

**E105\_1**

**Early years team work and leadership**

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## Introduction

In this free course, Early years team work and leadership, you will explore your understanding of leadership and how it operates in your early years setting. You will also consider how you work within a team and how your skills contribute towards supporting leadership. The course contains views from practitioners in different settings and at different stages in their early years careers.

This OpenLearn course provides a sample of level 1 study in [Education](http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/find/education).

## Learning outcomes

After studying this course, you should be able to:

* understand the concept of leadership in the early years
* demonstrate an awareness of factors that influence leadership and teamwork
* understand how teamwork can support leadership skills
* reflect on personal leadership and teamwork skills.

## 1 Thinking about leadership

In this section you will consider the increasing emphasis on leadership in early years practice. As a concept, leadership can be interpreted in a variety of ways, dependent on social and cultural contexts. The growing emphasis on leadership is based on the premise that effective leadership will mean improved outcomes for children’s care, learning and development. We take the view that leadership is the concern of all practitioners and not the exclusive domain of one individual, the designated leader. Stacey (2009) notes that while good leadership is key to a team’s success successful leaders are dependent on the rest of the team. From this perspective, leadership can be seen as an interactive two way process of influence. In other words, whether or not you are designated as ‘in charge’ or ‘a manager’, you are still in a position to reflect on your practice, effect change and influence the quality of provision in your setting. The idea of leadership as shared, dispersed or ‘distributed’ between team members, empowers leaders and other practitioners and enables an early years team to work together in a culture of learning and shared knowledge.

Working in early years settings is becoming increasingly complex and the roles demand high levels of knowledge and skills in practitioners and leaders. Aubrey (2018) uses the phrase ‘distributed leadership’, supporting the idea that early years provision is too demanding to be met exclusively by any one person. This suggests again that each member of the whole team, to a greater or lesser extent, has a crucial part to play. In this sense there may be a designated leader, but the culture of the setting is not one of ‘leader and followers’–rather, it is that of a team with everyone working comfortably in a climate of evaluation and reflection.

Developing a team culture is a key aspect of leadership. The nature and structure of the team will vary according to context and the work to be done, but those in the team should be working towards common goals. Crucial to this way of working are communication and the strategies used by team leaders and members. One common denominator in an early years setting is that a number of adults are involved. A home-based practitioner, for example, may not appear to be in a ‘team’ or be a ‘leader’ but may be working with other home-based practitioners, children’s centres and local support services. As an early years practitioner, you will need leadership skills for a host of purposes, including leading the curriculum, decision-making, working with parents and carers, developing policies, working with other professionals or agencies, dealing with conflict, and organising the environment.

Start of Activity

**Activity 1 Factors influencing leadership**

Allow about 1 hour

Start of Question

The objective of this activity is for you to think about your understanding of leadership and to reflect on factors that impact on effective leadership in your setting.

Read through the following questions and record your responses.

* How does ‘leadership’ operate in your setting, and how do you think it is different from ‘management’?
* Are there any factors that contribute towards effective leadership in your setting?
* What factors may hinder effective leadership in your setting?
* How does leadership in your setting enhance the quality of provision and improve outcomes for children’s care, learning and development?

End of Question

[View comment - Activity 1 Factors influencing leadership](" \l "Session1_Discussion1)

End of Activity

## 1.1 Leadership skills in practice

In the next activity you will listen to the audio sequence ‘Biographies’ and think about the professional qualities, attitudes and abilities linked to leadership.

Start of Activity

**Activity 2 Leadership skills in practice**

Allow about 1 hour

Start of Question

The objective of this activity is for you to identify the professional qualities, skills and abilities of a leader.

Listen to the audio sequence ‘Biographies’, where five practitioners – Beth, Catherine, Donna, Julie and Kirsty – talk about their personal and professional experiences.

Start of Media Content

Audio content is not available in this format.

Biographies

[View transcript - Biographies](" \l "Session1_Transcript1)

End of Media Content

Make notes on the personal and professional qualities, experiences, skills, knowledge and attitudes that demonstrate abilities of a leader. For example: they may have confidence, be able to communicate or reflect, take responsibility or make decisions; they may be flexible, ambitious or enthusiastic; they may be willing to learn, train and develop themselves.

Now reflect on your own personal and professional qualities, experiences, skills, knowledge and attitudes. Write a pen portrait of yourself, highlighting your key strengths, areas for development and any other factors that influence your ability as a leader of, or in, a team.

End of Question

[View comment - Activity 2 Leadership skills in practice](" \l "Session1_Discussion2)

End of Activity

In practice, leadership is usually a varied, fragmented process, enacted in a context of change and interwoven among day-to-day management tasks. Beyond doubt, leadership is only effective if it develops the leadership of those in the team. The role of the leader, therefore, is to consciously encourage others to lead themselves. The purpose of this is not to make the leader’s life easier, but to use everyone’s talents to best effect. Leaders play a significant role in enabling other practitioners to develop the necessary capabilities to enhance the quality of provision. Perhaps it is important that, as a practitioner, you aspire to adopt the aspects of early childhood leadership identified by Siraj-Blatchford and Hallett (2014):

* Directional - sharing a vision and setting a direction.
* Collaborative - promoting a team culture and shared decision making.
* Collaborative - promoting a team culture and shared decision making.
* Pedagogical - supporting practices that enhance children’s learning and development.

Start of Quote

Leadership must be visionary. Leaders must hold some idea of the future, the distant horizon and full game plan and they need the capacity to maintain personal and team momentum on the journey towards securing the desired goal. They must also show rich human qualities such as an allegiance to a mission, curiosity, daring, a sense of adventure and strong interpersonal skills, including fair and sensitive management of those who work with them. They must be able to motivate themselves and others, demonstrate a commitment to what they espouse, release the talents and energies of others, have strength of character, yet remain flexible in attitude and be willing to learn new techniques and new skills.

(McCall and Lawlor, 2000, cited in Jones and Pound, 2008, p. 1)

End of Quote

If you do not already have responsibility for aspects of the provision in your setting, as you become more competent, knowledgeable and experienced as a practitioner, you should find opportunities to exercise leadership skills in your work with children, families and the wider community. Effective provision requires leaders, and all practitioners, to continually reflect on children’s experiences in their setting and, in partnership with families and other professionals, to initiate change for improvement.

Start of Activity

**Activity 3 Identifying instances of leadership**

Allow about 1 hour

Start of Question

The objective of this activity is for you to identify opportunities to demonstrate leadership in day-to-day practice.

Watch the following video sequence, ‘Parents’ evening’, which was recorded at a Pathways nursery in Warwick. As you watch and listen, jot down possible instances of leadership that you identify in what is being said and discussed by Caroline and other staff featured. What examples of practice might be used as evidence of leadership?

End of Question

Start of Media Content

Video content is not available in this format.

Parents' evening

[View transcript - Parents' evening](" \l "Session1_Transcript2)

End of Media Content

[View comment - Activity 3 Identifying instances of leadership](" \l "Session1_Discussion3)

End of Activity

## 1.2 Evidence of practice

In Activity 3 you identified potential instances of leadership from your observations of Caroline and her colleagues. In the following activity you are asked to think about possible sources of evidence of practice and/or knowledge and understanding of practice, first in relation to Caroline’s practice and then in relation to your own practice.

Start of Activity

**Activity 4 What might constitute evidence of practice?**

Allow about 30 minutes

Start of Question

The objectives of this activity are for you to understand what constitutes evidence of practice and identify what a piece of evidence might ‘say’ about your practice.

Start of Table

Table 1 Instances of leadership and potential evidence

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Instances of leadership** | **Primary evidence** | **Secondary evidence** |
| *Provide your answer...* | *Provide your answer...* | *Provide your answer...* |
| *Provide your answer...* | *Provide your answer...* | *Provide your answer...* |
| *Provide your answer...* | *Provide your answer...* | *Provide your answer...* |
| *Provide your answer...* | *Provide your answer...* | *Provide your answer...* |

End of Table

In the table above, type into the left-hand column each of the instances of leadership you identified in Activity 3 from viewing the video sequence ‘Parents’ evening’. Now note in the relevant columns examples of primary and/or secondary evidence that Caroline, or the other practitioners in the sequence, might provide as evidence to demonstrate their practice and/or knowledge and understanding.

The example below lists a couple of instances of leadership that might be identified, together with possible sources of primary and secondary evidence.

Start of Table

Example of Table 1 entries

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Instances of leadership** | **Primary evidence** | **Secondary evidence** |
| Giving children responsibility | An observation noting what the practitioners said/did and how the children responded | Reflective journal entry discussing activity |
| Responding to parent over future changes to the parents’ evening | Agenda for evening showing ‘opportunities for questions’ Jotted notes from the meeting outlining parents’/carers’ suggestions | A witness testimony from staff member in attendance outlining how the request was handled |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

End of Table

End of Question

[View comment - Activity 4 What might constitute evidence of practice?](" \l "Session1_Discussion4)

End of Activity

## 2 Working in teams

Although early years settings operate in a variety of contexts, one thing they have in common is that a number of adults are involved. The complex and demanding nature of safeguarding and promoting young children’s welfare, learning and development means practitioners cannot work in isolation from colleagues and other professionals. Early childhood services involve people, relationships and feelings and interactions between adults, whether formal or informal, and have a crucial impact on the quality of the provision. Whether you work with other adults in your setting or outside it, how you relate and work with other practitioners is influenced by your attitudes towards other people and vice versa. Whalley (2019) makes the important point that leadership ‘viewed as the sum of the interaction between the leader, the team and their particular situation’, can have a major impact on quality. It is therefore important for you, as an early years practitioner, to understand what effective ‘teamwork’ might look like in practice and to consider how working with colleagues and other professionals is influenced by your underpinning values and beliefs.

Teamwork can be regarded as the building block of children’s services, but it is important to understand that building, leading and working in a team is a complex, ongoing process rather than a simple event. The commitment to working together in a multi-agency context stems from the belief that children’s needs cannot be boxed into health, social or educational compartments and should be viewed holistically. However, this presents a major challenge to traditional ways of working not only between those agencies but for individual practitioners in settings that, up until now, have viewed professionals beyond the setting as from ‘outside’ agencies rather than part of an extended team around the child.

In this section, the term ‘core team’ is used to encompass those close working colleagues who you work or have contact with on a regular or day-to-day basis. Most early years practitioners will have some contact with a variety of other practitioners, ranging from other childminders, support workers, and practitioners from other settings such as children’s centres. Many practitioners have successfully forged positive working relationships with colleagues via the Internet. Indeed, the use of the Internet takes developing working relationships with others into a new dimension. There are a large number of websites that enable you to contact others, share information and keep up to date with childcare issues.

The term ‘wider’ team includes those professionals who may be less closely involved with your day-to-day practice – for example, health visitors, speech and language therapists or educational psychologists – but who it may be necessary to collaborate with, as and when appropriate, to enhance your provision or meet children’s individual needs.

## 2.1 Engaging with colleagues and other professionals

As you considered earlier, how you engage with parents and carers depends, to a large degree, on your underpinning views and beliefs. Similarly, how you engage with colleagues and other professionals is influenced by your underpinning views and beliefs. In this next activity, you will be asked to think about how you develop working relationships with others in your core and extended team.

Start of Activity

**Activity 5 Thinking about how you engage with colleagues and other professionals**

Allow about 45 minutes

Start of Question

The objective of this activity is for you to reflect on relationships with colleagues and other professionals.

Think about the other adults you interact with in your role as an early years practitioner. Draw a chart or diagram to show:

* the core team – those colleagues you work or communicate with on a daily or regular basis
* the wider team – those professionals from agencies and services you may come into contact with in a multi-agency context, but not necessarily on a daily basis
* your position in the team.

Now work through the following tasks, noting your responses:

* How would you describe your working relationships with the adults you have included in your chart or diagram? Note two examples of how you share information and skills with those in your core team.
* Note two examples of how you share information and skills with other professionals in the wider context.
* Think about how you initiate and sustain contact with other adults in a manner likely to promote trust and confidence in the relationship and the setting.
* Think of a situation where there may have been conflict in your core or wider team. What caused the conflict to occur? How was the situation resolved?

Now listen to the opening segment of the following audio sequence ‘Roles and provision’ and listen to Berni, a childminder, talking about her work. Berni is the first practitioner you hear in the sequence; you will not need to listen to the others for the purposes of this activity.

Start of Media Content

Audio content is not available in this format.

Roles and provision

[View transcript - Roles and provision](" \l "Session2_Transcript1)

End of Media Content

* What does Berni think are the benefits of working with others?
* Can you suggest two ways of developing or improving your working relationships with other professionals? This might include colleagues within or beyond your own setting.

End of Question

[View comment - Activity 5 Thinking about how you engage with colleagues and other professionals](" \l "Session2_Discussion1)

End of Activity

Cooperation, in turn, will depend on the shared understandings in the team, and it will be influenced by the extent to which colleagues communicate assertively with each other. This is illustrated in the quotation below from Whalley (2019). While some people still enter the field with the assumption that the focus of the job is on autonomous work with children, the reality of these settings is that the increasingly multi-faceted work of the early childhood practitioner requires effective interaction with other adults as members of a multi-disciplinary team. When practitioners talk about the staff at their setting, the word ‘team’ is often used.

Start of Quote

'With leadership…the ability to build and maintain effective relationships is pivotal… the relationships early childhood professionals build with the children, their families, the immediate and wider staff teams and with professionals from other disciplines. The (early childhood) leader seeks to act with others rather than assert power over others’

(Whalley, 2019, p. 406)

End of Quote

Your practice is dependent on your own views as an individual. It may be that these views change as you become more experienced or as a result of your professional development. A key aspect of teamwork is the extent to which all those involved in the team have shared views, values and beliefs. If you and the other members of your team are able to articulate your views, values and beliefs then you are more likely to develop shared understandings and to be an effective team.

## 2.2 Values and beliefs in the context of teamwork

Being able to raise issues and put forward your ideas to others is an important skill for all practitioners (Aubrey, 2018). In the next activity you will be encouraged to articulate your values and beliefs in the context of teamwork.

Start of Activity

**Activity 6 Values and beliefs underpinning teamwork (I)**

Allow about 30 minutes

Start of Question

The objective of this activity is for you to review and evaluate your own practice in relation to working with colleagues in a core team in order to make your underpinning values and beliefs explicit.

Think about and make notes on the following.

* What do you understand by the word ‘team’?
* Do you experience any difficulties when working as part of a team?
* Do you have a ‘common purpose’, an articulated ‘vision’, a written ‘mission statement’ or aims and objectives in your setting? What are they? Are they written down? How did they come about? Were you involved? What do they mean to you?
* What understandings, values, attitudes and beliefs relating to how children learn and develop, written or unwritten, do you share with those you work with?

End of Question

End of Activity

It is widely accepted that the idea of ‘a common goal’ is core to understanding the notion of a team. But what is a ‘common goal’ and what does it look like in your practice? Bradford (2021) suggests that,

Start of Quote

In early years childcare, a team is a group of people who work together to meet the aims of their establishment or setting. Because most early years workers are required to work alongside colleagues in a team, effective professionals working in the field of early years therefore need to be skilled in, and to understand the nature of, collaborative practice – the ability to work with others from different professions and perspectives. Early years work is people- based, highly dependent on interpersonal relationships and shared value.

(p. 51)

End of Quote

Bradford goes on to suggest that the following concepts are associated with teams:

* motivated towards common goals;
* provided with the support and encouragement necessary to achieve these goals;
* able to communicate effectively.

It is commonly understood that teamwork involves individual interests being subordinated in favour of the group interests. This means that in order to create team spirit the needs of the team take priority over the needs of individuals in the team. It has been suggested that teamwork is underpinned by a number of core values. In the next activity you are asked to consider a set of core values underpinning teamwork.

Start of Activity

**Activity 7 Values and beliefs underpinning teamwork (II)**

Allow about 1 hour

Start of Question

The objective of this activity is for you to examine your own practice in relation to working with a core team in order to make your views, values and beliefs explicit.

Think about your own views, values and beliefs in relation to working with other people using the idea of ‘ethos’. The positive ethos may be intangible in that you can sense it when you walk into a home or group setting but you cannot see it. This is because it is the ethos of your provision that reflects the shared philosophy of the team.

All practitioners need to develop a set of core values to help them engage honestly with the everyday experiences of those they work with or come into contact with.

Read the list below of core values identified by Stacey (2009, p.32) and then complete the tasks that follow, making notes.

Start of Box

**Core values underpinning teamwork**

* Trust
* Empathy
* Active participation
* Working together
* Open to opportunities
* Shared responsibility

End of Box

* Write a short ‘self analysis’ to illustrate which of the core values you believe in or disagree with and explain why.
* Provide one example from your practice that reflects the influence of each of these core values.
* Talk to a colleague and note down which of your core values are shared.
* Consider whether there are any other core values to add to the list in relation to working with others.

End of Question

[View comment - Activity 7 Values and beliefs underpinning teamwork (II)](" \l "Session2_Discussion2)

End of Activity

## 2.3 Communication and comparisons

The framework in the next activity provides a useful tool for examining practice in relation to working with colleagues in your core team and professionals in the wider multi-agency context and allows you to make comparisons between settings.

Start of Activity

**Activity 8 Using a framework to think about communication with colleagues and other professionals**

Allow about 40 minutes

Start of Question

The objective of this activity is for you to use a variety of tools to help you examine your practice.

Consider the questions below and then read the two case studies underneath.

* What are your key reasons for communicating with different audiences? What are your key messages?
* Are your reasons for communicating helping you lead change or lead learning in your setting?
* How do you ensure your key messages are communicated clearly and consistently?
* How does the way you are communicating help you to build trusting and respectful relationships with different audiences?

(taken from Ministry of Education New Zealand, 2023)

Start of Case Study

**Case study 1 Isabel**

Isabel, aged 3 years, is described as having autistic tendencies. Susan from the local County Support Services visits Isabel in her day nursery setting every month. She observes Isabel for at least 30 minutes, makes notes and helps Jackie, the key person, to review Isabel’s progress. They work positively together to plan agreed targets to support Isabel’s inclusion, learning and development. Susan and Jackie have a meeting for at least an hour, to discuss Jackie’s observations and use these as a basis for agreeing and setting the new targets. Isabel is making steady progress and achieving her targets. If Isabel’s parents cannot attend the meeting, Susan writes a report for them and makes suggestions as to how Isabel could be supported at home. Jackie discusses the new targets with her colleagues and asks for their views, so they can all work together to help Isabel achieve her potential. When Susan leaves she reminds Jackie that she is available by telephone if any additional advice is needed.

End of Case Study

Start of Case Study

**Case study 2 Corey**

Corey, aged 4 years, has significant speech and language delay and some hearing impairment. The speech therapist, Lin, visits him every Monday afternoon. On the first visit she spoke to Lisa, the setting manager, and showed her information about various levels of hearing loss. Lisa placed the paperwork in her file. She carried out her own observations but did not look at Lisa’s observations. On subsequent visits she worked with Corey for 30 minutes each week, on a one-to-one basis in the quiet room and then leaves without discussion with staff. She sends in a report to Lisa by email with some suggested strategies to develop Corey’s expressive language. Lisa files the report.

End of Case Study

Now note down your answers to the following questions.

* How does the practice of each case link to the questions posed at the start of this activity?
* Explain how those in the case studies collaborate together? What does this tell you about the importance they place on sharing information and skills?
* Why do you think they believe the sharing of information and skills to be important?

End of Question

[View comment - Activity 8 Using a framework to think about communication with colleagues and other ...](" \l "Session2_Discussion3)

End of Activity

## 2.4 Developing a team culture

Having core values and beliefs and translating them into practice is not always as straightforward as it sounds. Working as a successful core team can be difficult to achieve. The variable nature of settings and the range of people involved means that there is no single route to successful teamwork. Certain constraints may prevent the practice reflecting the values and views of the practitioners.

You may be part of a team whose members have different experiences, and there may have been little time to develop shared understandings. Team members may only share the fact that they work with young children. You may be so busy with the day-to-day business of caring for the children in your setting, that there is no time set aside to make contacts with other professionals or to have informal discussions. As a result, you may only have ‘snatched time’ to develop relationships with your colleagues. Just as we noted when thinking about working with parents and carers, time is a key factor, and there are many competing demands for your time.

However, developing a team culture within a comfortable climate of asking questions, checking understandings, reflection and evaluation is of paramount importance in improving professional practice. In her chapter effective Early Childhood Leadership, Aubrey (2018) suggests the skills of teamwork should be viewed in a leadership context rather than a case of just muddling through on a day-to-day basis. She proposes that the process of working in a collaborative sense demands leadership within rather than of teams.

If a core team is working effectively towards shared goals the team will more readily relate and interact with professionals in the wider or external team. The drive towards partnership working has gradually been replaced by the more flexible notion of ‘integrated’ working and services encompassed in the term ‘multi-agency working’. Despite variations, most policy makers agree that children will benefit from closer working between practitioners and agencies. We now move on to explore the implications of multi-agency working at the level of individual practitioners and settings.

## 3 Revisiting leadership

You were introduced to leadership as being the concern of everyone, irrespective of the role they hold in their setting. This means that it is inevitable that your practice will show evidence of leadership in some form or another. How has change(s) to your practice offered opportunities to demonstrate leadership? Think about what the particular qualities, skills and abilities of a leader actually are.

Listed below is a summarised version of personal qualities, skills and abilities (Education Scotland, 2022) that may characterise an effective leader:

* empowering staff
* having a shared vision
* developing and maintaining relationships at all levels
* being creative and innovative
* effective communication and consultation
* positive role modelling
* engaging in self-evaluation

Start of Activity

**Activity 9 Healthy eating**

Start of Question

By now you will be familiar with the idea that all aspects of your practice can offer the opportunity to demonstrate leadership. As you watch the video sequence ‘Healthy eating’ below, reflect on how the practitioners in the clip demonstrate leadership skills when supporting the children to cut up the fruit, encouraging them to do things for themselves or extending understanding when talking with the children. These same skills – to support, encourage and extend understanding – apply when leading practice and supporting other practitioners.

End of Question

Start of Media Content

Video content is not available in this format.

Healthy eating

[View transcript - Healthy eating](" \l "Session3_Transcript1)

End of Media Content

End of Activity

Start of Figure



Figure 1 ‘… the purpose of snack time is to teach the children healthy eating, how to prepare a snack, about sharing and taking turns … cutting things up, spreading butter or cheese, … it gives the children the confidence that they can do things for themselves. They can prepare their own snack and then share it with their friends, but everything has to be healthy … sometimes it’s somebody’s birthday and that’s a treat, so we treat it as a treat and that’s when you have … foods like cake, just every once in a while’ (Catherine, practitioner, Pathways, Warwick)

End of Figure

In the following activity you will need to consider any opportunities you have had to develop leadership and to identify characteristics of leadership.

Start of Activity

**Activity 10 Identifying leadership skills and qualities**

Allow about 1 hour

Start of Question

The objective of this activity is for you to be able to recognise characteristics of leadership in evidence of practice.

Look at the qualities of a leader as outlined by Education Scotland (2022) above.

* Which of these qualities, skills or abilities can you see in the items of evidence you have selected for this activity?
* In what ways are they evident?
* What other leadership qualities can you recognise in your evidence?
* How could you develop your practice to show greater evidence of leadership?

End of Question

[View comment - Activity 10 Identifying leadership skills and qualities](" \l "Session3_Discussion1)

End of Activity

## Conclusion

In this free course, Early years team work and leadership, you have explored aspects of leadership and teamwork within an early years context. You have read about leadership and teamwork qualities and engaged with activities which provide a range of perspectives from early years professionals in a range of settings. You have been given the opportunity to reflect on your own leadership skills and how you might use these skills in your workplace whether you hold a leadership position or not. It is hoped that this course will support your personal and professional development in leadership and teamwork.

This OpenLearn course provides a sample of level 1 study in [Education](http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/find/education).

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## Solutions

## Activity 1 Factors influencing leadership

#### Comment

You are likely to have thought about the difference between ‘leadership’ and ‘management’ before, but perhaps not in relation to your setting.

Sarah, a nursery assistant in a private day nursery, wrote:

Start of Quote

In my setting the leader is our nursery manager and she is the ‘boss’. She takes on a lot of responsibility for the day-to-day running of the setting such as planning and setting up activities. Then she tells us what is happening that day. I think this is more management than leadership. It doesn’t feel very effective as we are not often asked as a team to contribute and sometimes we are not told what is going on, such as when we are having a visitor. It is always the nursery manager who shows parents around and I think other members of staff should be allowed to take on more responsibility if they are willing. One thing that is good, though, is that she encourages us to go on courses, and this helps to improve outcomes for children in our key person groups.

End of Quote

[Back to - Activity 1 Factors influencing leadership](" \l "Session1_Activity1)

## Activity 2 Leadership skills in practice

#### Comment

Below is an extract from Sarah’s journal notes.

Start of Quote

I think I have some leadership skills and qualities because I get on well with people, especially parents. My communication skills are good and I do accept other people’s viewpoints. I think I am patient and a good listener. However, I am not very good at telling people what to do, as I don’t like conflict or confrontation. I like being given responsibility and making decisions about things, but sometimes I find it hard to put my ideas forward in case they are criticised. Sometimes I bury my head in the sand rather than try to solve a problem. I am beginning to help others in the team who have just started working with us, and this has made me more confident. I am a trustworthy person and honest, plus I don’t mind working hard, which is important as I think it is good to lead by example. I want to learn more and be able to make changes in my setting.

End of Quote

[Back to - Activity 2 Leadership skills in practice](" \l "Session1_Activity2)

## Activity 3 Identifying instances of leadership

#### Comment

You may have noted the knowledge that Caroline displayed about the early years policy. Maybe you picked up the changes suggested for a future parents’ evening. You can show evidence of leadership without having a designated leadership role. Therefore, you may have identified an instance where leadership qualities were being displayed, such as in the sequence shown to the parents of the children playing, where they were being given some responsibility by the practitioner. You may also have thought about what went into planning and leading such an evening for parents and carers. What evidence might there be of working with other professionals, for example?

[Back to - Activity 3 Identifying instances of leadership](" \l "Session1_Activity3)

## Activity 4 What might constitute evidence of practice?

#### Comment

You could probably identify both primary and secondary evidence against each instance of leadership, although you may have identified only primary, or only secondary evidence. You may have realised, however, that unless you think about the need to gather evidence of your practice, some primary evidence could easily be overlooked or destroyed before you are ready to use it. The jotted notes from the parents’ meeting, for instance, are normally recycled after the action points have been addressed. Thinking ahead and gathering potential evidence in a folder is one way to ensure that it is not lost. Equally, you may need to think ahead to ensure that evidence of your practice is recorded. For instance, if you had brought the parents’ suggestions to a staff meeting to discuss plans for the next parents’ evening, you may have needed to ask the minute taker to take care to record your input in the minutes of the meeting.

You should aim for primary evidence sources wherever possible, but sometimes this can be difficult. You may have identified a number of instances where it is not easy to provide evidence that has come directly from practice – for example, where Caroline is talking to the parents as they are walking round the setting. Asking a colleague, to write a statement that outlines what you did is acceptable secondary evidence in this case. Clearly you need to be careful to ensure confidentiality when dealing with all evidence sources.

[Back to - Activity 4 What might constitute evidence of practice?](" \l "Session1_Activity4)

## Activity 5 Thinking about how you engage with colleagues and other professionals

#### Comment

While few would contest the value of teamwork, it is important to explore how perceptions of teamwork are reflected in the actual experience of belonging to a team and to be honest; some teams do find it difficult to work together. In this activity you identified the members of your core and wider teams and you thought about your working relationships. The nature of those relationships will largely depend on the extent to which you work cooperatively together.

[Back to - Activity 5 Thinking about how you engage with colleagues and other professionals](" \l "Session2_Activity1)

## Activity 7 Values and beliefs underpinning teamwork (II)

#### Comment

Many core values can be observed, or be seen to be lacking, in the way individual team members are empowered to communicate with each other, for example in a team meeting. Teamwork and effective team leadership leads to high quality engagement between team members. This results in increased trust and positive relationships as well as the setting of shared goals (Bradford, 2021).

[Back to - Activity 7 Values and beliefs underpinning teamwork (II)](" \l "Session2_Activity3)

## Activity 8 Using a framework to think about communication with colleagues and other professionals

#### Comment

In the first case study, there is a sense of effective teamwork. The practice links to several of the questions in the list. For example, the relationship between Susan, Jackie and the core team is one that is helping to build trusting and respectful relationships involving collaboration and empowerment. Communication between Susan and Jackie shows different reasons for communicating and this is mirrored in Jackie’s engagement with her colleagues. In the second case study, the communication fits in with the idea of trying to ensure key messages are communicated clearly and consistently. Lin makes no effort to share her expertise or views with the staff in the setting. Likewise, Lisa does not communicate the strategies for supporting Corey to her colleagues. These studies illustrate the importance of communication between practitioners in order to enhance the quality of support the children receive.

[Back to - Activity 8 Using a framework to think about communication with colleagues and other professionals](" \l "Session2_Activity4)

## Activity 10 Identifying leadership skills and qualities

#### Comment

Among the leadership qualities you have identified, you may have noted the ability to support, encourage and extend your own and others’ practice and to show an understanding of the theory informing practice. These qualities may be evident in your role or in how you set out an activity, for example.

Effective leadership is also a key element in implementing changes to practice. Having considered what leadership ‘looks like’ in practice, you should now be able to indicate how change(s) to practice offer opportunities to demonstrate leadership.

[Back to - Activity 10 Identifying leadership skills and qualities](" \l "Session3_Activity2)

# Biographies

## Transcript

Beth Casey

I am Beth Casey, and I am a director of a company, and also I’m company SENCO, child protection officer and health and safety officer.

I’ve been at Pathways for seven years, and before I started at Pathways I’d had my children, who are now 16 and 17, and I had no formal training at all to do with childcare. There was no provision for a mother and toddler group or anything in my area so I went and I opened one up, started it, didn’t need any qualifications back then, and then I took myself off to college and did an NNEB, 9.30 until 2.30 every day and took the boys to school. So I whizzed off to college, did that, and then I’m currently doing my foundation degree, and I’m absolutely loving it. It’s made me reflect on my own practice a lot, and sort of rather than just doing what I do, it’s made me think about the reasons why I do what I do, which I think it’s made me a stronger practitioner, and it has also made me feel more comfortable to be able to, you know, train the girls.

I’m in charge of training for all the girls across all five nurseries, and it’s interesting to see the amount of people that want to actually get to the Level 3 where they’re required to go and then you’ve got some that have no desire to actually move on, but also you have the ones that really want to further their career and they’re sort of saying what can I go on next, and is there funding available, so I think training’s a huge part and I would like to go on and, you know, progress once I’ve done that. I’m not entirely sure in which field yet but, you know, definitely. I’m always learning, every day I learn something new and, you know, you accept all these challenges that are thrown against you. But I’m a bit of a bookworm as well so I’m constantly reading articles and I’m hoping that, you know, I will progress.

Catherine Warner

My name’s Catherine Warner and I work at Pathways. I started out many years ago as a childminder when I lived in Canada, and when I came in, over to England, nine years ago, I started volunteering in a playgroup, and it got me more interested in children and decided to do my NVQ 3. And since then I’ve moved on, I’m now doing my foundation degree at WarwickUniversity.

The foundation degree has been hard work. But it has helped me progress in my professional development as well as my personal development. I’ve taken the degree back to the setting. My professional role has helped me with the foundation degree as well. It’s made me more confident in my practice and my personal life.

All around it’s been good. It’s just, it’s not easy, I’m not going to say, because I’m doing it part time, but I’ve managed it.

I’d like to do my honours degree after my foundation degree, and I haven’t decided if I want to do my professional status or my teaching yet. I’m taking one year at a time and decide when I’m finished.

My husband is British; I met him over in Canada, he was living in Canada, and we got married and had our children over there, and he just wanted to come home to his parents and I came along with him. At first, it was a struggle. But I think once I threw myself into the school and the children, because I do love children, I settled in really well. But it has given me the confidence, I keep saying, if I was in Canada I don’t know if I would be doing my foundation degree. I think coming over here has even given me the confidence in myself that you get away from your family and you’re not one of them any more, you’re on your own, nobody asked me to do the foundation degree, I wanted to do it myself. I did the NVQ 3 a few years back and decided that I wanted to educate myself more.

My role at the nursery, there’s five different nurseries, and at first the owner came up to me and said she knew me from my foundation degree and knew I had the confidence to be able to go around to the different settings, and she needed somebody to cover because when you’ve got five nurseries that’s five times the amount of staff that are off ill or have personal issues, appointments, training. So I sort of float around to the different nurseries.

Donna Quail

I’m Donna, Donna Quail, and I’m a child development officer here at Madras. I’ve worked here both job share and full time. I’ve been full time for the last six months and job share previously before that.

I’ve always loved my job, since gaining my SNNEB, and working from I think about eighteen, I did take a bit of a career break to have my own children, and it was then when I was working as a registered childminder that I decided I did have a bit more free time on my hands and I wanted to get the old grey cells working again.

So I thought about doing an OU course, which is a big, big step when you’ve not done it for such a long time. So I started doing an openings course, really enjoyed the openings course, and then went in to do the E123, by which time I was back working job share at a nursery, in Madras. So I’ve been able to do a job share and do the studying, it was just, it was great and I really, really enjoyed it. I’ve really benefited from it. And I’ve carried that through now to do, I’ve completed the E124, E115 and I’m now on to U212.

So it’s five years! I can’t believe it’s been five years that I’ve been studying with the OU, and now I just think I would be at a loss if I wasn’t studying through it, you kind of, it’s just, it becomes part of your routine. It’s difficult but you do, you do get there, and I think it just benefits me every day, every day.

Because you’re doing all the theory work at home then you’re coming into the nursery environment. You’re working everyday with all your colleagues, the children, all the parents and all the other agencies and people that we deal with day to day. The theory has a real impact on what you’re doing on a day to day basis. I used to come into work and, yeah, I always think I did a pretty good job but now I really know why I’m doing it. I know what difference, what I’m doing with the children, what a huge difference it makes to them, even the little things make a big, big difference, and it just makes the learning experiences that the children have more enriched. And I feel as though I’m much more confident in being able to support their learning and my confidence I think gives them more confidence as well.

Julie Chandler

I’m Julie Chandler, and I’m a local childminder in the area. I work under the name of Clockwork Childcare.

In my early twenties, I was fortunate to work on the stock markets in Canary Wharf, which was fantastic for a few years, and then moved back to the Midlands and started a family, and then we had the transition from professional to professional childcare worker, which was interesting, an interesting journey. I had some hitches along the way but actually ultimately it’s worked for me, it’s worked for our family, and I’m really glad I did it. It’s been good fun.

I had a lot of support from our local council, our local children service at the time who provide many free courses, short courses, sort of six week courses to go on to prepare you for what it entails and to make the whole process legal. So that was really helpful. It was quite a smooth transition.

We did various courses from health and safety, first aid, food hygiene, safeguarding children. I mean the list is really endless. You can go on sort of training and retraining yourself throughout your career as a child carer I think.

We were quite lucky locally in that the childminders are really supportive of each other, and although we don’t have an official childminding coordinator, we do chat to each other on a regular basis, and we have a group once a week where we get together and talk about any concerns within the childminding system and each other’s vacancies, and we know if we get enquiries, we can direct them to people who have vacancies or have the most suitable setting for that child. Equally, we work very closely with local nurseries, and it’s important for continuity of care for the children. They don’t have to be in one setting to have continuity. As long as everybody’s working towards the same set of rules and for the same goal and then the children can have a nice smooth transition from one setting to another, whether it be on a semi permanent basis or a daily basis if they spend a couple of hours with a childminder a day or six hours in a nursery setting, if we all work together.

I have also been training as a classroom and teaching assistant during the time I’ve been childminding with a view to, possibly, as my children grow up and go to school, moving into a classroom environment. But I feel that everything I do in a childminding setting at the moment is helping me in working towards that end goal.

As a childminder you are responsible solely for everything; you are your own teacher, your own cook, your own caretaker, you are everything.

Kirsty Light

My name is Kirsty Light. I’m an early years development worker at the Lark Children Centre, but I’m also a SENCO and an ENCO. ENCO is Equality Named Coordinator, it’s in charge of equal opportunities and diversity within the centre.

The ENCO role is a role that I’ve developed, we’ve developed over the years. We have a family that came from Angola and mum didn’t speak a lot of English and her children were very young. And when she first came, we developed a relationship over the years where I would learn to speak Portuguese, not very well but I know how to speak a few words of Portuguese she would bring her culture within the centre and she would bring in food and recipes. And every time we have a festival and things like that, we, we provide lots of materials and activities for the children to be very diverse. We have dolls, we have puzzles, we have visits out, we go to festivals. We like to try and make the children more patient and tolerant of each other, be respectful of each other.

When I left school, I went to work in a nursery as a nursery assistant, and I became a single parent so all the time my daughter was growing up, I worked for Social Services. I was providing respite care for foster carers, looking after their children at the weekends to give them a break. Had varying needs of the children I was looking after, one little girl had meningitis which left her severely brain damaged, cerebral palsy, and many other health-related problems, and I looked after those to give the foster carers a break, really. And when my daughter grew up and was a bit more independent at school, I decided that I would go back into child care and then I started here.

Being here has given me a good link with the school. We have many good opportunities to train here. When many of us are in the process of studying for a degree in early years and I would like to take that further and actually have a teaching degree and actually move into primary schools at the end.

[Back to - Biographies](" \l "Session1_MediaContent1)

# Parents' evening

## Transcript

[CHATTER]

SAMANTHA SWEET

At Pathways, we talk to the parents at the door every day. We speak to them at lunchtime when they come to pick them up. Sometimes, we even phone them just to say, we're a little bit unsure about this, we're a little bit unsure about that, or he hasn't been himself today. Could you help us and discuss any problems or any concerns that he or she may have?

[CHATTER]

CAROLINE JONES

It was good to have the informal time to be able to chat with parents without the restrictions of having the children, as they would normally do on the drop off and collection time, and they really valued that to get to know the staff in that sort of environment, rather than in the day to day nursery environment.

[CHATTER]

We're going to take a pew or a seat. That's the luxury one. The first person who arrives should be on that chair.

MAN

If you're naughty, you sit in the corner.

CAROLINE JONES

No, we don't have naughty corners anymore.

[CHATTER]

Thank you. Yeah, but you have to pretend you've got a small you-know-what to sit on the chair. Right. Good evening and welcome, everybody. It's lovely to see so many people here. We try to share information with parents in a variety of ways, really, because we rely on you and your information and your knowledge that you give us, but we like to share information with you.

There are two frameworks that we think about. One is called the Every Child Matters Outcomes. Now, that's really important because that's a big government agenda for every child, as the title indicates, not just children in early years, but in primary, secondary, and right up to 19, actually, in further education.

The second thing that I'm going to just tell you a little bit about is the Early Years Foundation Stage. We've left some copies out for you to have a look at, and that is actually what you might have called, when you were at school, a curriculum, and this is it. It consists of various things. There are some cards with principles and themes.

One of the themes is positive relationships. Obviously, that's something we've always done, but it's nice to see that it reflects what we have done and it's good for us for training our staff.

Then there's some practice guidance here, which gives us some ideas of the things that we might do with the children, how we might observe them, and activities we might do for them. And then there's some legal requirements. It's a lot more complicated than it might first appear, what we do in the nursery.

OK, so going back to the Every Child Matters Outcomes, I'll tell you what they are and a bit of the ways in which we try to promote them in the setting so that you, obviously, I'm sure anyway, can support us at home with these things. So the first one is about staying safe, or helping children to keep safe as well.

We do that in a number of ways. We keep the doors locked, we keep the gates locked, we have a visitors book, we do risk assessments, we check our equipment, we encourage the children to get their safety jackets out if they're going down to the field or out for a walk.

They need to support what the children are experiencing in the nursery and extend it when the children are in their home and vice versa. It also avoids parents having any misunderstandings or unnecessary concerns about what their expectations are from the nursery. If the expectations are set out clearly to the parents, either on verbal day to day contact, or in an evening, or in the brochures, then there's less likely to be any friction.

And then the final one, which is--

The partnership's a lot stronger if they understand why we do things the way we do, and maybe not always in the way that they might have expected.

But what we do try to plan for is the six areas of learning and development. This is the bit where you have to listen now. You'll see them around the room, and they're on the posters. There's one here and one on the parents' notice board, which I'm sure you've seen many times, and there are six areas of learning development, and these are the ones that I want you to look out for on the video.

We're not saying that children learn in separate boxes. They're all interlinked. They all link together somehow, but it's a very useful way to think about children's development and to spot where a child might need some extra support or where a child might be ahead of their age-- they might be at a stage ahead-- so we can meet each individual child's needs.

So what are the six areas? Well I should ask my staff this, really. Any volunteers to tell us any of the areas?

WOMAN

Personal, social, and emotional.

CAROLINE JONES

Right. It's our circle time. It's about feelings, it's about sharing.

If we had a lot of parents, I might have used and a bit of technology and actually had a PowerPoint. One parent commented, interestingly, that it would have been good to involve the other staff more in giving the presentation, and so that's something that we would definitely consider so people could actually talk about their own individual roles and responsibilities and have a little input into the presentation itself.

And then creative, which I think is really important, to express themselves so they can use their senses, they can use play dough, they can explore colour with painting, in the sand again, the water. Some of these resources cross the areas, but particularly about creating things for themselves, not an adult saying, stick this on here, stick that on there, paint this, paint that, but actually allowing children, giving them the resources so they can do the collage or whatever it is they want to do and explore their taste and their feel and their touch and everything.

So here, it's really important for us that we give a real emphasis to creative, and we do try to do that. Although the six areas are equally weighted, we try to emphasise personal, social, language, and creative, particularly for the two- to three-year-olds, and then maybe emphasise the problem solving, reasoning, [INAUDIBLE], and the other areas. Now, we're going to look at a video, a few clips. I said to the girls, try and cover the six areas, and try and covers the Every Child Matters Outcomes. Just watch it and see if you can try to identify what's going on.

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

[CHILDREN PLAYING]

TEACHER

That looks like a yummy lolly. What are you making?

BOY

[INAUDIBLE]

TEACHER

Pardon? Oh, yummy.

[END VIDEO PLAYBACK]

CAROLINE JONES

I could see by their faces, quite a few were nodding imperceptibly, really, and that they were taking in what was being said and interested in finding out. Also surprised, I think, when they saw the video of their children in the nursery-- how much actually goes on. They made comments like, I never realised how much planning underpins everything that goes on in the nursery. When my child comes home, they don't say what they've done, and it's been great to have this view of what goes on in the nursery.

I see lots of PSE working together, cooperating.

MAN

Communication as well between each of them and to adults.

CAROLINE JONES

Lots of communication between adult and child, and child to child. I saw somebody trying to put a shoe on in the role play, so there's a bit of independence there, but also trying to explore on their own without an adult intervening. I wonder if I can get this on, so a bit of independence there. How many minutes was that we watched, about? Five? Possibly. I didn't actually time it. I haven't got a watch on, but about five.

And how many hours are the children here? Sometimes they're here three hours. Sometimes they're here seven hours. How are they going to tell you what they've done when they come home? They're not going to be able to, are they? But if a child is doing that much learning, if one child is going through those experiences in that five minutes, how much they're gaining actually from being in the group environment if it's well planned and structured with appropriate adults there? It's amazing.

And it is about partnership. We can't do it on our own. We've got a lot of experience, and good staff, and so on and so forth, but is also about partnership with parents, and talking to parents, and having the support of parents.

WOMAN

How do you check out your staff to protect our children?

CAROLINE JONES

We have got clear government guidelines that we follow, and they're minimum guidelines, so we go above and beyond that. So what would happen with us is, we would invite, somebody would apply for a post, or they might come and speak to us and say, I'd like to work in the nursery. Or we might advertise, not that we usually have to advertise, but if we do, we would then ask for a written letter of application and a CV. We'd speak to them on the telephone, and then we'd check up the two references.

[Back to - Parents' evening](" \l "Session1_MediaContent2)

# Roles and provision

## Transcript

Berni Roberts

My name’s Berni Roberts. I’m a mother of three. I’m also a childminder and I look after a mixture of various age groups, ranging from one up to ten, at different times of the day. I look after five other children at different times.

So I’ve got before and after school, and I’ve got some all day, during the day. And, you know, boys, girls, the whole mix, so it’s really nice. I’ve had another child of my own as well. So she’ll be coming up two in September. So it’s hard work but very rewarding when you see what they can learn. I think from the point of view of the Early Years Foundation Stage, there's certainly an awful lot of information and things that can help bring them on and educate them but there's also an awful lot of paperwork which I think sometimes hinders the process. And I find the pressure is on us to perform and get good reports and to do all the right things, I think the most important thing for the parents is that their child is loved, cared for, happy, you know, and in a secure environment where they can learn to a degree but ultimately that they’re just happy and safe.

I think the tendency is that, you know, once you’re at home, you’re at home, and you might go to a couple of stay and playgroups, that type of thing, but you don’t realise what's actually out there.

So I’m hoping to sort of work more on that side of things and get in touch with colleges and other professionals and see what we can do as a group. There's training, for instance, that nursery staff might be going on, that could benefit childminders as well, and there's a lot of courses that I tend to go on that are very focused on nursery staff, and they sort of just skim over childminders’ needs, and we’re expected as an individual to implement the same thing that a team of staff do at a nursery. It’s very very hard to make sure that you’re doing everything that you’re supposed to be doing. So if we can mix with other professionals, then it might be easier for individuals like myself to achieve that.

Alice Thornton

My name is Alice Thornton and I'm a specialist speech and language therapist who works based in the education team with early years training and support.

I work in the Lark Centre in a variety of ways. One of my roles is to support the Communication Coordinator, Abi, and to support and equip her and the other Communication Coordinator across the City.

I trained as a speech and language therapist twenty years ago, and worked as a clinician in a community clinic. Then I moved into working in community development. So I was supporting young families on an estate, and then also ran a marriage preparation and relationship skill and parenting, and then came into Sure Start work five years ago, and working in a preventative role with universal all children in Sure Start in Plymouth. And out of what I was doing and the training that I was running and the groups that we designed in Sure Start, that then formed a model for the work that we now do across the whole city. So it was very exciting and I'm delighted to be in this role.

Some of the shared messages that we want to get across and to everyone in the City, parents and workers, is that tuning into any baby or child at any age, the way you do that might change as they get older but it's very important to tune in, to support their language and also to be able to have a good relationship with them, which we know links between communication and attachment.

One of the other groups that we have set up here is Great Expectations which is working with antenatal parents and helping them to have understanding about some of the ways that you communicate, even with your bump, and to be prepared to be building up a relationship and, so I would like to develop my understanding further about the issues around that, the impact of infant mental health on communication.

The research in Plymouth shows that there are many children, significant numbers with delayed speech and language skills, and we can make a difference to that. And so the multi-agency work that we’re doing and the fact that I'm working with an education team with the early years advisory teachers, working with the communication coordinators, working with the early years practitioners, working with midwives and health visitors, what an opportunity.

Yvonne Crookshank

My name’s Yvonne Crookshank. I am Deputy Head of Centre, one of the Deputy Heads of Centre at Madras Family Centre, and I’ve worked for East Renfrewshire Council for about eight years now. But I have worked for other authorities before that.

The opportunity came up to act up here and I acted up and now I’ve got the job. It is a new role we’re still learning a lot of things because we have just become a family centre in recent months.

Myself and the other depute are here to support obviously the headteacher, support the staff, and we support families who maybe need a wee bit extra support. We go out on support visits. We do home visits as well.

As staff come to us and they want anything to do with maybe more development, we maybe give them the opportunity to go off the floor when they need that time.

Maybe they want to develop an area like music or a first aid course, we’ll try and find that and we will give them the opportunity to do that.

I suppose our role as well is we work with the children every day we’re a role model for the staff. We’re also at care review meetings and different things. We take a lot of the caring aspects for the children. We’ve got special children that, I don’t mean they’re special children but we’ve got children who we call social inclusion children that they maybe just need that wee bit extra, and it is more of the care side rather than education side and that's where we sort of come in as well.

I think that what I’ve realised in myself is I want to fix everything and now I realised I’m not going to fix everything overnight. But when I’m supporting some of these parents and maybe it’s just for them to tell me the problem that day or something that I feel as if I can’t fix everything but if they need me just to listen to them, or saying to them listen you’re doing really well because I’ve noticed you’re got four children and you’re in here and you must be really well organised and they start thinking well wait a minute I am quite organised, I’m getting in here for nine o’clock.

Hugh Graham

My name is Hugh Graham. I’m the Family Learning Coordinator with Adult and Family Learning Service in East Renfrewshire. That’s part of the Education Department and one of the establishments I work in is Madras Family Centre.

Family learning has been around a long time. It really came out of the integrated community schools movement in Scotland and that was very much looking at a holistic approach to working with the child and working with the whole family and the wider community. It was kind of joining up services and so the Family Learning Coordinator’s role is very much to be part of reaching from the establishment into the home.

I come from a community learning background. So I’m very much interested in the whole community approach and working directly with adults and how we can supports adults to support them with their children and it’s a very interesting role because it’s all about early intervention. We want to work with children and parents as early as we can. Because if we work, the evidence shows that if parents engage with their children at an early age then the benefits come out in the learning in later life.

We’ve drawn on this marvellous approach called Bookstart. A national initiative to get books into the hands of children and the Bookstart have a whole range of programmes for getting books from very early years. Rhymetime is part of their programme to engage with parents and children under three. Now the great thing about Rhymetime is that you can work with parents and you can work with children together and there’s so much learning to be undertaken by singing rhymes together, singing songs together, reading books together, being familiar with all these surroundings. And it’s great to be in the libraries because it is a knock-on effect that children and parents can join the library, borrow books and feel very much part of the wider community.

Some of the programmes that we run, we run things called play along maths which is a very great, an interesting programme, which is demystifying what maths is all about, but that’s a home based programme. Children take these kits home to work at home with them or they might have rhyme bags. We’ve got bilingual rhyme bags in East Renfrewshire, which is dual language books, so it’s encouraging a taste and an interest in another language. We’ve got story sacks, which are a similar kind of arrangement where there’s toys, there’s books, there’s soft puppets and so it’s a kind of adventure for parents and children to explore together.

Bryony Roberts

My name is Bryony Roberts. I'm a nursery nurse at Pathways.

I have key children in the nursery setting which I look after and have the role of taking care of. If there's situations, I assess them regularly to see where we can make them progress in their work, so they are my responsibility to ob… observe throughout each half term, and then at the end we evaluate where the children are, where they need their next step to go, their learning to go.

I was playing on the Play-Doh table, recently, and it was just free play, the children were playing and I was involving myself in each of their conversations and one of the children suddenly started, cut out, we had a shape, and they cut out the shape of a person, and he held it up, and they said it was a gingerbread man! And we started talking about the Gingerbread Man, the story and we started singing the song, run run as fast as you can you can’t catch me I'm the gingerbread man, and one of the children told me how it was eaten by the fox and how it jumped on its back and how it jumped on its head and how it jumped on its nose.

I think Play-Doh is a great time for them to let their imagination go, and again we can be there to extend it or support what they're playing with and what they're doing. That’s what I really like about being a nursery nurse, seeing that something we have done has gone into their learning and they’ve taken it in and they're playing with it with or without me, but we are there to support it.

I just think young children have got so much to offer, it’s their enjoyment of learning, their enjoyment in their eyes, the way they play, the way we can adapt our play, we can play with them.

But we’re supporting them playing and helping them learn and achieve.

My name’s Ed May. I'm Head Teacher of Newburgh Primary School in Warwick.

Newburgh Primary School is on the southwest side of Warwick. It’s a school which has grown significantly in the past four years, from about 132 children, uh, to 186 children currently.

One of the advantages of being a head teacher on, on this site is that we’re fortunate enough to work with three other partners. And so our most recent partner, the children’s centre, and Pathways have been onsite for some time, certainly before I was head teacher. So, we do, we operate lots of partnership work with Pathways. So, for example, apart from the facilities that we like to share, so we do things like they will come and share our computer suites, our hall our outside areas. We also make use of each other’s specialities, and so we may need advice about how to work with the very youngest children or, indeed, how to work with families that they’ve worked with and get to know the families.

One of the problems we face is with working with other agencies. So, for example, Health and Social Services, we use different languages, and we operate different working days, different holidays, and we have different protocols, and that’s going to be a real challenge to ensure that we all work together with children at the heart of what we do.

The biggest benefit we found recently is by looking at the example of our reception group coming in, in September. About, I would say about 25% of the families that are joining us in reception, we, we already know very well. We knew the children as bumps and also lots of the parents by their first name because they’ve been involved in children’s centre activities, Pathways’ activities later on and then the children join us. So the children joining us in reception, many of them are already very very familiar with the school and we don’t have those issues about being worried about what the school will be like, who the people are and so on. So lots of the very young children already know me and the staff very well indeed.

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# Healthy eating

## Transcript

STAFF

That's it. Good girl. Well done.

CHILD

That looks like potato.

STAFF

That is potato. You're right. Don't you want to try a bit more for me?

CHILD

[INAUDIBLE] Potato.

STAFF

If I could sit by you. Wonderful, thank you.

CHILD

[INAUDIBLE].

STAFF

I am sitting in between. You're next to Cerys. You are. Aren't you?

CHILD

[INAUDIBLE].

CAROLINE JONES

Really, for personal, social, and independence, I think the lunchtime, in particular, is good. And the staff can see the opportunities there to continue as they would in the daily routine, in terms of supporting the children's learning through the meal time.

STAFF

Well done. [INAUDIBLE].

STAFF

Shall I get you some kitchen roll?

STAFF

Is it cool enough now? Give it another blow.

STAFF

There you go, look. Good girl. Well done. Very good. There you go. Out of the way, love.

CHILD

I ate all my mashed potato.

STAFF

Good. What have you got?

CHILD

Pasta.

STAFF

What's in it?

CHILD

Yummy in my tummy.

CHILD

Tomato sauce. I like pasta.

STAFF

I know you like pasta. That's one of your favourites, isn't it?

CHILD

[INAUDIBLE].

CAROLINE JONES

The staff sit with the children when they're eating.

STAFF

This is dirty now, isn't it? It's on the floor. You eat the ones on your plate.

CAROLINE JONES

But also, they're away sometimes, and leave the children to eat on their own, and have their own discussion without the adult being there. It's fine having the staff that have the skills to be able to make that decision, as to when it's appropriate to go, and when it's appropriate to stay.

CHILD

These are biscuits. I mean cheese biscuits.

STAFF

Take one and cut it up yourself. Put it on your plate.

CATHERINE WARNER

The purpose of snack time is to teach the children healthy eating, how to prepare a snack, about sharing, and taking turns. Cutting things up, spreading butter or cheese, gives the children the confidence that they can do things for themselves. They can prepare their own snack, and then share it with their friends.

Also, everything has to be healthy. Sometimes, it's somebody's birthday and that's a treat. So we have the foods like cake, just every once in a while.

STAFF

Take one, then.

CATHERINE WARNER

The practitioner's role in snack time is just to be there to support the child, teaching them how to self-register. Of course, if they're using knives, that they're not sharp knives. So sometimes a practitioner has to be there to do the final cutting up. But it's mainly there just to support the child and encourage them to do it for themselves. And some children don't want to do it. And we just wouldn't force anybody, we would just encourage.

CAROLINE JONES

Eating together is part of the curriculum. And when we move into the Flexible Free Nursery Entitlement, we've suggested that becomes part of the day, in terms of the curriculum. It should be planned as an opportunity for children to experience and to learn and develop, but enjoy.

And thinking of it across the Every Child Matters outcomes, you've got the obvious things, like keeping children healthy. And then you've got things like exploring their senses with the taste. You've got opportunities, not to force them in really, but for counting, and things like that.

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