

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP



Sure Start Oswestry Local Programme and Children's Centre

Examples of Good Practice around

Working with Childminders

.....working towards

PSA 1 – Reducing the proportion of young children living in households where no-one is working

SDA 2 – To create 180,000 new childcare places in the 20% most disadvantaged wards (and smaller areas of disadvantage)

OBJECTIVE 3 – Improving Children's Ability to Learn. In particular by encouraging high quality environments and childcare.....

and supports **EVERY CHILD MATTERS** outcomes:

BE HEALTHY	✓
STAY SAFE	✓
ENJOY AND ACHIEVE	✓
MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	✓
ACHIEVE ECONOMIC WELL-BEING	✓

INTRODUCTION

Sure Start Oswestry Local Programme, a Wave 3 programme which received approval in July 2001, is located in the market town of Oswestry and 4 of the surrounding villages close to the Welsh border. It is a rural area which presents challenges and opportunities for the programme – not least the delivery of services from 8 different locations serving 6 distinct communities.

BEST PRACTICE - WORKING WITH CHILDMINDERS

The core team were recruited in February 2002, amongst them a Childminding Development Worker (CDW) who had previously worked as a childminder herself in Oswestry, and therefore knew many of the local childminders personally.

Since the programme began, the number of Registered Childminders in and around Oswestry has increased from **39** to **73**
an increase of **87%**

The number of registered childcare places for under 8's has increased from 234 to 438.

- A parent and childminder living in the Sure Start area was sponsored to undertake Teacher Training in order to deliver the 'Introducing Childminding Practice' course to prospective Childminders. This has proved extremely beneficial and there is an increased number of them going on to become Registered Childminders, as a result of the knowledge of childminding practice she has and the support she is keen and willing to offer.
- Recently, a "Support Childminders" scheme has been launched in the county. The CDW works in partnership with the Shropshire County Council Early Years and Childcare Team to recruit and support registered childminders to act as mentors/buddies to new and/or aspiring childminders. The experienced childminder offers support and advice with everyday issues and information on where to go for further help.

The scheme is open to prospective childminders attending the Childminding Briefing Sessions and newly registered childminders during their first year. To date, there are 4 Support Childminders working with 16 new and prospective childminders. It is anticipated that this will further encourage childminders to undertake both training and registration.

- Further support is offered by the weekly Childminder 'Drop-In' groups which currently operate in two of the Sure Start Family Centres – one in the centre of town and one in Gobowen, 5 miles from the centre of town. The groups provide childminders – new and old - with the opportunity to get together to offer support and to share experiences and good practice.

Regular visits to the drop-ins are made by the Speech and Language Officer (on secondment from the PCT), Dental Health Therapist, Sure Start Library and CIS Information Officer, the School Nurses and Health Visitors. They are able to offer professional advice to childminders to ensure that best practice is maintained.

- Since transport is one of the key issues in a rural area, Sure Start provides a 'buggy bus' to enable parents, children and childminders to access services in Family Centres which may not be close to where they live and operate due to the widespread geographical areas in which rural programmes operate. One childminder reports that this service is a real life line for her, since it enables her to attend the childminder support drop-in with her minded children,
- A local Community Childminding Network has been created, using NCMA 'Children Come First' Quality Assurance Scheme. To date, 7 childminders in Oswestry have successfully completed the training and have offered respite care for families living in the Sure Start areas. To date, referrals have been received from Social Care and Health, Home Start and Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).
- Sure Start Oswestry is also working in partnership with Job Centre Plus (JCP) to offer childcare support to parents participating in a pilot project 'Time For You' – offering

parents the opportunity to achieve something for themselves. JCP work with a local Community IT Centre to encourage and enable parents to increase their skills.

Sure Start Oswestry offers help towards the cost of childminders to enable parents to evaluate the services childminders can provide to support them whilst they engage in training and/or employment opportunities.

- The Childminding Development Worker has been trained to deliver the Webster Stratton “Incredible Years” programme, a behaviour management programme for parents and carers of children aged between 3 and 8 years. To date, 18 childminders have successfully completed the Twelve-week (24 hour) course and the Sure Start Childminding Development Worker is now working with the Shropshire County Council Early Years and Childcare Team to deliver the course county wide. The course now features in the Early Years Training Programme and is fully subscribed for the year to come!

Evaluation shows that Childminders have benefited greatly from the course. Comments included:

“I thoroughly enjoyed the programme and I think it gives childminders a chance to discuss any behaviour problems which they might not otherwise share”

“The programme is realistic and achievable”

Childminders have also indicated the desire for a refresher course to be developed in order to maintain best practice.

In addition, the course is offered to parents and carers living in the Sure Start Oswestry area helping towards children receiving a positive, consistent approach towards behaviour.

Liz Nicholson, Corporate Director for Children and Young People’s Services Directorate, Shropshire County Council with Sharon Elcock, CDW, and Registered Childminders receiving their ‘Children Come First’ Quality Assurance certificates