

## Little Learners at home – transition to nursery



**Sherwood Children's Centre, Newark and Sherwood Area**, run 'Little Learners' transition groups for two- to three-year-old children and their parents. They attend a two-hour session once a week for a term, before entry to nursery.

The groups benefit from the involvement of a multidisciplinary team, including children's workers, crèche workers, a teacher, a speech and language therapist, a nutritionist, a local centre that gives support to parents of children with additional needs and Bookstart development workers.

An initial meeting with parents takes place, which provides an opportunity to talk to the children's worker about their child's interests, development and any concerns. This information is used to inform planning of the initial play sessions.

Observations are recorded on Post-it notes throughout each session. These are shared informally with parents, and are then used to plan the 'next steps' for individual children.

Photographs are also taken by the children and adults during a session and these are either displayed on a 'Little Learners' display board or in the child's portfolio. The portfolios also contain drawings, paintings, examples of early writing and so on.

The portfolio provides a visual record of the child's time at Little Learners and is made available as part of the session for the parents and children to look at together to celebrate the child's achievements, interests and progress.

The portfolios are presented to the child at the last session, for them to take home and share with their families and the next setting.

Working in this way has enabled practitioners to build their own confidence in listening and talking with parents, and to meet the needs of individual children more appropriately. Parents are able to develop a relationship with staff and feel more confident about approaching them to discuss their child's development or any concerns.

Following PEAL and Listening to Young Children training the centre identified the need to give parents more support for learning at home with their child – and to develop ways of enabling parents to share their own regular observations of what their child was saying or doing at home.

It was decided to develop activity packs and a home portfolio for parents and children to use between each session. In this way, parents have become more deeply involved in observing their child's



*“The girls come home full of new ideas and the staff are nice and easy to approach.”*

interests and play over the week, and share this knowledge with practitioners at the next group session. This gives a more complete picture of the child and enables planning for the sessions to reflect individual children’s needs and interests.

The packs and home activities are giving parents more confidence in leading their child’s learning. They also enable parents to see that what they already do, involving children in their everyday lives, helps to support their child’s learning.

The packs include items such as: story books with a game and ideas for imaginative play, construction activities, collage and cutting sets, dough recipes and materials.

A card is included in each pack, giving information on ideas for play and explaining what a child will be practising and learning. The cards are illustrated with pictures and are laminated.

The project is explained to parents at the beginning of term. The importance of listening to children as they play is emphasised. Parents are encouraged to allow their child a ‘voice’ as to which photos and samples of work to include in the portfolio. Parents are asked to add comments about what their child said and did. All contributions are valued and parents who have less confidence in making recordings are supported in this.

Future plans include talking to the wider Children’s Centre team to raise awareness of the project; evaluating its impact by asking parents and children for their feedback; developing the practice of involving parents in contributing their observations across all crèche sessions; and asking for feedback from receiving nurseries in the autumn term to see if the project has had an impact on children’s learning on entry (entry profile) and on parents’ involvement at the new setting.



*“He does things like making things and collage now – things he was less likely to do at home.”*