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Person-centred support means working well with other agencies

Partnership working with other agencies is a key strength of the work of Midlothian Sure Start. The centres provide a way for other agencies to reach families in need of support. They work closely with health visitors, community learning and development partnerships and those delivering information about welfare rights. They also work closely with Midlothian Council and Midlothian Community Health Partnership in developing and implementing the Midlothian Parenting Strategy. They have a key partnership arrangement

with Malani (Midlothian Adult Literacy and Numeracy Initiative) and work with Homelink (a befriender organisation) to help ensure co-ordinated services and the opportunity for past users of the projects to 'give back' by becoming trained volunteers.

Support a qualified, reflective workforce

Midlothian Sure Start has recognised that well qualified staff are imperative to offering a quality service. The organisation has ensured that all staff have received required qualification training to meet regulatory requirements

for registration. In addition, a range of further training has been offered to all staff including: birth to three training, Incredible years, Play@home, Sleep Scotland, Baby Massage, Smoke free homes, First Aid, Early Talk, Solihull training³ and Child Protection. The organisation also takes 'a pro-active view on reflective practice'. In addition to support and supervision on a regular basis, reflective practice sessions are offered to managers and development practice sessions to family play workers. Further, in conjunction with the organisation's Early Years Co-ordinator, staff have been supported to offer peer mentoring and training. Staff who have

a particular interest in an area have been provided with time and support to mentor their colleagues, provide multi-agency training and have recently been presenting at conferences.

Further information

More on the work of Midlothian Sure Start including parent case studies can be found here:
<http://lx.iriss.org.uk/content/midlothian-sure-start-overview>

Scottish Government (2013)
 Play, talk, read
<http://www.playtalkread.org/>

³ The Solihull Approach is an integrated model of working and training programme for care professionals working with families, babies, children and young people who are affected by emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is an early intervention model and is also used for prevention and group work. The model incorporates three concepts of containment, reciprocity and behaviour management.

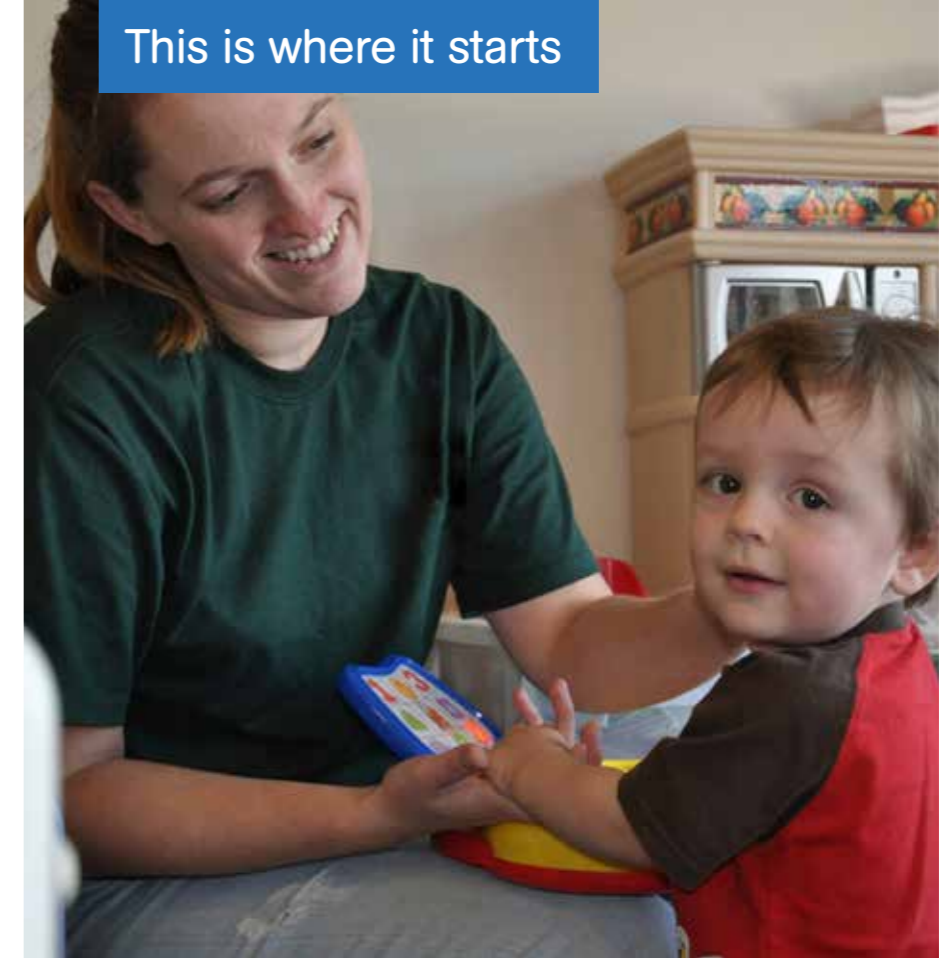
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This is where it starts



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**Case study 4:
Midlothian Sure Start**

Background

Midlothian Sure Start is a third sector organisation with an aim to give young children (from pre-birth to 11 years) the best possible start. A range of services are provided through six centres and on an outreach basis within the semi-rural community. Project users including families with young children are provided with holistic support.

Many families in contact with the organisation are affected by poverty, inequalities and challenges around housing, postnatal depression, isolation and childhood trauma. Services are offered through six centres and include: peer support; individual, couple and postnatal counselling; advocacy; literacy and numeracy support (individual and group); confidence building; capacity building; support into work, training and volunteering; play therapy; healthy living courses; exercise; tooth brushing; healthy snacks; complementary therapies; parenting, and helping children meet their developmental milestones. The centres across Midlothian have been established in areas of higher deprivation.

- **Funding (and costs where available)**
Funding: Midlothian Council, NHS Lothian, Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, ERDF/LEADER+, Children in Need, Friends of Midlothian's Children, Lloyds TSB, Pleasance Trust, John Watson Trust, Big Lottery Fund
- **Size:**
 - Stepping Forward – Penicuik (open full time)
 - Bright Start – Loanhead (open part time)
 - Positive Steps – Bonnyrigg (open part time)
 - Small Steps – Gorbridge (open part time)
 - Family Reachout – Mayfield (open full time)
 - Hand in Hand – Woodburn (open part time)
- **Referral routes:** self-referral, statutory and third sector social services
- **Key partners:** Midlothian Council, Midlothian Community Health Partnership, Midlothian Adult Literacy and Numeracy Initiative, Homelink
- **Established:** 2001.

Key messages

Co-produce support with parents

Parents are directly involved in planning the services offered by Midlothian Sure Start. Project user meetings happen monthly and half of the places on the Board of Directors are reserved for users of the project including parents, grandparents and other family carers. This approach ensures the involvement of families in the centres goes beyond consultation and is actually embedded, giving power and ownership to families to make decisions about the support provided to them.

Address stigma through universal-style services

A key challenge for Midlothian Sure Start was the perception from some parents that the support provided by the centres was for 'druggies' or 'mental mums'. In order to help address this the organisation made a concerted effort to address stigma and to offer more universal-style services. One example of this was the baby massage course which was positively received by parents in the community. After the success of the baby massage course staff noted

² <http://www.playtalkread.org/>

a change in the profile of people using the centres and an increase in self-referrals for support from 10-20% to 40%. This could be an indicator of the ways the organisation has succeeded in addressing stigma and widening access.

Share evidence with parents

As part of providing more universal-style services, the centres have incorporated messages from evidence into their support to parents. For example, evidence about early brain development, attachment, bonding, weaning, Play, Talk, Read², Play@home, Book Bugs and teaching early first aid have been shared with parents. This has been very well received by parents. Staff note that parents ask for more information of this nature and that they share these messages with each other, with their families and with other parents in the community.

Co-ordinate peer support

Peer support is an important part of parents helping themselves and each other. The role of the centres is to co-ordinate peer support through group work and to ensure the collective needs of parents are being met by providing inputs on topics parents request. Peer



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support is vital to many of the parents who come to the centre experiencing feelings of isolation, particularly if they are new to the area. A key impact of the support provided by Midlothian Sure Start is that parents make new friends and feel part of their community. Benefits of the group work in Midlothian Sure Start is twofold - it provides a forum where parents can support and challenge each other but also enables the organisation to provide support to a larger number of people at once with limited resources.

'Free parents up to be open to messages about parenting'

A strong message from the case study was that support which helps parents deal with their low confidence, low self-esteem, poor parenting experiences, trauma and abuse is a necessary first step towards improving their capacity to parent their children. Only when these issues are acknowledged and addressed can parents be 'freed up to be open to messages about parenting'.