

Good Practice - Case Study...

Overview	
Case Study Title:	Improving services in Maple Cross
Summary:	Rickmansworth Children's Centre has worked closely with the Local Strategic Partnership, health colleagues, a local school and HomeStart, to develop much needed services in the area such as a weekly Positive Beginnings group for families, providing a family drop-in session during the baby clinic at the newly refurbished Maple Cross Club on Saturdays, and providing drop-in 'information and advice clinics'.
Project	
Target group/Key stage:	Families in Maple Cross. Groups are open to all, but the focus is on any vulnerable or marginalised families who may have been referred by their Health Visitor or other professionals or agencies.
Reason for offering activities:	To develop services in an area where provision for families with young children is much needed.
Description of activities:	<p>A weekly Positive Beginnings group for families which is a structured stay and play session where practitioners act as role models for the parents, offering guidance in, for example, interacting and playing with babies and young children. This is held at the local school which has provided a large indoor and outdoor area for the sessions.</p> <p>Children's Centre staff work alongside the baby clinic at the newly refurbished Maple Cross Club, and provide a drop-in family stay and play session called Families Unlimited. The Saturday morning session enables grandparents, dads, working mums and siblings to attend.</p> <p>There is also a monthly session for families to access an advice and information 'clinic' which runs alongside the Citizen's Advice Bureau at the Maple Cross Club.</p>
Management and Logistics:	Partners provide their own staffing and organise their own rotas. By working with the Children's Centre, issues associated with lone working are lessened. Children's Centre staff work on a rota at the Maple Cross Club and there is currently a volunteer and an early years student at the Positive Beginnings group.
Partnerships:	Partners include Health Visitors, Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), Three Rivers Local Strategic Partnership, Maple Cross School and Maple Cross Club. The intention is that once services become more established, other partner agencies such as the Community Voluntary Service (CVS) and

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	Jobcentre Plus will participate on a rotational basis in the future.
General benefits of activities:	By developing and providing increased opportunities for the community to access services the Children’s Centre has the capacity to reach and support more families in the Maple Cross area.
Timescale of project:	The projects are on-going, and will develop in response to identified need through consultation with parents and other agencies.
Cost:	The school does not charge a letting cost for the room used for the Positive Beginnings group, however the Children’s Centre commissions HomeStart for their input into sessions. The letting costs for the Maple Cross Club are paid for by the Local Strategic Partnership.
Key challenges and how these were overcome:	Challenges included lone working related issues, but these were overcome by agencies liaising to time table events to coincide with each other, thus eliminating the need to provide two staff from each organisation. The Children’s Centre’s reduction in funding means keeping costs low is a priority. Joint working provides opportunities to offer more services and the financial support for lettings, provided by the Local Strategic Partnership, facilitates increased sustainability.
3 tips for similar activities:	Identify gaps in services by building relationships with agencies and professionals already working in the community and investigate sources of possible external funding. Encourage members of the community to voice their views through parents’ forums and membership on the Advisory Board, thus promoting buy-in and ownership. Explore creative ways of working in partnership so as to avoid unnecessary costs for staffing, resources and premises.
Next Steps:	To develop the services available by working with other agencies, such as Jobcentre Plus and CVS.

Outcomes	
Impact of project:	Developing satellite provision in partnership with other agencies in an area with high levels of deprivation increases opportunities for families to access services within their own community. Provision tailored to identified need results in increased attendance and access to outreach services in an area where services are severely limited.

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	Creative use of venues and available resources ensures provision is suitable, high quality and provides best value for money.
Impact of project on young people's learning:	The Positive Beginnings group promotes the importance of play and provides parents with ideas to incorporate into family life and extend their child's learning opportunities at home. The range of provision provides children with opportunities to learn and play together, meet and form friendships with other families living in the area and feel less isolated.
Impact of project in terms of 'Every Child Matters outcomes':	By linking with other services and professionals, the centre is able to offer a greater range of services which provide improved health and well-being opportunities for young children and their families. Outreach work offered through the satellite centres ensures families receive swift and appropriate services and support.
Impact of project in terms of the Core Offer for schools:	N/A
Evidence of Impact:	Attendance records demonstrate a steady increase in service users. Anecdotal and formal evaluations indicate the benefits of services for individual families and children. Learning Journals monitor and record group and individuals' progress and development. Newly implemented tracking systems are following individual children's progress.
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