EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF SUPPORT FROM THE START

The overall aim of Changexchange is to understand how communities deliver sustainable change to reduce health inequalities in early years.

SUPPORT FROM THE START

Many initiatives have developed under Support from the Start, each with a focus on addressing the health and well-being of some of our youngest children and their families. The main aim has been to facilitate and enable mainstream services to deliver support in a different way and to share the learning from this.

CHANGE

The key to ensuring long term change in service delivery is to establish what has made a difference both to practitioners and to those who are in receipt of the service.

EVALUATION

The Changexchange project will seek to evaluate the impact of these initiatives by identifying changes which have taken place within families, practice and service delivery. Information will be gathered by a variety of research methods including questionnaires, focus groups and individual interviews.

OUTPUT

The output from this research will highlight changes which have taken place within families, staff, communities and organisations, detailing examples of good practice and will be used to inform future service delivery both locally and nationally.
Evaluating the Impact of Support from the Start

The Changexchange Team

Prof. Kirsty Forsyth, Queen Margaret University, has extensive experience in successfully implementing service redesign with a foundation in evidence based practice.

Dr. Donald Maciver is a Reader at Queen Margaret University. He brings experience of multidisciplinary child and family research, qualitative methodologies, academic/practice partnerships and evidence based approaches to care.

John Boyce is a Public Health Practitioner with East Lothian Community Health Partnership and has been appointed to Changexchange at Queen Margaret University as a research practitioner.

Ann Hume is a Teacher in an East Lothian Nursery School and has been appointed to Changexchange at Queen Margaret University as a research practitioner.

Steven Wray is the Lead Officer for Support from the Start in East and Midlothian.

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Changexchange

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**STAY AND PLAY IN WHITECRAIG**

**SUPPORT FROM THE START**

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**THE HISTORY**

Stay and Play was established in Whitecraig Community Centre in November 2009. The Community Development Officer, Lena Hutton identified a gap in the provision for children under 5 and their families.

Contact was made with Pauline Homer, one of the Support from the Start service champions, asking for guidance on how to better meet the needs of young children and families in Whitecraig.

As the existing mother and baby group only had a few parents attending with their children and a very limited supply of stimulating equipment it was agreed that an alternative group should be established.

**WHAT HAPPENED NEXT**

Lena drew on the services of Maureen Black, Play Adviser with East Lothian Council. They started with Bookstart sessions but these proved not to be popular. Maureen and Lena then drew up a programme of play sessions where adults and children played together in organised activities. This was the birth of Stay and Play.

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**SUPPORT FROM THE START**

The group started with a small number of parents and was deliberately timed so that it did not clash with the existing mother and baby group. However within a very short period of time these two groups merged to become one as more parents chose to attend the Stay and Play sessions.

**WHERE AND WHEN?**

The sessions are every Friday morning during term time and are attended by up to 10 parents/carers and as many as 16 children. Each session follows a routine which involves a planned activity followed by a healthy snack where all children and adults sit together at snack-time. The sessions end with time for free play.

“Parents are now advocates for the Group”

Community Development Officer

“I have been on a massive journey and now the main focus of my work is now in early years”

Community Development Officer

“People believe in it. They come back and wouldn’t if it wasn’t doing some good”

Play Leader

**MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE**

A significant change in behaviour has been around children’s eating habits.

With the establishment of a snack routine, the children are now too busy playing and are content to wait until it is time to eat together.
Stay and Play in Whitecraig

What has worked...for parents?
Parents increasingly recognise their role in encouraging others to come along and will support and nurture those who feel less able to participate. If someone fails to attend they take it on themselves to find out why and encourage attendance by phone and text.

...for children?
Children show signs of greater resilience in that they play more confidently with other children whilst their parents are involved elsewhere in the room.

...with the local community
Positive links have been established with Health Visitors who previously had limited contact with this group of parents.

The group is also able to support some of the more vulnerable children and their parents through work with First Step Community Project’s Family Outreach worker.

...for staff?
There has been an increased awareness of the importance of focussing on working with young children. More work within the centre is now aimed at this age group.

The Future
Evaluating the impact of this intervention is under discussion between Lena and Joanna Taylor, Head Teacher at the primary school. Both are looking at ways in which they can measure the difference in children’s readiness to learn and also at ways to track the current cohort through their pre-school year and on into primary 1.
**Support from the Start**

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**Supported places @ Puffin Playgroup**

Puffin Playgroup has been going for two years and supported places from Support from the Start were introduced last year. It is run by Jane Wood and Lucy O’Brien and is supported by Pauline Homer. The playgroup serves a diverse population some of whom can comfortably afford places and others who struggle with this. There are currently three fully supported places which can be used flexibly to support either three families with full week provision or a number of families with additional days. This allows the sessions to be spread amongst participants so that parents pay for what they can afford and additional time is provided by Support from the Start.

**Most significant change**

The development of supported places has ensured that children are not excluded from playgroup because of financial or family circumstances.

Significant improvements have been observed in the language development of the children following immersion in a language rich environment.

“Happy confident children going out the door today. Happy confident children leaving to start nursery.”

Playgroup staff

“It’s...hard to capture in words the quality of the environment when the children are actually present as well as the journey and progress that has been made over the last 18 months or so.”

Playgroup staff

“The playgroup serves a diverse population some of whom can comfortably afford places and others who struggle with this.”

Playgroup staff

“Quite a bit of effort has gone into making sure that the playgroup as a whole works.”

Playgroup staff
Supported places @ Puffin Playgroup

What has worked...for parents?
Parents report that their children generally are settling better into nursery than they had expected and they put this down to attending Puffin Playgroup.

One parent has continued to access the playgroup after her child started at nursery to facilitate her attendance at counselling. There is good parental involvement in additional fund raising efforts and parents also asked provide some additional sessions as helpers.

For children?
Children settle better into nursery after attending Puffin. The transition process is helped by detailed progress records on each child being passed on to nursery staff.
Snack time has been adapted to be available at any time as some children were coming in without having had any breakfast.

Support from the start

For staff?
Challenges can be presented by children regardless of whether they access a supported place or not. The supported places simply allow some children to attend, or to access more sessions, who would otherwise not attend as much or at all.

With the local community
There is a close working relationship with the next door crèche and staff are keen to develop stronger links with health visitors, nurseries and other groups. Puffin Playgroups plays an active part as a member and secretary of the centre users group.

There have also been strong links developed with the Three Harbours Arts festival. A story telling artist created a story and two painters have begun working on an outside mural linked to the story that was told.

The future
Puffin Playgroup would like to go on to develop and introduce:

- a lending library for parents on parenting and child care. The library resource could be shared centre users.
- story sacks.
- demonstrable ways for parents to spend quality time with children without spending large amounts of money.

CHANGE x CHANGE

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NHS Lothian
MUSIC, LITERACY AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

SUPPORT FROM THE START
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TRAIL BLAZING MUSIC
In Wallyford and Whitecraig nurseries Support from the Start is blazing a trail in the use of music to help young children develop skills useful for many other aspects of learning. Music can engage with and develop emotional literacy skills such as sharing, listening, turn taking as well as with practical literacy skills such as phoneme recognition.

RAINDROPS & THUNDER
The idea for a nursery focused music initiative developed from discussions on mapping what contributed to readiness for learning. One key insight was that anything that could help children with rhythm would help with language.

Home made shakers sound like “raindrops and thunder”
Wallyford Nursery Children

CREATING MUSIC TOGETHER
Two particular areas of music work are proving to be particularly helpful in developing literacy skills and emotional literacy. The first is story telling and creating music that is emotionally relevant to the story. The second beneficial effect is in learning to work as a group; learning to take turns, learning when to make a noise and

“Story telling on mood music allows for safe involvement and engagement in strong emotions one step removed from the moral and emotional conflicts.”
Music Specialist

STORY TELLING
These two strands have been developed in an age appropriate way for nursery children in Wallyford and Whitecraig as part of Support from the Start. The main element is to tell a story with emotional highs and lows and then to create music as a group to accompany the story. This allows a focus on listening and reading skills with emphasis on different pitches and between loud and quiet as well as stopping and starting together. These are broadly the same skills required for early reading. The programme is about early life skills and helps to develop resilience, tolerance, cooperation, and relationships with others. Children benefit greatly from learning to listen and through being listened to.
**Music, Literacy and Emotional Development**

**Resource Development**
The resource is under development and should be available and rolled out across East Lothian early in 2011. It will be available for all nursery staff to access and use with the support of a music specialist to assist their practice development. The resource will provide a wide range of ideas for short, flexible use of music and song in the nursery curriculum specifically to promote and develop literacy skills and emotional literacy.

**Complementary Resources**
Schools in the Support from the Start area have been allocated additional staff resources to support literacy in the early years. The hope is that some of this additional resource may be able to support this music initiative along with complementary approaches to emotional development such as Creating Confident Kids. The music work will relate directly to and complement work such as this.

**Next Steps**
The pilot will be written up and converted into a flexible resource to be trialled again later in 2010 in other schools in a modular format. This teaching resource will then be marketed to nursery teachers across East Lothian as a professional development opportunity to take forward children’s literacy, socialisation and emotional literacy skills.

*With thanks to Debbie Beveridge, Pat Holden, Mary Howie, Sarah Lindsay, David Troughton, and Steven Wray*
THE PLACE 2 BE

SUPPORT FROM THE START

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EAST LOTHIAN – THE PLACE2BE

East Lothian Council is committed to making a meaningful difference to the lives of all children within the county, particularly those who experience most difficulty and hardship. Through Support from the Start, attention has focussed on the health and well-being of our youngest children and the Council has therefore agreed to resource the establishment of a Place2Be Hub in the west end of the county.

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

The Place2Be is a national charity which works hand in hand with children, their parents and their teachers to bring about meaningful change. They operate in 130 schools across the UK, with Edinburgh being the only Local Authority in Scotland currently benefitting from the services of Place2Be.

SUPPORT FROM THE START

The Place2Be is a school-based counselling service, dedicated to improving the emotional wellbeing of children, their families and the whole school community.

The Place2Be focuses on developing the wellbeing of children in primary schools allowing us to have an earlier intervention”

Principal Officer—East Lothian Council

“By working with these children in this way ... children’s ability to learn will be improved when the culture within the school is supportive.”

Principal Officer—East Lothian Council

WHERE AND HOW?

There are six schools that will benefit from Place2Be, these being Sanderson’s Wynd and St. Martin’s primary schools in Tranent; Prestonpans Infants, Prestonpans Primary and St. Gabriel’s primary schools in Prestonpans; and Wallyford Primary School.

The project will have an overall Hub Manager, with each school having its own School Project Manager for 2.5 days a week. The School Project Manager will also be supported by up to 4 volunteer counsellors each being in the school for 1 day a week. The overall project will be overseen by a multi-agency steering group consisting of representatives from Education, Children’s Services, Police and Health.

In each school there will be a designated Place2be room which will be decorated and equipped as ThePlace2Be and will form the hub of all their activities.
THE PLACE 2 BE

**WHAT WILL WORK....FOR PARENTS?**
In the initial stages parents will be fully informed about the development and the progress of Place2be within each school and the implications it will have for their children. It is anticipated that as the projects develop there will be more support offered directly to parents.

**WHAT WILL WORK....FOR CHILDREN?**
The Place2Be operates at several levels offering different degrees of support to all children and staff. Children can refer themselves to The Place2Talk, or can be referred by teachers for one-to-one counselling. Children will also be able to participate in small group work sessions around a particular issue, or be part of solution-focused, short-term intervention groups.

**....FOR STAFF?**
There is also support for staff within the school which will focus on the development of strategies to support children within the classroom. The Place2Be will deliver CPD sessions for staff which will build on and extend the existing knowledge base within the school. At an individual level, the School Project Manager will also contribute to multi-agency staged assessment meetings.

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SUPPORT FROM THE START

**....THE COMMUNITY?**
A partnership involving key representatives from Education, Children’s Services, Police and Health will ensure vital links with the wider community.

**THE FUTURE**
The initial stage within each school will involve the School Project Manager working with parents and staff and getting to know the needs of the school. By the start of the new term in August each school will have a designated room in which initial training of all staff will take place and an evaluation of the emotional well-being of children in P4 will be undertaken during the first term.