

Sure Start Gives 2-3year olds the Best Start

9 February 2017

Members of the Childcare Partnerships in Northern Ireland supported and administered by the Health and Social Care Board, hosted an event, *Development of Good Practice in the Sure Start Developmental Programme for 2-3 year olds* at the Seamus Heaney Home Place Centre in Bellaghy this month.



Photograph Caption:

Julie Thompson, Deputy Permanent Secretary Department of Education,
Mairead Abraham, Childcare Partnership Manager and Sure Start Lead Health &
Social Care Board, Claire Devlin Early Years Consultant, Fionnuala McAndrew,
Director of Social Services and Children of the Health & Social Care Board

The event was organised to highlight the journey of the successful Sure Start Programme which is currently available to 1,700 children in Northern Ireland through 145 Sure Start Developmental Programmes which are specifically designed for 2-3 year olds.

The Sure Start Programme is funded by the Department of Education which invests £25 million, through the Health and Social Care Board, for the delivery of Sure Start programmes. Provision is targeted within the most disadvantaged areas of Northern Ireland where educational underachievement is prevalent and currently the Sure Start

projects cover 25% of the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland and play a vital role in helping to improve the outcomes of children where it is most needed.



Photograph Caption:
Sure Start Development Programme for 2-3 year olds exhibition at the Seamus Heaney Home Place Centre

The Department of Education's Early Years Framework - Learning to Learn (2013) identifies the Sure Start Programme as one of its key early intervention initiatives and acknowledges the Programme's importance in creating positive pre-school experiences for the social, emotional and cognitive development of children aged under four.

This Sure Start Programme provides group-based support to children in their penultimate pre-school year and focuses on children's physical, social and emotional development, though age-appropriate play based learning and enjoyment. The Development Programme for 2-3 year olds has an emphasis on parental involvement with the crucial importance of supporting parents to maximise their children's development is recognised and incorporated within the programme. The children and parents who attend are also supported by an extensive range of other Sure Start services for example parenting support, and Speech & Language therapy. Multi-disciplinary input is a key factor in the success of the Programme.

Fionnuala McAndrew, Director of Social Care and Children, Health & Social Care Board, who spoke from the event said; "This exhibition provided an excellent opportunity to showcase the journey of the Sure Start Development Programme for 2-3 year olds. We must celebrate the Early Years practice and environments developed across Northern

Ireland. This early intervention approach in Sure Start addresses the holistic needs of the child and parents - to provide the best outcomes for children”.



Photograph Caption:

Fionnuala McAndrew, Director of Social Care and Children, Health and Social Care Board highlights the importance of parental involvement in improving outcomes for children at the conference

The event aimed to celebrate the journey by creating environments suitable for 2-3 year olds: places to be active, to relax, to use their imagination, to explore materials, to dine and socialise and places for family. This Sure Start Development Programme for 2-3 year olds can help identify and address emerging issues at this developmental stage and can significantly improve outcomes for children and families by providing early intervention.

Sure Start Managers, Committee Members and Childcare Partnership Members were joined by other professionals working with children in these formative years including Early Years Social Services Teams, Speech and Language Therapists and Early Years professionals to share and celebrate examples of excellent Early Years practice from Sure Start projects across Northern Ireland.



Photograph Caption:

Fionnuala McAndrew, Director of Social Care and Children, Health and Social Care Board, Mairead Abraham, Childcare Partnership Sure Start Lead HSCB, Julie Thompson, Deputy Permanent Secretary Department of Education, Roisin McCooey, Childcare Partnership Sure Start Lead HSCB, Linda Drysdale, Head of Early Years - Intervention Programmes Team



Photograph Caption:

Waterside Sure Start exhibiting at the Child Care Partnership conference

Contact Us: For further information about the Child Care Partnerships please visit our website at <http://www.childcarepartnerships-ni.org/>