home

Know how they're doing, share how they're doing. The Department of Children, Schools and Families tell us about the importance of mums and dads being involved in their child's learning and care

There has been a wealth of research in recent years looking at what helps children's learning. Time and again, it shows parents – both mums and dads – make the biggest difference to their child's learning and development.

Parents are their child's first teacher, and have a huge influence on their child's learning. We know if mums and dads share what they know about their child with the experienced staff of their childcare setting, their child is happier and likely to do better.

High quality childcare always involves mums and dads and their knowledge of their child. The experienced staff share regularly the ideas and plans they have for their child's learning – perhaps on a weekly or monthly basis. When you, mums and dads, know what these ideas and suggestions are, you can build on them at home with more fun activities you can do with your child.

There is lots of information for parents out there on straightforward, free things you can do with your child which make a huge difference to their development and understanding. The Department for Children, Schools and Families has brought some of these great ideas together for parents to see and designed and produced a pack of leaflets, booklets and even a height chart.

You can look out for the pack 'Your child's early learning and care' in your local children's centre and your local Family Information Service (see box for how to find your local services or order a copy on 0845 60 222 60). See which of the ideas your child will enjoy and ask your childcare provider how they include those activities – you might get some more ideas to use at home in return.

For problem solving skills, what about sorting pairs of socks to match patterns, colours and designs or sharing out food to show how things can be shared out fairly between everyone?

**Any experienced childcare staff who are looking after your child will have ideas to mix and match with yours.**

We know if children regularly take part in high quality childcare, their learning and development really benefit – so much so the effects stay with them right through to age eleven. These effects are often independence and concentration, co-operation and socialising with both children, and other adults. These are essential skills which prepare children for learning, whatever their future experience might be.

Whatever path you choose, the most important thing is to talk and play with your child, and to know how your child's doing and share how they're doing with everyone around them. It will make a huge difference to your child's experience, and those effects will stay with them for years to come.



*All Saints Sure Start Children's Centre Medway*

**Helping out in the centre is a big 'thank you' from me and my daughter for all the advice, help, encouragement, nice relationships and fun we have both had attending different groups, activities and special events.**  
**Zuzana, parent volunteer**

## Parent Champions

Based on the knowledge that for most parents, the best people to ask for information and recommendations about childcare are other parents, the aim of the Parent Champion is to reach families who may not have any contact with 'official' services and help them to find out more about childcare.

We talked to Moymona Begum, a mother of three who worked as a Parent Champion in Tower Hamlets for a year to find out more about the role.

"I attended a workshop at my local Children's Centre where I regularly took my youngest daughter Karema for 'stay and play' sessions. During the workshop, I heard about the Parent Champion project. I never knew about childcare with my two older children but with Karema, who is four, I could see the benefits she was gaining through attending these play sessions and I felt I could help other parents in finding out about childcare."

Following the workshop, Moymona was interviewed and appointed as a Parent Champion. "The job involves visiting children's centres, toy libraries, baby clinics, even parks and speaking with other parents about childcare and the benefits of childcare. It's amazing how many people don't know about childcare. It's not that they don't want to use it, they just don't know much about it."



Moymona is a school mid-day supervisor, so for her, the job of Parent Champion is perfect; "it's so flexible, I work around my school job. I make my visits a few times a week, always meeting new people. I chat with them about their children, ask whether they use childcare, talk to them about the different childcare options and give them my card. For some language is a barrier, so I will ring the Family Information Service for them if they want. For others, it's confidence or lack of knowledge so I will go along with them to their first sessions at a toy library or 'stay and play'. Often it's the first step that's the hardest and when they have attended once, their confidence grows and you can see the huge change in them. Their children are happier too."

Following successful trials of Parent Champion schemes, Daycare Trust and DCSF have now produced a toolkit to help local authorities and other organisations set up a scheme in their area. For more information, email [info@daycaretrust.org.uk](mailto:info@daycaretrust.org.uk)

### Childcare for older children

Daycare Trust's recent *Childcare costs survey 2009* highlighted the lack of suitable childcare for secondary school children [aged 11–14 years]. One of the ways the Government is trying to close this gap in childcare for older children is by funding 'extended schools'.

Extended schools offer a range of services to children and their families, and the Government have set a target for all schools to offer the following services by 2010:

- a varied menu of activities in a safe place
- childcare 8am–6pm, 48 weeks a year for primary schools
- parenting support including family learning
- swift and easy access to targeted and specialist services
- community access to facilities including adult learning, ICT and sports facilities.

In the latest of Daycare Trust's *Listening to Families* research series, we found out more about the views of young people – aged 11–16 – on existing extended school services. We visited a number of schools in England and talked to their students about a range of issues, including whether they thought there were

enough services for older children, what they thought of the choices of activities offered and whether they would rather spend more time with their families and friends. Some of the things they told us include:

*'There's a wide variety of things for people who are really sporty. There's also drama clubs and clubs for people who are interested in music, so it caters for everyone rather than one type of person'*

*'I show up early so I'll go the breakfast club with my mates and play games and stuff. After school I do dance'*

*'If you spend too much time with your family you need your own space and that is where the clubs come in'*

Recommendations made as a result of the research will be published in the final report in May 2009.

For more information about childcare for older children, call the Daycare Trust Information Line on 0845 872 6251 or talk to your child's school about the services they offer.

# Daycare Trust's Parent network and Parent media panel

## Parent network – making your voice heard on childcare

Are you a parent or carer of a child(ren) aged 14 or under? Daycare Trust would like to invite you to sign up for free to our Parent network. As a member of the Parent network you can have your say and put the voice of parents at the heart of decision making.

Our 'Parent network' aims to give a stronger voice to parents as advocates for childcare, and involve parents in campaigning for better Government policy for childcare and early years. As a member of the Parent network you will be able to share your views and experiences in our surveys and research and we will regularly consult you on new policy ideas and proposals so that you can participate in our campaign for accessible, affordable, quality childcare. We already have hundreds of parents in our network but we want to double the number of members in 2009 so that parents can have a louder voice and more influence on the Government and other political parties.

Parent network members may also be able to join our Parent media panel (see below), will be invited to Daycare Trust

events and receive *childwise* straight to their door. To join the Parent network, just fill in the form below and return it to us.

## Parent media panel

We are also looking for a dozen members for our Parent media panel who can act as 'champions' for childcare in the media. We will provide training on public speaking and interview techniques, equipping you with the skills to speak out in local and national media, from your local paper or radio station to GMTV and Radio5! The panel is free to join and we will pay expenses incurred for attending the training sessions.

By taking up this opportunity you will be able to develop your skills and confidence whilst helping other parents to see how their family can benefit from using high quality childcare.

All members of our Parent network can apply to be a member of our new Parent media panel. If you are interested please contact Joe Caluori at [jcaluori@daycaretrust.org.uk](mailto:jcaluori@daycaretrust.org.uk) or call 0207 840 3350.

## Join our Parent network

For your free subscription to *childwise*, please fill in the form below and join Daycare Trust's Parents' network. Return completed forms to: Daycare Trust, 21 St George's Road, London SE1 6ES, or fax it to 020 7840 3355.

I am a parent and would like to join Daycare Trust's Parents' network and receive my free copy of *childwise*.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

We may occasionally contact you about other publications and services we offer. If you do not wish to be contacted please tick this box.

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