



Principles of Quality

Newcastle Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership



Effective partnership working is based on shared values and beliefs. The Newcastle Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) consists of providers and policy makers with a wide range of perspectives from the maintained, private and voluntary sectors. Together they plan and deliver childcare and education provision that is accessible, affordable and, most importantly, of high quality.

As in any partnership, it is easy to make assumptions about the values and beliefs that individuals share around the table. Practice changes with new insights into children's learning styles, how they become emotionally and psychologically strong and attached and how they develop physically and neurologically. The EYDCP is firmly committed to talking and learning together in order to make sense of and incorporate these understandings into staff training and development so that we can deliver the very best services to children and their families that we can. Everything that we do and say is underpinned by these understandings so it is crucial that we are able to articulate why we are doing what we do and to be confident enough to engage in continuous reflection about this.

Having a culture that supports such an approach is crucial. It means that staff who come to the EYDCP must feel valued for their individual contribution, but also acknowledging and validating of what others bring also. These quality principles fully endorse such an approach. They are designed to generate discussion and personal reflection, but also to challenge practitioners to engage in a debate about their views of childhood that will require them to look back on their own experiences as well as forward to those of the children they work with now.

These materials will therefore potentially support an emotional journey of self discovery as well as a professional debate. The materials are there as a guide, but inevitably it is those that accompany us on the journey that will see us through. That is why the EYDCP is not only delighted to see the materials that have been produced, but very excited to be starting to work through them together.

Sue Miller EYDCP



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The care and education of our youngest children has always been a priority for Newcastle upon Tyne. I am therefore delighted to introduce this 'Principles of Quality for Newcastle' document which is intended to support all those working with children from birth to five.

Quality is not something fixed, nor can it be imposed through a set of 'standards'. Rather it is a continual striving for excellence, through a process of reflection, evaluation and change.

A central theme of the Children Act 2004 is personalisation and therefore we must strive to provide a range of high quality provision for our very young children that appropriately meets their specific needs. If we are to achieve this we must build services around the needs of the child and family and break down the barriers between services and agencies.

The question of quality in early education and care is crucial and one we can't afford to get wrong. Early learning is the foundation for lifelong learning. Young children have only one childhood...it has to be the best we can offer.

I hope that everyone involved in developing high quality early years education and care enjoys this document and finds it supportive.

Helen Cavanagh
Head of Early Education and Childcare Service



Introduction

Who should read this book?

The Quality Principles for Newcastle were drawn up to support all those who are involved in childcare and early education in Newcastle. It reflects the views of parents and carers, practitioners, managers and members of the wider EYDCP community.

This booklet is intended to offer advice to those who are seeking, through reflective practice, to develop the quality of their provision. It gives an outline of the principles we should adopt to ensure the ongoing development of quality practice. For those looking towards accreditation as a Quality Assured setting, it offers a helpful introduction to the different schemes currently on offer.

Most importantly, we are celebrating the excellent practice that we see in Newcastle in all aspects of provision. We are celebrating you, the providers and the experiences offered to our children, where Quality Principles are embedded in your practice.



Quality Principles

Key Elements of Effective Practice (KEEP)

The Primary National Strategy:

“Effective practice in the early years requires committed, enthusiastic and reflective practitioners with a breadth and depth of knowledge, skills and understanding. Effective practitioners use their own learning to improve their work with young children and their families in ways which are sensitive, positive and non-judgemental.

Therefore through initial and on-going training and development practitioners need to develop, demonstrate and continuously improve their

- relationships with both children and adults
- understanding of the individual and diverse ways that children learn and develop
- knowledge and understanding in order to actively support and extend children’s learning in and across all areas and aspects of learning
- practice in meeting all children’s needs, learning styles and interests
- work with parents, carers and the wider community
- work with other professionals within and beyond the setting”

These statements are now very much at the heart of training and support given to practitioners by the DfES and the LEA. By evaluating our practice against them we can continuously address quality issues.



Quality Principles

Birth to Three Framework

- Parents and families are central to the well-being of the child.
- Relationships with other people (both adults and children) are of crucial importance in a child's life.
- A relationship with a key person at home and in the setting is essential to young children's well-being.
- Babies and young children are social beings they are competent learners from birth.
- Learning is a shared process and children learn most effectively when, with the support of a knowledgeable and trusted adult, they are actively involved and interested.
- Caring adults count more than resources and equipment.
- Schedules and routines must flow with the child's needs.
- Children learn when they are given appropriate responsibility, allowed to make errors, decisions and choices and respected as autonomous and competent learners.
- Children learn by doing rather than being told.
- Young children are vulnerable. They learn to be independent by having someone they can depend on.



Quality Principles

Foundation Stage

Effective education requires both a relevant curriculum and practitioners who understand and are able to implement the curriculum requirements.

Effective education requires practitioners who understand that children develop rapidly during the early years - physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially.

Early years experience should build on what children already know and can do.

Practitioners should ensure that all children feel included, secure and valued.

No child should be excluded or disadvantaged.

Parents and practitioners should work together.

To be effective, an early years curriculum should be carefully structured.

There should be opportunities for children to engage in activities planned by adults and also those that they plan or initiate themselves.

Practitioners must be able to observe and respond appropriately to children.

For children to have rich and stimulating experiences, the learning environment should be well planned and well organised.

Well planned, purposeful activity and appropriate intervention by practitioners will engage children in the learning process.

Above all, effective learning and development for young children requires high quality care and education by practitioners



Quality Principles for Effective Learning

Foundation Stage

- Children initiating activities that promote learning and being able to learn from each other
- Children learning through movement and all their senses
- Children having time to explore ideas and interests in depth
- Children feeling secure, which helps them to become confident learners
- Children learning in different ways and at different rates
- Children making links in their learning
- Creative and imaginative play activities that promote the development and use of language



Quality Principles for Effective Teaching

Foundation Stage

- Working in partnership with parents
- Promoting children's learning
- Modelling a range of positive behaviours
- Using a rich language
- Using conversation
- Direct teaching of skills and knowledge
- Encouraging children to teach others
- Interacting positively with children
- Planning the indoor and outdoor environment
- Skilful and well planned observations
- Assessing children's development and progress
- Working with parents
- Identifying the next step
- Using assessment

We recognise that in stating the needs of children we are also making a statement about our own beliefs.
European Commission Childcare Network.

Where there are high quality opportunities for babies and toddlers to create and imagine...
Manning-Morton and Thorp

Quality education is about three things: The child, the context in which the learning takes place and the knowledge and understanding which the child develops.

Bruce



A high quality nursery curriculum is one which enables children to enter school with a positive outlook, by developing self-esteem, commitment to learning and a belief that if they try, they can succeed.

National Commission on Education

The National Standards are a set of 'outcomes' that providers should aim to achieve...OFSTED hopes that this guidance will help providers and development workers ensure good quality provision.

OFSTED

The child who has benefited from security in her relationships is likely to develop a sense of self confidence and assurance.

Murray and Andrews

Children who experience high quality pre-school for a long duration have the most advantage in intellectual and social development when they start school.

Effective Provision of Pre-School Education Project (EPPE)

Above all, effective learning and development for young children requires high-quality care and education by practitioners.

QCA Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage



Any approach to assessing quality must be preceded by a working through of what we believe matters, what we are trying to achieve and how we will reconcile competing or conflicting goals.

Elfer and Wedge

Local Education Authorities will work with schools to look at how 'Leading Practice' can support networking arrangements so that good practice is shared effectively.

**Excellence and Enjoyment:
A strategy for Primary Schools DfES**

What will we see when quality principles are in place?

Successful integration of childcare and education

Busy, happy, content children

Stability of staff and quality of interaction with children

A stimulating, safe and challenging environment



Inclusive practice catering for the needs of all

A strong team spirit

Forward thinking flexible staff

Staff informed and consistent- secure and valued financially

Personal sense of satisfaction or achievement

Feedback from staff, parents and children

Measured within a framework or guidelines

Children happy, having fun and learning

Strategic auditing, planning, training and moderating

Impact upon others - children, staff, governors, parents...

Would this be good enough for my child?

Self-reflection or team reflection

How do practitioners judge the quality of their own work?

You can assess the quality of an activity by how the children react to it.

Playgroup Worker, Chillingham Rd. Playgroup

Newcastle seems to be very good at ensuring inclusion for Black and Ethnic Minority Groups. When I did my training the college was very supportive. Childcare issues were not a huge problem.

Playgroup Worker



I judge the quality of my work by the parents' feedback
Deputy Leader, Chillingham Rd. Playgroup

Quality

What the Practitioners Say

To develop quality provision you have to have communication between staff, you have to have a good team. If you haven't got that it can all break down. Everyone has to have an understanding of good practices and the policies they are working with.

Deputy Playgroup Leader

We were doing everything but now we have the evidence. It's really useful to show to everyone. New parents and other people are interested to see it.

Leader Chillingham Rd. Playgroup
Speaking about their successful Ofsted inspection

My son was part of the EPPE project. He was really quiet and if he hadn't had pre-school provision starting school would have been very difficult for him. He went to Cruddas Park Early Years Centre where they focus on play therapy for personal and social skills. If it hadn't been for the quality provision in Newcastle I would not have been able to work

Parent/Practitioner

Quality

What the Practitioners Say

It is the quality of relationships that is really important: Relationships with children, families and practitioners. What makes this place a good place is the quality of the staff and their attention to detail

Head Teacher, Walkergate Children's Centre

Parents should be encouraged to spend a session with us - to see just what goes on. We should be aware of what parents want for their children.

Playgroup Worker, Westgate Hill

It is really important to me that access for those with special needs is provided in every setting.
Playgroup Worker

“Personal, social and emotional development are the first steps in any child’s development. They are very shy when they start playgroup. We work hard to make parents really welcome and tell them not to go until they are happy that their child has settled.”
Heaton Manor playgroup

As a childminder, I offer one to one care, a home from home. The children are part of the family. Network childminders have excellent opportunities for training. We’ve just had a really good course on Behaviour Management from the Childcare Consultants.

Parents realise that childminders have an expertise having looked after their own children. We can be flexible too and make the most of new opportunities for learning as they arise.

Childminder

What the Practitioners Say



We couldn’t start a crèche straight away. The children just wouldn’t have left their Mams. Over eighteen months we have gradually got the children confident to leave them. Now we can start to organise crèche facilities. This is a real success story.

Mobela Women’s Group.

What the Practitioners Say

Going through the Quality Assurance process provided us an opportunity to confirm and strengthen our good practice. Management and staff are in a stronger position to move forward with our statement of intent
Scotswood Library Playgroup

It’s so good to see the toddler group being used. There is always a variety of activities. I see the children as foraging at this stage, doing whatever takes their fancy.

The songs we sing are very valuable for language development and they help some of our parents with their English. It is great to see friendships develop between parents.

**Toddler group
Moorside Community School.**

As part of our on-going work to support settings we are compiling a City wide log of good practice ensuring that quality practice is shared. Our role is to provide advice and training to all those working with children from birth to five in Newcastle and we are currently seeking to promote the Key Elements of Effective Practice mentioned earlier in this booklet.

Education Consultant - Education and Childcare Service

We have to ask the parents what they want..to look at their culture, language skills and what they accept and don't accept. Quality childcare is not always what we think is the best.

*Mohela Women's Group
Bentink Tennants' Association.*



We have a worker here every week for continuity. Parents look to us for advice. We are supporting the development of individual children. Parents are realizing the educational value of play

We had 50 parents registering in a month. The school children were so excited! 91 of them entered the competition to name the toy library – they all won a prize. The stock just keeps going out. We had European Social Fund funding.

Toyland , Moorside Community School

I feel that I offer the best quality care to the families I work with. Now we have Quality Assurance parents know that we're offering the best. I provide a stimulating environment, educational and care, soft play, library and toddler club visits. It is the happiness of the child which is most important – they should go home with a smile!

Childminder

What the Practitioners Say



I would want to see a safe outdoor area which was just as inviting and stimulating as the indoor environment. Both are very important.

Playgroup Leader, Westgate hill

Approved network childminders are attending training on the Foundation Stage, so that eventually they will be able to deliver early education to three and four year olds in the city. The childminders are very enthusiastic about this new venture and are keen to give parents more choice when deciding on their children's early education.

Childcare Consultant EECS.

I prefer this group because of the space and there are lots of activities. The toy library is great and the staff are lovely. She (Nina) pays attention to the other children but she needs a bit more time before she will play with them.

Parent, Moorside toddler group

I like the toddler group. The staff bring the children on. The children mix with other children, Caitlin likes it. The mothers have a bit chat and a nice hot cup of tea.

Parent, Moorside toddler group.



It's familiar faces, I really appreciate that. The crèche workers that train here are great. Laura Orkney, she is fantastic. She is only young but she really cares, she goes the extra mile. I want to leave my son with someone I feel confident with.

Parents' group –Ashfield Nursery School

“My children's learning in school is good and I am happy with it. They are learning Maths and English. The teachers are good.”

Parent

Quality
What the Parents Say

We look to see if the staff are smiling and talking to us. It is important that the children want to be there. Workers should be approachable, it helps if some are Bengali speaking.

Parents, Mohela (Women's) Group

Childcare has improved vastly, although we still need more crèche places. There's a very friendly atmosphere here, with good interaction between parents and staff. It is important that schools listen to parents.

Parent (committee member), Ashfield Nursery School

He's taken to the teachers like a Mam. He says, "I want to go to Ms Anderson's house, don't come and pick me up!" I'm okay too. The first time I entered Newcastle I didn't know anyone. This group is making me feel happy. As a black Mam my experiences here have been very positive.

Parents' group, Ashfield Nursery School

Quality
What the Parents Say

Everyone is friendly and helpful and make you feel welcome. They inform you of forthcoming events. Something for everyone. Very well organised and arranged.

Parent

The children learn how to speak, their words and their numbers. They get ideas from the artwork and it's a social time for mothers.

Moorside parent

The crèche is important, so that the Mams can have English classes.

Parents, Mobela's (Women's) Group



(Newcastle Toy and Leisure Library) is a place to meet my friends.

Quality

I love the sand and the trains.

You do lots of fun stuff!

What the Children Say

All I want is for him to be happy during his time because if he's happy and interested he'll learn anyway. I want him to have good experiences at school.

Parent, Our Lady and St. Anne's

What the Parents Say

They (Saturday Clubs) also provide the children with a lovely mix of friends, and they realise that they are not alone in having a sibling with special needs and that everyone can have fun together and help each other along.

Parent

I give my paintings to Grandma, she loves them.

I like it best when we go outside.

Everyone is kind.

Lots to do - different activities and special events.



Quality

The Process

Where to start?

The idea of defining the quality of our practice or provision should not be seen as an intrusive process. We already have a great deal to celebrate and to feel proud of. We all work within unique settings and every practitioner wants the best for their children. Assessing the quality of our practice is not new. In the light of recent Quality Assurance initiatives it is hoped that this guidance will be of use to those practitioners looking again at QUALITY.

A commitment to quality

Parents and children in Newcastle have access to quality childcare and early education in a wide variety of settings. Not every provider works in a team and many open their own homes to children instead of working in a different setting. Childminder networks now exist across the City and some have achieved Quality Assured status. Coordinators have been appointed to support each of these networks. Wherever we work we strive to provide the best for our children.

This process begins with an assessment of where we are at and what our understanding of quality practice is. This may involve an honest look at what each individual considers good practice and a further look at why each person has these opinions.

There will need to be an agreement that there is room for improvement and a reassurance that team members will treat each other with respect throughout the whole process. It will also involve a commitment to a consensus of opinion which centres upon what is best for the children, rather than what is most comfortable for us as practitioners. Our thinking should be informed by research and examples of excellent practice, through training and exchange visits.





Working towards quality

It will be helpful to work towards an agreed set of values for the team to share. This often takes the form of a "Mission or Vision Statement" which is displayed for visitors to see and for practitioners to refer to. Working together to produce this statement can be a very helpful team building exercise.

Communication between group members should be effective and management team members should be aware of issues affecting the group as soon as possible. In settings where the team consists of one or two members good communication is still important.

The notion of reflective practice may be new to some and should be introduced in a way that encourages honest discussion. The focus should be initially on the positive aspects of the setting, encouraging each team member to feel good about what they do. At a later stage, problems or areas for improvement must be addressed. The emphasis should be on how the team can best meet the needs of its children, not upon individual team members.

Meeting criteria set by law

Any provider of childcare or education will have a responsibility to ensure that all registration procedures have been addressed. This process involves writing or adopting policies which relate to issues such as Health and Safety, Inclusion, Child Protection etc. It is helpful to work through these policies as a team so that everyone understands how their own practice should be influenced by them. In this way the team has ownership of the underlying principles upon which the setting is structured.

Partnership

The Quality of provision offered cannot be effectively considered by the team or provider in isolation.

All those who make use of the setting should be included in the debate and their views valued in the light of the contribution they make to the children's experience. In each case the group of stakeholders will be unique and efforts must be made to include those whose voices are not always heard.





Towards Quality Provision

The whole process will only be maintained if a shared commitment exists to create an environment where child centred and reflective practice underpins developmentally appropriate provision for each child. There must be agreed systems for continually improving the quality of provision. A realistic timetable for meetings and reviews should be formulated with a healthy work-life balance in mind.

It is the purpose of this guidance to encourage providers to develop an inclusive approach to putting their own systems in place and to working confidently with them.



Quality

The Key Areas

What to assess?

Each individual accreditation scheme looks at Quality Assurance in a way that is unique to the settings for whom it is written. However there are many common themes that have been highlighted for assessment.

There follows a list of these themes to give an indication of the aspects of our provision that we may need to evaluate or improve as part of the Quality Assurance process. For those practitioners who are deciding whether to apply for accreditation the list below is not exhaustive but is a valuable source of ideas upon which to focus reflection, even if the accreditation process is something for the future.

Area	Definition	Indicators of Quality
Action Plan	This is a document which shows how the practice of the setting will be developed over a period of time. It shows areas of responsibility and costs of various projects.	<p>The plan should be forward thinking and regularly updated. Funding and time-scales should be realistic.</p> <p>It should be clear who will carry out projects and evaluate them.</p> <p>The plan should be in overall agreement with the aims of the setting.</p>
Administration	Where practitioners work alone the burden of administration falls to them. The issues for assessment are similar in every setting. Effective communication. Managing insurance, pay and employment and overseeing many procedures including maintaining charitable status where appropriate.	In settings across Newcastle we see examples of excellent administrative work. The verbal and written communication is of a high standard including translation where necessary. Policies and clear, non discriminatory procedures are in place. Staff are competent and approachable.
Assessing the Learning	<p>Assessing the Learning Making a series of judgments about how each child is progressing towards achieving the goals of the curriculum. This can be done formally or informally by observation or by keeping evidence in the form of pieces of work or photographs.</p> <p>The responsibility for assessment may fall to a key-worker or the adult supporting or observing the play.</p>	<p>Some of the excellent practice we see in Newcastle includes timed observations of activities. Photographs are collected along with pieces of work. The evidence is dated and marked with a link to the objective achieved by the child and a comment explaining the context of the activity.</p> <p>Learning is also assessed though 1:1 discussion with the child and small group activities.</p>

Area	Definition	Indicators of Quality
Additional Considerations	Settings consider whether the provision that they offer differs in any way from the norm. Extra sessions or wrap around care etc. must be carefully organized and registration processes addressed.	Quality practice involves practitioners in a process of reflection and evolution. If provision can successfully be extended or improved this will be undertaken with necessary research and forethought. The benefits to children, practitioners and community are seen across the city.
Child protection	<p>All staff (and visitors as appropriate) should be aware of the issues around child protection that relate to the setting.</p> <p>Every setting should display the Department of Health Flow chart for referral.</p>	Regular and up to date training will ensure that practitioners have the opportunity to discuss how child protection issues can be most efficiently dealt with. The policy file for this area will include names of people with different responsibilities and any notes or letters containing information about children. Confidentiality will be maintained.
Community Links	Stakeholders within the community are an invaluable resource to the setting. Likewise the setting provides a service within its locality. The nature of the relationships between practitioners and community members is the key to effective partnership.	Settings where excellent practice exists ensure that open meetings are held whenever appropriate to allow stakeholders to be part of the reflective practice of the setting. Forward thinking practitioners form positive links with other providers and libraries, soft play centres, as well as other people within the community. Regular planned use is made of resources outside the setting.

Area	Definition	Indicators of Quality
Confidentiality	Each setting will have its own particular areas in which confidentiality must be maintained. This will be made clear to practitioners and visitors as appropriate.	<p>Policies and communication strategies will exist which ensure that all practitioners are informed and confident about issues of confidentiality.</p> <p>Documents and details will be kept locked away where appropriate. An agreed system will exist to facilitate the access to such material when necessary.</p>
Curriculum	<p>The curriculum, in this instance, includes not just the educational curriculum but the whole experience, learning and social, that is planned for the child.</p> <p>It will include statutory learning goals, frameworks or educational curricula.</p>	<p>The curriculum will seek to promote developmentally appropriate learning for each individual child.</p> <p>It will be regularly assessed and evaluated, through reflective practice. It will be seen to meet the needs of the whole child.</p>
Daily Routines	Every setting will have its own basic time-table even if it is as simple as when the session starts and when it ends. The opportunities for snacks and use of different areas may be included. The purpose of such a document is not to form a restrictive schedule but to provide a starting point for flexible planning.	Examples of excellent practice within Newcastle include simple routines which practitioners work around, following the interests of the children. They make reference to safety issues. Some include an outline of different learning opportunities available at various points during the session. Routines should be displayed clearly.

Area	Definition	Indicators of Quality
Evaluating the Activity	This is distinct from assessing what a child has learned through an activity or play experience. It is the process of looking at the usefulness of the activity as a learning tool. It may be that the activity was well planned but not suitable for the particular group or child. Some changes may need to be made before it is repeated.	Excellent practice will involve an honest approach to evaluating our own ideas and the activities we plan. This may be done as a team or as an individual. There will be a focus upon matching the play experience to the child and his/her interests. There should be opportunities for the child to develop new skills or understanding and evaluate experiences.
Equality of opportunity	Legislation exists to ensure that equal opportunities are given within any setting, to practitioners and users alike. All practitioners should be aware of how this affects their practice.	Where excellent practice exists, practitioners and stakeholders will seek to actively eliminate discrimination and prejudice. Steps will be taken to include positive images of all kinds of disability and ethnic or gender group. Resources will be chosen for their usefulness in combating stereotypes. Children will be involved in hands on activities from cultures and experiences other than their own. Planning for diversity will not be 'tokenistic' but rather a regular part of the child's learning.

Area	Definition	Indicators of Quality
Information About Setting	The information to be communicated effectively will depend upon the setting and its uses. This information will include opening times and closing times, health and safety regulations with names of responsible people, phone numbers etc. Registration details including staffing structure and numbers of children. Any information necessary to visitors or parents should be displayed clearly. Other information should be kept on file and regularly updated. Detailed information regarding a setting will be required for any quality assurance assessment.	<p>Across Newcastle we see practitioners using tried and tested methods of recording information about their settings. As new legislation is introduced procedures are revised.</p> <p>Practitioners are supported in this by EYDCP systems for collating this information. Visits from Childcare and Education consultants and Playgroup Network and Inclusion workers.</p> <p>Where excellent practice exists practitioners have complete and up to date information to hand and communicate this effectively with all stakeholders.</p>
Interaction with Children	This aspect of our work includes both the planned and informal exchanges that practitioners have with children. These interactions are the building blocks of the relationships we form with children. It is through them that a sense of security and positive behaviour patterns are developed.	<p>Amongst the excellent practice we see in Newcastle, warm and open relationships are formed between practitioners and children. There is a celebration of the child as an individual and a sense of fun as the friendship grows, each developing a greater understanding about the other. We see children developing a positive sense of self-esteem.</p>

Area	Definition	Indicators of Quality
Mission Statement	The overall aim of the setting should be clear to all stakeholders. Everybody should have ownership of the underlying philosophies of the group. This aim should be effectively communicated to visitors and parents and the wider community. The statement may have a different title chosen by the stakeholders, such as 'Statement of Intent'.	<p>Use posters and leaflets to display this aim.</p> <p>Include the aim in the constitution of the setting.</p> <p>Ensure that the aim is regularly evaluated according to the needs of the setting and its community. In some settings the Mission Statement has been expanded upon to form a leaflet which gives a much more comprehensive description of the aims and ethos of the group.</p>
Nutrition and serving food	In all settings basic hygiene rules should be observed and drinks and food appropriate to the dietary needs of the children provides. Supervision of this should be adequate for health and safety reasons. Practitioners should try to avoid long waiting times at the table and to allow children free access to drinks as appropriate.	<p>A healthy and varied diet will be offered to the children. The kinds of foods available will promote awareness of foods from within different ethnic groups. Children will be encouraged to participate in preparing the food or drinks where this is safe for them to do. The meal or snack time will be a positive social experience with lots of opportunities to talk and to share. Celebratory meals or parties will be a regular aspect of the setting.</p>

Area	Definition	Indicators of Quality
Parental Involvement	Possibly the largest stakeholder group, parents are by nature involved in the setting. The formalisation of this partnership is an invaluable process. It involves communication and practical sharing of tasks and responsibilities. Most commonly, parents are involved during the registration and settling in period. This is an ideal chance to initiate a positive partnership right from the start. Particular skills that the parent brings may be especially useful.	<p>Parents should not only be well informed of the aims and objectives of the setting but should be involved in the development of policies and activities. Parents may form part of the management structure or an advisory group which feeds into the regular evaluation of the setting. Meetings will be held to keep parents informed of their child's progress and there will be daily opportunities for informal exchanges between parents and practitioners.</p> <p>In some settings parents will be involved in a well structured way as volunteers.</p>
Planning the Curriculum	<p>Deciding how to cover the appropriate curriculum in the time allocated within sessions.</p> <p>This will include long, medium and short-term (weekly or daily) plans.</p> <p>Objectives will be linked to activities and appropriate to the needs of the children.</p>	<p>Excellent practice will show regular planning meetings.</p> <p>There will be evidence of planning to meet individual children's needs and interests.</p> <p>Planning sheets will be detailed and useful working documents that show flexibility and are used effectively by all practitioners.</p>

Area	Definition	Indicators of Quality
Policies	Policies are statements which outline how various aspects of the setting will be managed. They include procedures to follow and details of who will be responsible for these.	Policies will be in place for all relevant areas - those required by law and any others which are considered useful to the stakeholders. The policies will promote excellent practice and be understood and followed by all team members.
Premises and Equipment	The physical environment within which the children and practitioners work has an impact upon the atmosphere and the social/learning environment. Registration procedures should be followed and responsibility for maintenance of buildings and resources should be allocated effectively. Of course there are often funding issues but creative planning, sharing of resources and drawing upon sources of "free and found" materials within the community are all helpful strategies.	Across Newcastle each setting is unique and the number of ways in which resources are utilised is almost infinite. Where excellent practice exists practitioners and other stakeholders work hard together to keep premises well maintained and resourced. The layout of the building will be appropriate to the development of the children and include space for quality play experiences in a variety of environments. The children will be involved in designing play areas and have autonomous use of resources.
Safety	Safety issues include not only procedures for practitioners but also the child's understanding of how to keep safe within the setting or while in the care of practitioners off-site.	The arrangements for each setting should be worked out by the whole team and clearly understood by all. Child protection issues must be included in this discussion. Quality practice will include understanding of health and safety regulations and a nominated rep.

Area	Definition	Indicators of Quality
Staff portfolios	An up to date record of the training (with certificates) that practitioners have attended. This file may also include details of areas of responsibility that the practitioner has.	Where excellent practice exists, each member or staff will have a comprehensive record of training that they have attended and information fed back from other sessions by colleagues. The file may contain evidence of activities planned and carried out by the practitioner as a result of training. The portfolio will demonstrate an awareness of current issues and govt. and LEA / EYDCP (etc.) publications.
Staffing – key workers	Within a setting the children are divided into groups which represent a spectrum of abilities and needs. Each group is assigned a key worker who takes responsibility, at some level for the group.	Some of the excellent practice we see in Newcastle involves key workers who regularly observe, assess and record their children's development. They share relevant information with colleagues and parents. The system provides a supportive relationship and a means of creating a social /learning experience which is tailored to the needs of the child.
Staffing - qualifications	The legislation regarding required qualifications for practitioners must be followed. In each type of setting there will be adults with specific qualifications – and a wealth of experience.	Quality practice within setting ensures that appropriately qualified practitioners are always present. There will also be a policy for professional development, encouraging stability.

Area	Definition	Indicators of Quality
Staffing - ratios	Again, legislation exists, setting out the ratio of qualified or registered adults to children of certain ages. In every setting a higher ratio of adults to children is beneficial.	Where excellent practice exists adult ratios will be exceeded where possible and staffing managed well. Children will have consistent, secure relationships with adults and work in small groups.
Staffing – special responsibilities	Initial training should be of a high standard and there should be a commitment to further on-going training. Sharing good practice and visits help with this. Each setting should also consider whether they could support students on placements or people interested in experience of childcare or education prior to initial training.	The quality of initial training and the aptitudes of the new worker will be important to employers taking on new staff members. Practitioners will seek out high quality training opportunities and be well informed of best practice. There will be structures in place to feed back to the whole staff.
Student Profile	Details of course requirements should be kept by those practitioners responsible for students. Each student should have a file containing course details and evidence of training and assignments carried out during the placement.	Where excellent practice exists students will have completed an induction pack devised by the setting. This will contain information such as policies and routines which relate to the student's responsibilities. At least one practitioner will have completed a course which enables them to mentor students effectively. There will be regular communication between the college/university and setting. Practitioners will ensure that the file is a suitable portfolio for the student to take to a job interview. The student will have had every possible chance to take appropriate responsibilities during their placement.

Area	Definition	Indicators of Quality
The Birth to Three Framework	This more recently published framework looks at the younger child as A Strong Child, A Healthy Child, A Skillful Communicator and A Competent Learner. It provides examples of suitable activities for children from Birth to Three.	Children from birth to three should have the security of a close attachment to the adults who work with them. They will choose, at their own pace, from quality experiences and opportunities. Excellent practice will support and encourage children to explore a rich and stimulating environment, and not focus on the teaching of skills.
The Early Learning Goals	There are six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage: Personal, Social and Emotional, Communication, Language and Literacy, Mathematics, Knowledge and Understanding of the World, Creative and Physical Development. Each area has a set of goals or statements, which describe what the child leaving the Foundation Stage should have achieved.	The ELG's will be covered in an appropriately planned way. They will be delivered through a range of play activities and other experiences, which children can access freely. Children will make informed choices. Excellent practice will show a bias toward cross-curricular activities that engage the children in memorable learning experiences.
The Early Years Curriculum	This will include the Birth to Three Framework and the Foundation Stage Curriculum for Three to Five year olds. It may also include other non-statutory areas if settings so choose.	Settings will be delivering an exciting and balanced curriculum covering all areas of learning through child centered practice. The curriculum will be appropriate to the age and development of each child.

Area	Definition	Indicators of Quality
Trips and outings	There will be a record of details of trips organised and carried out. Risk assessments will be done and all insurance / travel details etc. recorded.	Where there is excellent practice visits will be a regular part of the experience provided for the children. Details will be kept of suitable venues and how visits link with the long term planning of the setting.



Quality

Quality Assurance Schemes

Quality Counts

National Day Nurseries Association

- includes "Quality Criteria Levels" 1-3 as standards
- a series of formative and summative assessment questionnaires
- care and education are covered with reference to Early Learning Goals

Aiming for Quality

Pre-school Learning Alliance

- involves self assessment
- a collection of a portfolio of evidence
- a focus on reflective practice, objectives and action plans

Aiming High

4 Kids

- involves practitioners in portfolio gathering
- looks at 'positive play opportunities'
- includes a helpful glossary of terms
- standards are clearly explained.

(Aiming High is currently being developed to form a scheme for birth to three provision)

Sheffield Quality Kitemark

- may be used in any kind of setting
- looks at relationships between stakeholders
- involves work on team dynamics
- separate versions for playwork and early years
- focus on outdoors

(Leeds have also developed a generic scheme which can be used by any provider)



A Quality Assurance Scheme for Nurseries and After-school Care

CfBT Education Services

- focus on individual staff development
- emphasis on collaborative development
- outlines six key areas
- workshops offered to support staff

Children Come First

NCMA (Childminding networks)

- promotes NCMA's 'principles for excellence in childminding practice'
- allows childminding networks to seek accreditation
- key areas include; status, learning and development, business practice
- includes a focus on seeking help and support
(There is also a scheme for individual childminders)

EEL Scheme

Effective Early Learning Project

- a 'cost-effective' scheme
- supports practitioners to improve on 'personal best'
- evaluates the quality of the experiences offered to children
- includes tracking children and assessing colleagues' practice
- recently recommended by Primary National Strategy Team as good Early Years Practice

Details of the '**Investors in Children Programme**' established by the Sure Start Unit can be found at www.surestart.gov.uk/ensuringquality/investorsinchildren along with information about many of the quality assurance schemes endorsed by this programme.



Exploring Quality

Taking time to reflect

The next few pages of this booklet are just for you. Many practitioners have found this exercise to be very useful. If you can find time to work through the questions and jot down your thoughts you will be well on the way to having a better understanding of why you work in the way you do. This can be done individually or as a team and will hopefully help you to draw together some reasons to celebrate your practice and a few priorities. Working towards quality practice is an evolution and we may never be finished, so remember to set realistic goals and review your progress regularly.

What is quality?

Reflect within your group upon what personal childhood experiences gave you:

Pleasure

Security

Satisfaction

What do you find you have in common and what is unique to your experience?

Where does quality come from?

What opinions do you have about quality childcare and education?

Where and when do you think these were formed?

Do any of your opinions ever get you into trouble?

Indicators and Inhibitors...

Within your group list what you consider to be indicators of quality education and childcare.

What factors or conditions would inhibit quality practice?

A set of criteria...

Take a few minutes to reflect upon how you judge the quality of your own work.

Within your group share your own quality control methods. List the different ways in which you do this.

Why do you think we all do this differently and what implications does this have for teams?

A time and a place

When and how do you feel that you have successfully planned for quality?

List examples from your group.

How far have we got?

How many different initiatives and training sessions etc. can you remember that have made a positive impact on the quality of provision for children?

Who should be involved in the quality debate?

In your group make a list of the people who should participate in the discussion about quality

How do you make sure the child's voice is heard?

What next for us?

What do you feel to be the most helpful principles for developing quality in your setting?

How will you put this into practice?

When will you review this?

Making positive changes

How will you find out what each child considers to be quality?

How do you plan to follow up children's interests each day?

How will you handle the issues involved in keeping parents informed and working with you as you make changes?

How will you plan for the impact these changes may have on practitioners?

If you would like to photocopy and forward any of your responses to this section (anonymously or otherwise) we would be delighted to receive and collate your ideas. They would certainly be of interest to us and others in the EYDCP community. You may not normally work as part of a team but you might find it helpful to meet up with a friend or colleague in order to work through these questions. Please do not feel that you have to send us your responses!



Case Studies

Ashfield Parents Centre

At Ashfield Parent Centre we offer training and support to the local community. We encourage people to join in our activities at whatever level they feel comfortable with.

Our Parent Support Group is a first port of call and allows the parents to chat about their children and get to know each other. When people get to know the Centre we then encourage them to join in our courses which all have crèche facilities run by workers trained at our own Centre.

We run successful courses in basic skills, crèche work, Art and Craft etc. As the crèche workers are known in the community Ashfield parents find it easier to leave their children with them. The children are happy being in the crèche and it gets them ready for their transition into the Nursery.

Shiria Ali joined our Parent Support Group 2 years ago. As her confidence grew she joined in our story sack course with the Newcastle Literacy Trust. From this she progressed onto the crèche course. Shiria now encourages other people to join in the activities at Ashfield.

KEEP principles:

'relationships with both adults and children'
'work with parents, carers and the wider community'



Practitioners caught in the act of excellent reflective practice – looking at the planning!

KEEP principles:

'understanding of the individual and diverse ways in which children learn and develop'

'knowledge and understanding in order to actively support and extend children's learning in and across all areas and aspects of learning'

Case
Studies

Chidsplay Day Nursery

Over the last few years the team at Chidsplay Day Nursery have been working hard to implement significant changes to their practice. The pedagogy advocated by the pre schools of Reggio Emilia in Italy and the advent of the Birth to Three Matters framework have influenced their understanding of how young children develop and learn to explore the world. Practitioners are also keenly aware of the role of schema and the importance of recording learning journeys for each child. In the baby and toddler rooms even simple changes such as a small tent replacing the sand tray have convinced practitioners that children need to be more involved in making their own choices about how and when they will interact with resources. The impact of these ideas is also to be seen in the work done with the older children too. Changes already made to the learning environment include willow structures and carefully planned areas for more child initiated play in the outdoor area and the creation of a beautiful room with natural colours and wooden flooring for sensory and large motor play indoors.

Inevitably the practitioners needed to look at planning systems to ensure that these reflected the new approaches to introducing themes and experiences to the children whilst allowing space to record and develop the children's own individual interests and learning journeys. Over a few weeks the practitioners are reflecting upon how best to complete the planning process. They are confident that when they have talked through the issues they will have a system in place which involves all the practitioners and builds upon each child's current interests and needs. They intend to have a record which celebrates the very best in Early Years practice.



Face painting is very popular at Chill Out, the children often paint each other's faces.

KEEP principles:

'work with other professionals within and beyond the setting'

'Knowledge and understanding in order to actively support and extend children's learning in and across all areas and aspects of children's learning'

'Chill Out' After School Club

'Chill Out' after school club at English Martyrs' School has been put forward as a case study for our booklet for many reasons. The committed team work well together and regularly access training in all areas of their work, most recently from childcare consultants on 'Promoting Positive Behaviour'.

They are keen to work with outside agencies, working at present with inclusion support workers from The Better Play Project. They are also piloting an inclusive play pack in the setting. Their willingness to seek advice and to try new things has had real impact upon the service they offer to local families.

Practitioners have carefully planned the environment to allow for different kinds of learning opportunities, having a large physical play area and quieter areas to do creative and role play activities etc.

The adults value what the children have to say, and plan around what they want to do. There are regular children's meetings and graffiti boards where children's ideas are gathered into the planning process. At times the children have the job of writing on the planning sheets. Relationships with the parents and the Primary School are always valued and constantly built upon.

The group is currently going through a Quality Assurance Scheme for Out of School Clubs, 'Aiming High'. They are already members of the Network of Out of School Clubs.



A variety of effective communication systems exist between School and Playgroup!

KEEP principles:

'knowledge and understanding in order to actively support and extend children's learning in and across all areas and aspects of learning'

'work with other professionals within and beyond the setting'

Chillingham Road Playgroup

Chillingham Rd Playgroup operates from a room within the Primary School. Recently, the improvement of links with the school staff and governors has had very positive effects upon the children and practitioners in the group.

The Head Teacher obviously values the youngest children and the school appreciates the work that the playgroup does. Nursery staff have attended playgroup team meetings to observe and interact with playgroup staff in a very positive way with lots of praise for the playgroup.

Practitioners have worked together to find ways to share resources such as the outdoor area. Children also have more space as they can use the large new sports hall and have use of the kitchen for cooking activities. There are also plans for a sensory room.

The children are benefiting from attending assemblies and festivals with their siblings which they are now invited to attend as appropriate. (Leaving early if they are fidgety!) Playgroup has its own governor who feeds back to staff and takes issues to meetings on their behalf.

There is a climate of joined up working and a willingness to look for ways in which practice may be improved. Practitioners feel that they are fully part of the team and that their opinions and expertise are valued.



An understanding of how children learn is crucial in helping each one to reach their full potential.

Case

KEEP principles:

'practice in meeting all children's needs, learning styles and interests'

'work with other professionals within and beyond the setting'

Studies

Denton Burn Pre-School

Denton Burn Pre-School have recently been able to offer a place to a child who has special medical needs. The Practitioners have received training and support from the Community Nurse who has been able to spend time within the setting while the practitioners become confident with procedures. There is also support from the Access Fund to pay for an extra practitioner to work within the setting, allowing ratios to be maintained when adults need to spend extra time attending to the particular medical needs of the child. There is an Area SENCO Inclusion Worker who also helps with any queries the practitioners and parents may have.

The Management Committee and the staff have been very keen to take this inclusive step and to offer a place to this child and whilst it has not been an easy process the results are a fantastic example of how this can be a reality for any setting. The group has recently received a glowing Ofsted report and has certainly proved that courageous changes thoughtfully made to policies can be beneficial to all stakeholders.



Building relationships is central to good early years practice.

Case

KEEP principles:

'relationships with both adults and children'

'work with parents, carers and the wider community'

'work with other professionals within and beyond the setting'

Studies

Walkergate Children's Centre

The concept of a Children's centre with its core offer of provision including childcare, early education, family support, family health services, links with job support services etc. may be new to some. However, at Walkergate Nursery this kind of provision has been developing over the years under the visionary leadership of Dorothy Gregory, the Head Teacher there for the past five years.

The Nursery has always sought to serve the community effectively. It not only provides excellent early education but encourages parents to become engaged with their child's learning through many different initiatives. Parents are also supported in their own development through training with crèche facilities and employment advice.

Since its designation last year as the first Children's centre in Newcastle, the families have had an even better quality service to enjoy. The new parts of the building have been sensitively designed to improve space and provision. The practitioners have made use of their expertise in early years pedagogy. There is a stunning new entrance area and the setting now has a baby room, board room facilities, meeting rooms, an IT training room and much more! The playgroup and training rooms which were separate are now part of the main building. All these changes allow for a more cohesive service with provision for a wider range of ages and activities. Amidst all this new development practitioners still firmly believe in certain priorities.

"It is the quality of relationships that is really important," says Dorothy, "relationships with children, families and practitioners. What makes this place a good place is the quality of the staff and their attention to detail."



The parents and staff at the toy library saved up for about four years for their super soft play area.

Case

KEEP principles:

'work with parents, carers and the wider community'

'practice in meeting all children's needs, learning styles and interests'

Studies

Hadrian Toy Library

At the very heart of high quality provision is the prerequisite for committed and well trained practitioners who are willing to go the extra mile.

The Newcastle Toy and Leisure Library is based at Hadrian School. It began just over thirty years ago when a group of parents got together to combine resources and to share specialist toys for their children. The aim of the group, now staffed efficiently by practitioners employed through various funding streams, is to support children with special needs and their families. These families are offered not only a fantastically resourced toy library but clubs on a Saturday, including football, soft play, arts and crafts etc. There are play sessions during the week for siblings and a group of childminders meets in the school building where the very strong inclusive ethos is reinforced.

The evidence for quality that practitioners see is the impact that the group has had on the lives of local families. Some of their evaluations of the service are very moving and practitioners include children in the planning and evaluation process too. The service has evolved and grown over time and the children and parents have very much taken things forward. A new 14plus group is starting soon.

The welcoming and supportive atmosphere of the service is one of its strengths and this can only be maintained through constant attention to the relationships with its 144 active members. This commitment is one of the building blocks of provision which impacts upon quality of life.



A memorable day for Lewis as he meets Mr. Olly.

KEEP principles:

'work with parents, carers and the wider community'
'relationships with both adults and children'

Born to Read: Lewis' Story

Mr Olly entertained parents and toddlers at Blakelaw Clinic on Thursday the 1st May 2003. One very anxious little boy peered curiously from his mum's knee. His name was Lewis.

As the show progressed and Mr Olly entertained everyone with puppets and rhymes, Lewis' confidence grew. He slowly ventured towards Mr Olly with a smile on his face. He was very happy at the end of the show when Mr Olly presented him with balloons.

At home that night Lewis recalled the day's events to his dad, he laughed as he told dad all about the puppets he had seen. Lewis had even remembered the nursery rhymes.

Mum was delighted to see how much he had enjoyed it and how much he had remembered. She brought Lewis along the following day to Blakelaw library where Mr Olly was performing again.

This time Lewis greeted Mr Olly with a big smile and immediately was intrigued to discover what was inside Mr Olly's box of tricks. He participated in the magic show waving the magic wand proudly.

This summarises the whole aim of Born to Read and for this little boy, the opportunity he was given has made a tremendous impact.

Born to Read helped to provide an ideal environment in which children like Lewis, could interact. Through rhyme the children experienced fun and enjoyment as language and communication skills were developed.



Parents and toddlers join in with the singing and dancing games at Moorside Parent and Toddler group.

Case

KEEP principles:

This series of reflective questions includes all of the KEEP principles.

Studies

NAPI

NAPI workers discussed issues of quality with the staff of some Newcastle Parent and Toddler Groups. (NAPI support 135 toddler groups across Newcastle)

These are some of the key principles which they find helpful. All toddler groups operate differently but they can demonstrate quality in a number of ways:-

Environment – Is the group making the best use of the space available both inside and out? Is equipment laid out so that children can explore it to its full potential? Is it safe – are all measures in place in relation to health and safety? Has risk assessment been carried out by NAPI?

Activities – Do activities provide opportunities for all children between Birth and Five? Is there a range of toys and equipment to provide for the development of a healthy and strong child, a competent learner and a skilful communicator?

Welcoming – How does the group demonstrate that it meets the needs of parents and children? Can the group leader demonstrate the skills required for good social interaction?

Business and Administration – Are all records of the group kept up to date? Has the group a bank account? Are accidents recorded? Do parents and group leaders attend training sessions?



Some settings have PEEP sessions for toddlers and their parents.

KEEP principles:

'relationships with both adults and children'

'knowledge and understanding in order to actively support and extend children's learning in and across all areas and aspects of learning'

PEEP

At St. Paul's Primary School parents and carers are very much involved in a PEEP (Peers Early Education Programme) session which happens every week. They stay on after dropping off their children and join in with early literacy activities in the Nursery area with the Early Years practitioners. The parents and children join in activities together and then go into separate groups to work. A number of the adults stay for coffee after the session. Some parents manage to fit this session in before work and all are keen to participate.

The sessions have been running for two years now with support from the local Sure Start Programme. One of the parents now helps to run the sessions. The relationships between staff and parents have deepened and grown through this project and the benefits to the children are clear. Parents and carers have a much better understanding of how their children learn and are far more engaged in their learning, having confidence to work in partnership with the school more.



Playgroup Network Newcastle regularly meets with the Early Education and Childcare Service to promote quality provision across the City.

KEEP principles:

All of the key elements of effective practice are covered in the work that Playgroup Network does

Playgroup Network

Members of Playgroup Network in Newcastle are fortunate to have the committed support of a team of experienced and caring fieldworkers. PGN, like NAPI, support individual groups with every aspect of their provision as they seek to promote quality practice in all settings. Each member group is entitled to:

- Half termly advisory visit by fieldworker
- Support and advice on any playgroup/management committee matter with extra visits if necessary
- Pre and post Ofsted support
- Guidance for prospective providers
- Guidance on Ofsted National Standards
- Signposting to other relevant agencies e.g. NAPI, CIS
- Assistance with recruitment and selection of staff
- Support around all areas of sustainability
- High quality loan service with delivery and pick up
- Publications e.g. registers & accident books which are either delivered or posted out
- Liaison with the Early Education and Childcare Service
- Representation on EYDCP and other Early Years Forums
- Advice regarding Children's Centre developments and representation at Children's Centre locality meetings
- Training needs identified
- Mentors for Quality Assurance Scheme
- Phone line for advice
- Emergency Supply Cover
- Links with National Playgroup Network
- Newsletter



The new environment at Regent Farm First School is an inspiration to other reflective practitioners.

Case

KEEP principles:

'knowledge and understanding in order to actively support and extend children's learning in and across all areas and aspects of learning'

'work with other professionals within and beyond the setting'

Studies

Regent Farm First School

Changes to an environment can often be identified as an area for long term development. Many settings are currently looking at how they can improve the quality learning through outdoor play. The staff and parents of Regent Farm First School began this process some years ago. Initially the children had a large playground area with a grassed space which practitioners used as best they could to provide for all areas of learning. As there was no particular focus to any part of the yard this was difficult to do.

With the help of The Wildlife Trust, The Tidy Schools Project, City Works, governors, parents and children from the school, practitioners in the Foundation Stage have worked to create a stimulating and well defined outdoor area. There are special places to garden, to explore musical instruments and to experience the smell and feel of herbs. Pathways lead the children through a withy tunnel and into an atrium with a log seat. The willow is just coming into bud and the children are looking for other signs of Spring as the daffodils and snowdrops bloom. A pile of large logs provides a fantastic supply of mini-beasts for regular inspection and a wooden house is a focus for role play.

The hard surface has been replaced with soft surfacing marked out in a large and interesting pathway forming a space for wheeled toys and journeys. This allows others to play on climbing equipment away from the danger of enthusiastic drivers. Practitioners take turns to put exciting opportunities to explore into the weekly planning.

Another huge benefit of the outdoor space is that it is often used by other year groups and out of school clubs etc.

Many of the visitors to the school are inspired to take away ideas for their own outdoor area. This project has really developed in stages and shows how important it is to plan carefully for change to make it manageable and to allow time for monitoring and evaluation as the environment evolves.



Building relationships with parents enables practitioners to have time to explain new initiatives in Early Years like the Birth to Three Matters Framework.

KEEP principles:

'work with parent carers and the wider community'

'relationships with both adults and children'

Case
Studies

Ryehill Community Nursery

At Ryehill Community Nursery we have always recognised the benefits of supporting parents and carers in order to provide the best possible start for the children in our care.

We provide a parents' room that can be accessed at any time to offer a safe, secure and friendly environment. Each morning refreshments are offered and there is an opportunity to speak to a Nursery staff member or a Sure Start worker either on a one to one basis or in an informal group.

We also have a big breakfast on a Friday where parents are encouraged to stay and have breakfast with their children or in the parents' room. As part of a Children's centre we link into other agencies and offer services such as our very successful health visitor drop in session. Parents can, in confidence, discuss any health issues or concerns or seek advice around their children's own health. We have also established at the request of the parents, a smoking cessation clinic, weight management and a healthy eating programme as well as other courses and support.

In our parents' room parents and carers have been given the opportunity to establish new friendships with others while being able to relax in a comfortable environment. They have gained more confidence in being able to talk to others with similar problems or interests and are able to relate and respond to their children's needs in a more positive way. We have found that they are more willing to participate in nursery life as they become increasingly familiar with the nursery environment and the practitioners who are there to support them.



A safe and caring environment is vital for every child to thrive.

KEEP principles:

'work with parents, carers and the wider community'

'relationships with both adults and children'

Case Studies

Community Childminder: Jean Thackray

Quality of provision can often be measured by the progress made by individual children, hence the importance of accurate ongoing assessment systems. Jean Thackray has been a Community Childminder for over 11 years.

Her commitment to the families she works with is outstanding and she has encouraged and supported many children and parents involved with Social Services. When children arrive at her home she uses a mixture of reassurance, understanding, patience and perseverance to help them to cope with sometimes traumatic or difficult situations.

Jean takes every opportunity to access training and over the years has built up an expertise in her job, helping to guide anxious parents through the worrying times and to build up a their confidence and trust.

Her primary concern has to be the children and she regularly attends core group meetings and case conferences. The information that she brings about the children is invaluable and very few professionals have such a detailed and informed picture of how the child is progressing.

Jean enjoys the challenge of difficult situations and has regularly seen transformations in the children she works with. She has formed some very supportive long term relationships with local families. Once again the positive changes in lives bear witness to the quality of her care.



The one to one care that each child receives from a childminder can make all the difference.

KEEP principles:

'relationships with both adults and children'

'knowledge and understanding in order to actively support and extend children's learning in and across all areas and aspects of learning'

Childminder: Mary Trappe

Mary Trappe has been working for 20 years in Newcastle to provide excellent childcare. As a member of 'Outer West Children Come First Childminding Network' and the National Childminding Association (NCMA) she has higher standards to meet so that the children she cares for receive the best quality care available. She regularly attends a range of training courses; child development, behaviour management, equality and diversity and first aid, as well as attending conferences and networking with other colleagues.

Mary has recently attained NVQ level 3 in childcare which she says has changed the way she feels about her work. She has a greater understanding of how young children develop and how to support this process and is now finding her work even more exciting.

By writing very sensitive diaries of each child's day and by encouraging her parents to share their ups and downs she has built up very supportive relationships. She firmly believes that confidence is the key to successful parenting.

Mary is constantly building up her range of resources, trying new things as well as old favourites and sharing ideas with colleagues. She works confidently with different aged children and provides a stimulating range of activities for them all. She has recently become a mentor supporting newly registered childminders who will certainly benefit from her experience and commitment to quality in all she does.



‘In my workplace we are working towards ‘Quality’ but this course has helped us to identify the work we do as ‘Quality’ and how to go about pushing it forward in little steps.’

KEEP principles:

‘work with other professionals within and beyond the setting’

‘work with parents and the wider community’

Westgate Children’s Centre

Westgate children’s centre was designated in 2004. The work begun by the Sure Start local programme, New Deal for Communities and many other agencies working within this area has formed a very sound base from which to develop multi agency working and an integrated approach to provision for families.

As part of this development the locality team asked for a ‘quality day’ to be run to which all 140 practitioners in the area were invited. The day was entitled, ‘Westgate Children’s Centre, quality right from the start!’

The aims of the day were to:

- establish a set of common values for our work within the children’s centre
- discuss issues facing practitioners and families
- make working links with colleagues within the children’s centre
- raise the quality of the provision for families within Westgate

The practitioners who attended worked through a reflective exercise similar to the one at the back of this booklet. There was an opportunity to look at photos of different examples of practice and discuss how we felt about constructive criticism. We also had the chance to challenge each other to get out and visit other settings within the children’s centre, to share resources and to learn from excellent practice.

The evaluations from the training showed how valuable practitioners feel these times to reflect can be and how helpful such days are when working across agencies and finding out just what people in those jobs do! It is hoped that more opportunities to meet in this way will be built into the continued development of the children’s centre. One of the most important prerequisites for quality provision is time for practitioners to reflect as indicated in the Key Elements of Effective Practice.



Communicating before words.

Keep principles:

'relationships with both adults and children'

'work with other professionals within and beyond the setting'

Case Studies

West Walker Family Centre

West Walker Family Centre are currently showing off a bright, informative display produced jointly by parents of the West Walker Baby Social and the SureStart Speech and Language Team in the area.

The display, entitled 'Baby Talk', has been designed to enhance parental awareness of the many communications that occur before speech appears. Babies learn so much about how to communicate with their families and with other babies in the first year of their life. Before babies ever say a first word they learn to 'talk' by watching your face, copying your expressions, listening to your voice, taking turns with simple games, and making lots of different sounds. The Baby Talk display really captures all these wonderful communications.

Children's learning is transparent and so can be easily seen in photographs. Whilst creating the display, parents were shown how to zoom in with the camera to focus on something specific such as facial expression, eye contact between parent and child, focus on a toy etc, increasing their observational skills and raising awareness of early interaction. They then proceeded to organise the photos under a number of relevant short captions, for instance 'I love it when we are face to face'. This highly visual, low text approach to displaying information means that the display is accessible to parents and carers with varying literacy skills. It generates discussion and instantly captures parental imagination – everybody loves to see pictures of their children! The display highlighted to the parents involved how much positive parenting they were already doing, and fostered new ideas.

Following the success of this jointly produced display, the involved parties are now looking to video for their next inspiration... watch this space!

Sally Coplowe - SureStart Speech and Language Therapist



Contact Us

Newcastle Early Education and Childcare Service

The Newcastle Early Education and Childcare Service (EECS) exists to support all those registered and prospective providers of early education and childcare in Newcastle - childminders, full day care providers, playgroups, out of school clubs, crèches and schools. The Early Education Consultants and Childcare Consultants have specific responsibilities for support, advice and guidance.

In drawing this document together we hope to have highlighted the excellent practice which is already on offer to our children. Our Childcare and Education Consultants work in partnership to meet the needs of all practitioners in the following ways:

- Supporting and working with families, governing bodies, voluntary organisations.
- Working in partnership with Sure Start programmes and Children's Centres in accordance with the Every Child Matters agenda.
- Liaising with OFSTED and supporting settings who are going through inspections and working on action plans.
- Helping new settings or practitioners to set up their provision with advice on policies, buildings, regulations, health and safety and other issues covered by the National Day Care standards.
- Working with leadership and management teams in planning for and delivering care and education for young children.

- Carrying out regular visits to attached settings and practitioners to support them in the development of all aspects of their work including those working through a Quality Assurance scheme.
- Providing training to support those working with children from Birth to Three and in the Foundation Stage.
- Seeking to establish links between agencies and working to facilitate a more efficient network of support for settings and practitioners.
- Working hard to encourage the sharing of good practice and a reflective attitude amongst those working with young children.

If you have read this book and found it helpful, we would like to support you in the next steps for your setting.

- You may want to consider adopting some of the ideas for reflective practice.
- You may want to discuss aspects of your provision within your team or with your committee or those who support you in your work.
- You may feel that it is time to forge stronger links with other stakeholders such as parents or community members.
- You may feel that you have identified a specific need for training for yourself or other people within your team.
- You may wish to make a comment about the book which would be useful to us when we publish the "final" copy.
- You may wish to let us know about some of the excellent practice where you work or where your child is cared for.
- You may feel that you are ready to begin the process of accreditation for Quality Assurance.

Please let us know, by completing the form overleaf, if we can support you in any way. We would be delighted to have feedback about this document.

Name _____

Job title / parent etc _____

Contact number / address (if appropriate)

A brief description of how we can support you with Quality Issues

Send to:

Penny Clark, Education Consultant
Principles of Quality for Newcastle
The Early Education and Childcare Service
Newcastle Springfield Centre
Off Blakelaw Road, Blakelaw
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE5 3HU

For more information about this project phone 0191 277 4660

Where can you find help?

If you are interested in taking a reflective look at your practice the following publications and websites may be helpful. Don't forget to check for current research papers on the web. Also listed are the contact details of organisations within Newcastle who will be very happy to help and advise you.

Every Child Matters

Tel 08706005522

Birth to Three Matters

(Sure Start –produced by the Department for Education and Skills)

Tel 0845 6022260

The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education

(EPPE Project)

Tel 020 7612 6219

Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage

(QCA Publications)

Tel 01787 884444

Foundation Stage Audit Materials

(Teacher Training Agency)

Tel 0845 6060 323

Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching in the primary years

(Department for Education and Skills)

Tel 0845 6022260

www.surestart.gov.uk/ensuringquality/investorsinchildren

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/parentalinvolvement

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/sen

www.ofsted.gov.uk

www.newcastle.gov.uk (follow links to Early Education and Childcare Service)

Early Education and Childcare Service Newcastle

Tel 0191 277 4660

CIS (Children's Information Service)

Tel 0191 2774133

Playgroup Network Newcastle

Tel 0191 275 3837

NAPI

(Newcastle action for parent and toddler groups initiative)

Tel 0191 265 6158

Newcastle Childminding Network Consortium

Tel 0191 277 7441

Newcastle Libraries and Information Service

0191 278 4201

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