



Sure Start Children's Centres

Communications
Toolkit



department for
children, schools and families

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How effective communications can help your Sure Start Children's Centre

Your Sure Start Children's Centre should aim to become the first local port of call for all families with young children under five in your local area. Whether local parents are seeking advice or support on their child's health, development or care, or need help with the day-to-day challenges of bringing up children in the crucial early years, they should be aware of how your centre can help them access the information and support they need.

The aim is to ensure that no child or parent living locally misses out on this help and support. A clear marketing and communications strategy will help you reach out to your entire local community. Promoting your services well and using different approaches to contact all parents – fathers, mothers and teenage parents – will make it easier for more parents to walk through the door, get involved and maintain an interest in your centre.

Whether your Sure Start Children's Centre has just opened and wanting to gain local publicity, or you are looking for new ways to publicise your services and tailor your communications to reflect local needs, this toolkit offers a range of ideas to get you started.

Many of the ideas do not involve a lot of extra time and money but you should focus your energies on those activities which will be most effective in raising your profile.

We hope that you will use this toolkit as an on-going reference tool.

We have also included a number of case studies that highlight various marketing approaches from a selection of Sure Start Children's Centres.

An electronic version of this toolkit is also available via the Sure Start website (www.surestart.gov.uk/resources). We would welcome your feedback about this toolkit, as well as any success stories that you have. Please contact us through the Sure Start website.

We wish you every success in your ongoing communication activities.

Department for Children, Schools and Families

The right message and branding

Key messages

Before you start any communications activity, it is important that you think about your target audience, what you want to say to them and how this fits with your centre's priorities.

It helps to have some key messages as a starting point. Depending on which communication tool you use, your key messages need to be the top three to five points that you need to get across to your audience. Clear messages will give your communications focus and consistency. They need to be no more than one sentence (the shorter the better) and you will need to keep them simple to avoid overloading your audience with too much unnecessary detail. These can be used every time you communicate with your local community, from dealing with the media to preparing a leaflet or newsletter for parents, residents and the wider community.

Below are some sample key messages that you may want to use.

Suggested key messages:

- Sure Start Children's Centres are places that offer access to a range of support for families with children aged under five.
- Sure Start Children's Centres offer accessible services for all parents with more support targeted at those who need it most.

- Services available include early learning and childcare, parenting advice, health services and help for parents to find work or training.
- Services that Sure Start Children's Centres offer give children the best start in life and help them to reach their potential – and parents benefit too.
- We want to know what you think about your local centre and how you'd like us to develop our services to meet your needs.

Other key messages/benefits that you may want to include:

- Good quality early learning and childcare gives your child the best start in life – academic research backs this up.
- Early learning and childcare is now more affordable – every three and four year old is entitled to 12.5 hours of free early learning a week, which will rise to 15 hours by 2010.

Sure Start branding

Branding is also another essential element to your visual communication activities. Consistent branding will add authority to your message and mean instant recognition of your centre amongst your target audience.

Your branding is the Sure Start logo and associated Sure Start imagery. Further branding may also include your own centre's or local authority's logo or branding. Further guidance on using the Sure Start brand is available at www.surestart.gov.uk

Targeting parents and working with community partners

Getting local parents interested

When communicating with local parents it is important to give a clear message that Sure Start Children's Centres are open to all families with young children and you value and welcome their views on your services. Whilst the local community will have been consulted during the planning phase, many parents in your local area may not yet be aware of your centre, its work and services.

To encourage local parents – mothers, fathers, carers and teenage parents – to use your centre, they need to know it exists and how it is relevant to them. They need clear information on what activities you can provide for their children and the specific help and support available to them as parents.

By having more parents involved in your centre, you can then find out how they would like the centre's services developed to best meet their needs. That way parents can have genuine and continued input into the design and improvement of your services.

It is particularly vital that your centre reaches the most vulnerable and disadvantaged families at greatest risk of social exclusion including workless households, lone parents, disabled children and parents, black and minority ethnic groups, teenage parents, asylum seekers and refugees.

There are many different ways you can communicate with local parents and this section provides you with some ideas. Remember that health visitors, midwives and outreach workers can also play an important role in this.

TARGETING PARENTS



**TOP
TIP**

✓ **When you are communicating with the public don't fall into the trap of presuming everyone knows about the centre, the services it provides and who has access to them**

Different audiences need different messages

Tailor your communications to each specific audience, thinking about the best way to communicate with different groups of parents within the community. It's important to understand and analyse the local situation, consulting widely with your community and to treat children and families as individuals rather than making assumptions based on their membership of certain groups. Consider what will appeal to individuals and how you can inform them and keep them up to date.

Demystify your services

Being clear when you communicate with any audience will help to demystify the services your centre offers. Be careful not to use jargon and acronyms and always make sure you use plain English.

Specifically, be clear about:

- The location of your centre. Is it a single site, operating from more than one building, providing outreach? What is available at each location?
- The fact that your children's centre can be used by and will meet the needs of both children and their parents.
- What age range of children you cater for. What services do you offer?
- The centre's opening hours.
- How much your services cost. This is a complex area, try to make it easier for people to understand.
- Where parents can go for more information.

Provide examples of how other families have successfully used your centre and its services. This will allow new parents to see how they too could access and benefit from the centre.

Word of mouth – the best marketing tool

Word of mouth is free and it's a very effective way of raising awareness of your centre, what it offers and how the community can get involved. Spread information about your centre's services, news and events through parents and key community representatives: MPs, councillors, schools, Jobcentre Plus staff and health professionals.

Some centres have funding for community outreach workers, who keep the local community up to date about their centres' services.

Word of mouth

How to make friends and influence people

Community outreach in the Cookridge area of Leeds was virtually unheard of. Three years ago, an outreach worker joined the staff team at Ireland Wood Children's Centre and she has made it her business to get to know everyone from parents and carers to professionals.

As a result of this networking and information gathering she's helped set up many of the centre's services, which are specifically tailored to meet the needs of families. They include parent and toddler groups, a single parent group, services for excluded families, a group assisting parents in their children's learning and a group that works with families experiencing difficulty managing home life.

Centre manager Linda Parkin says: "It's amazing how many families our outreach work has brought into the centre."

"This is because our outreach worker has got to know families as well as professionals across a range of agencies. She has spread the word about the centre, our work and the services we can now offer. She's also listened to the needs of families and with a range of partner agencies including health, social care, housing and schools, we have created and designed services that help meet and complement these needs."

Marketing ideas

You can use these ideas to market your centre and services throughout the year:

- Posters in well-used community venues such as schools, local shops, doctor's surgeries, libraries, places of worship and other community venues.
- Sending information out with people who make home visits, such as health visitors and midwives.
- Leaflets, flyers, postcards in community venues or through door drops.
- An outdoor banner placed on your external fence for passers-by to see.
- News and features in the local press, TV interviews and radio broadcasts.
- Advertisements in the local press (you will usually need to pay for these but you maybe able to negotiate a discount or free placement).
- Article/advert/competition in your Local Authority's newsletter.
- School bulletins.
- A notice board or a display area promoting your services.

Using marketing tools

CASE STUDY

Hertsmere Leisure has successfully engaged with its local community about two new children's centres.

Hertsmere Leisure manages two yet-to-be opened children centres – Potters Bar Children's Centre and Borehamwood and Elstree Children's Centre. The Borehamwood and Elstree Children's Centre will serve about 1,600 families.

Getting the local community interested and involved from the start has been a key concern for Hertsmere Leisure, but its innovative marketing ideas have been a hit with local parents and community partners.

Ideas include using children as 'roving TV reporters' as part of its DVD, an interactive calendar that highlights milestones in the centre's development and key event reminders.

Other marketing activities include:

- Distributing an information leaflet explaining 'what is a children's centre';
- A quarterly newsletter for families featuring information about the new services, events and news;
- Launching a children's centre website;
- Attending various community family days;

- A photo diary;
- Posters and other displays in local community venues; and
- An online and printed service directory.

There has also been a lot of interest in the local press and a media event is planned for the opening of the Potters Bar Children's Centre, featuring a well known local celebrity, family Easter Egg Hunt and first public performance of a specially commissioned song for the children's centre entitled 'a great place to be'.

"Both centres are exciting projects for the area, so we thought it was important to get the communities engaged from the start," explains Children's Centre Director Liz Applin.

"Initially we consulted on the services the centres should provide so we could ensure they'd meet the right needs. Local people even voted and chose the centres' names."

Most of the marketing material was distributed and promoted via Hertsmere Leisure's community partners including health visitors, midwives, childminders, pre-schools, places of worship, libraries and community voluntary services.

Using marketing tools

CASE STUDY

“One of the hardest to reach groups is dads,” says Julie Grinstead, manager of St John’s Little Learners Nursery, Huntingdon Children’s Centre.

“A few years ago I saw a magazine article on a centre that was running a very successful dad’s group. So we decided to try the same, opening the centre up to dads and kids aged up to five on a Saturday morning,” she explains.

“We had three or four dads coming regularly, but wanted to attract more. So we tried advertising in the local press, leaflets, posters and flyers and it just didn’t work on our target group. Even though the service is free, it’s been really difficult to get dads through the doors.”

Julie decided to take a different approach and together with an amateur filmmaker created ‘Men Behaving DaDley’. It’s a short DVD featuring three dads who talk openly about the positive aspects of the weekly group. It’s simple and direct and has prompted more dads to join. But Julie says the most effective way the centre has reached out to dads has been through word of mouth and gentle persuasion.

“The sell that seems to work is that dads get their own personal bonding time with their children, get to meet other dads and through organised sessions learn how to cook simple meals and help their children learn through play,” says Julie.

Health visitor assistants are supporting the project, by handing out leaflets and DVDs to the partners of expectant mums and fathers of young children during home and postnatal visits.

Now 15 dads are regularly attending the group, some every other Saturday, "It's been slow," admits Julie. "But we're making progress."

Posters and leaflets

Ask staff, parents and community providers to help distribute your posters and leaflets, that way you won't incur any costs. Posters and leaflets are best placed in well-used community venues such as schools, libraries, doctors' surgeries, shops, places of worship and other public venues. If you have the resources you can also target people through door-to-door leaflet/flyer drops.

We have developed a number of poster templates that you can adapt for your use, which are available to download from the Sure Start website.

PRODUCING POSTERS AND LEAFLETS



TOP TIPS

- ✓ Don't go over board with the amount of text you use – remember less is best as it is easier to read – and remember your key messages.
- ✓ Don't forget to use a visual element such as a photo or an illustration such as a cartoon, which illustrates what you are trying to communicate.
- ✓ You can commission your own pictures or use a photo library, such as www.istockphotos.com, where you will be able purchase generic photos.
- ✓ If you are taking your own photos or supervising a photographer, make sure that you get the permission of parents (please refer to the media section/photography for more guidance).
- ✓ Use a simple design that can easily be photocopied using your photocopier. This is cheaper than printing.
- ✓ A local printer may sponsor your printing if you mention the service in your poster/leaflet.

Open days and events

Holding open days and events are good ways to attract new parents and keep current parents involved and informed. You can showcase what you do, demonstrate the broad range of services and activities available and answer questions.

The most effective events come as a result of close collaboration with other partners, such as community groups and Family Information Services, who can help you identify and provide ways to reach new parents and excluded groups of parents. Always keep in mind the aim of your event and plan and publicise it accordingly.

Event ideas

Give your event a particular focus to draw people in. You could:

- Arrange a visit from a local celebrity, your MP or another high profile community figure;
- Invite local radio who are often keen to get involved in community events;
- Hold a themed event around outdoor learning and play, a Mother's or Father's day celebration, or a local event to mark one of your centre's latest achievements e.g. refurbished outdoor play area or a new play group or community partnership; and
- Host an open day and invite parents and children to take part in the centre's activities. For example, hold a Teddy Bears' picnic or party, or a BBQ sponsored by the local butcher/supermarket.

Getting parents to attend an event

It is important to get parents who are already using your services to attend and support events to ensure they remain involved and to maintain the centre's community feel. However, all your events should also focus on promoting services to prospective new parents, those who are unaware of the centre's services and people who find it difficult to access services.

You can publicise your services and events using the marketing ideas listed on page 10.

The power of events

CASE STUDY

At Stanlaw Abbey Children's Centre, staff are always looking at different ways to get more parents through the door, hosting a range of events and activities that attract people from all walks of life. Every year it organises a number of events including a summer barbecue, sports day, fun day, Christmas celebration event and tie-in activities with a wide range of national childcare initiatives. They are advertised through posters, leaflet drops, leaflet inserts in the free local paper and word of mouth.

"Our events are open to everyone in the community," says centre manager Ann Clay. "They are fun and help us to spread the word about the services we offer. We're growing all the time and now have 1,200 people coming to the centre every month," she adds.

Keeping parents involved and interested

You can keep parents and the wider community involved and interested in your centre, by including them at every stage of your centre's development.

We've highlighted the value of word of mouth in helping to raise awareness of your centre. Word of mouth is even more powerful when people hear from parents who are already using your children's centre. So it's a good idea to recruit parent champions to talk about the centre at events and meetings. In addition, they can also appear in press and broadcast interviews and discuss the difference your centre is making to their lives. Use their stories to appeal to your target audience. You can also use parent champion feedback to shape and improve services. Also, ask if any of your parents would like to join a forum or become volunteers.

Producing a personalised, eye-catching monthly newsletter can be an effective way of keeping parents informed of current activities and success stories. You should think about distributing it locally and display copies clearly in the foyer or reception area of your centre.

USING TECHNOLOGY TO KEEP IN TOUCH



TOP TIPS

- ✓ Technology can be a useful and quick way to get information out to local families.
- ✓ You could create your own Sure Start Children's Centre website to update parents and stakeholders on the centre, its activities, news, success stories, campaigns and fundraising initiatives. Make it interactive by inviting feedback via an email response facility. Plus you can include all the essential basic information on the website for potential new parents, such as information about the centre, your staff, opening hours and a map.
- ✓ When writing for your website, remember to keep your language simple and brief. Also ensure that someone is in charge of monitoring and updating the information regularly, as out-of-date information can be off putting to users.
- ✓ Send out a monthly or quarterly e-bulletin to parents about forthcoming activities and actively seek their involvement.
- ✓ Mobile phone texting is also another effective way of reminding people of your services.

Working with community partners

It is good to regularly communicate with local parents but who else may be interested in your activities?

Your centre will already be working in partnership with Jobcentre Plus, the NHS, local parenting groups, local Family Information Service and staff in other childcare settings. They will all be helping to promote your centre's services to parents and the wider local community.

You should also think about other individuals and organisations locally that may be well placed to help you increase local knowledge of your Sure Start Children's Centre and its work.

Some potential community partners could include:

- Local businesses
- Local parenting groups
- Health centres (e.g. gyms)
- MPs and councillors
- Celebrities
- Sporting organisations
- Religious organisations
- Schools
- Local police and emergency services e.g. fire brigade and ambulance services
- Local authority, especially their early years staff.

The key to success is approaching organisations with great ideas, but before you do, make sure you know plenty about

the organisation, or person. Think about how they could potentially help your centre and try to see the benefit from their point of view – what would they like to gain from the relationship?

You could ask your community partners to help with the following:

- Ask healthcare professionals, such as GPs, social workers, health visitors and midwives to circulate leaflets and talk to parents about your centre.
- Display posters, newsletters, brochures and leaflets in health centres to help get your messages across and let people know about forthcoming and regular activities.
- Approach local supermarkets, faith groups and Jobcentre Plus offices with notices for display boards and ask about setting up a mobile display.
- Keep your local Family Information Service up-to-date with an e-bulletin, newsletter or brochure.
- Present your high profile supporters such as celebrities, MPs and councillors with ideas and opportunities for media coverage.
- Talk to partners about sponsorship opportunities that can be mutually beneficial.
- Suggest a drop-in session at partner venues as an 'added value' service to their clients.

Working with the media

Local media coverage can have a significant impact on what people think about your Sure Start Children's Centre. A positive relationship with your local media can help you to access parts of the community that you might otherwise not reach. Local media will include local and regional newspapers, radio and TV stations.

Local authority press office

Your local authority press office regularly communicates with local media.

Contact your local authority press office and ask them what they are doing to promote Sure Start Children's Centres in your area. You may also be able to offer them specific expert spokespeople and parents, as well as suggesting your centre as a venue for a relevant media visit/event.

How to work with journalists

Understanding what journalists are looking for

Start by talking to your local authority press office about your ideas for the media and seek their advice about the local media landscape, which journalists are good to approach and what stories they are usually interested in.

If you don't have any specific contacts, you can still contact your local newspaper, TV and radio station and ask for the news editor. Briefly explain who you are and your purpose in calling and ask whom you should speak to. This will usually be an education reporter or a general assignment reporter who covers any type of story in your centre's area. Begin by

introducing yourself and give them brief details about why you are calling and ask what they look for in a story. It may be helpful to have some initial story ideas for them. For example, your centre could be offering a new service or have launched a campaign to attract more dads.

It's important to maintain good relationships so try to offer your contacts regular stories, or at least keep in touch to see if they have anything planned which could involve early years/ family support in your area. Aim to have one key contact for each local media outlet.

A 'friendly' journalist will not ignore a negative story – a good relationship works both ways – but they're more likely to be supportive of your point of view if they know you to be open and honest with them.

Creating a story

What makes a story newsworthy?

News is defined as information or reports about recent events. When contacting the media make sure your story ticks at least two of these boxes:

- The word 'news' means exactly that – things that are new – is what you are saying new, a first for the area or innovative?
- The number of people affected by the story is important – does, or will it, involve or affect a lot of people?

- Famous people get more coverage because of their profile. If your story involves someone with a local high profile or a celebrity it will attract more attention – is there anyone you can approach?
- Human interest stories appeal to people’s emotions and don’t date as quickly. Do you have families with a unique and interesting story to tell, for example about how their children are learning and developing at your centre? Do you have parents on board who are training or have found work through your centre? Do your staff have interesting things to say? Do you have an example of where a child or parent or staff member has had to overcome a particular barrier to achieve their goal, which your centre has helped them to achieve?

There are confidentiality issues when using ‘real’ people, so please refer to ‘legal issues and consent’ later in this section.

You can also tie your story in with other news hooks, for example, with major national events or announcements about children’s centres, Mother’s or Father’s Day, school holidays, Christmas and Easter etc. You can provide the journalist with a local angle story.

Press releases

A press release will attract journalists’ attention to your story. Local journalists will be interested in individual or group achievement, community impact and innovation from your Sure Start Children’s Centre.

Writing a press release

A press release should:

- Contain news; make sure it is something new, not just rehashed old information.
- Give journalists enough basic detail to write a short news story without needing to contact you.
- Include enough information to answer every journalist's key questions, including the who, what, why, where, when and the how.
- Be clear and concise, so the journalist can grasp the details when they read it for the first time.
- Contain all your centre's key messages (see Section Two).

Press release layout

You can put together a press release by following the steps below. You should always write in plain English, and without jargon and acronyms.

- Title – press release (and add the date).
- Headline – sum up the story in up to seven words.
- First paragraph – sum up the most newsworthy aspect of your story.
- Second and third paragraphs – expand on this to explain the story in more detail and answer who, what, where, when, why and explain how.

- Quotes – the next paragraphs should contain a quote from a relevant spokesperson. Always state the name and title of the person being quoted. Always include at least one quote from someone senior at the centre. Make the quote emotive but keep it realistic. It may also be appropriate to include a quote from your local authority’s Head of Early Years.
- Write the word ‘ends’ at the end of the story to show the journalist this is where the ‘for publication’ part ends.
- Notes to editors – add any background details such as statistics, web links and contact numbers for further information. Include your contact details here or at the top of the release.

What to send with your press release

If you have photos to go with your story then send them, or mention in the press release that you can arrange a photo opportunity for press photographers.

Once it’s ready to go, ask your contacts how they would like to receive news items. Some will only accept emails as text without attachments, so paste the release into the body of the email. In emails put the press release’s headline in the ‘subject’ box.

Template press release

Date

Daytime and out-of-hours contact details

Headline

First paragraph (one sentence only)

Choose the most interesting aspect of your story.

Second and third paragraphs

Explain the story in more detail and answer who, what, where, when, why and explain how.

Quote

Attribute the quote and then provide a couple of lines to summarise the story.

Ends.

Notes to editors

Include background information, state that pictures are available on request if that's the case and give details of attachments.

Example Press Release No 1

Nursery Children Start Work on Children's Centre

Published October 29, 2007

Youngsters from a County Durham school will don hard hats and roll up their sleeves to get work under way on a £952,600 Sure Start Children's Centre this week. (Wednesday, October 31)

Nursery children from Benfieldside Primary School will join their head teacher, Durham County Councillors and school governors in cutting the first turf of the development in their school grounds on Wednesday, October 31.

Developed by Sure Start County Durham, which is run by the County Council, the new centre is expected to open in the spring of 2008 when it will provide a range of services including high quality childcare, health, social care, adult training opportunities, welfare rights sessions, employment advice and social activities.

Local County Councillor John Davies said: "This is an exciting first step which will eventually give us a centre that will provide wonderful opportunities for both young children and their families and become an important part of community life."

Councillor Claire Vasey, Cabinet member for Children and Young People's Services, said: "By providing access to quality integrated care and early years' education, Sure Start helps ensure that children's potential is unlocked at the earliest opportunity."

"Families in Benfieldside will be able to access a range of services from flexible and affordable childcare to education and employment as well as health and well being advice, ensuring the best start in life."

Families with children aged under five will be able to access services covering six key areas:

- Family support and parental outreach providing access to specialist services, support and information.
- Early years' education with day care for babies and children until they reach school age.
- Child and family health services including ante-natal and post-natal support and help to stop smoking.
- Support for parents of children with special needs and specialist services for youngsters with disabilities.
- Links with Jobcentre Plus to support parents considering training and employment.
- A base for childminders and a community hub for parents and childcare providers.

Families wanting to know more about the centre should contact Julie Bailey, information officer for children's centres in Derwentside on 01207 XXXXX or visit SureStart County Durham.

(Ends)

Note to News Editors:

1. You are invited to send a reporter and/or photographer to the turf cutting with a JCB by head teacher David Kerry and children from Benfieldside Primary at 10.00am on October 31.
2. Sure Start brings together Government policy and services on childcare, early years and family support to give all children the best start in life. It supports all young families – from pregnant mothers to those with children aged up to 5. A network of 43 Sure Start Children's Centres, providing key services – early education, childcare, health, family support and help into employment – is being established in the most disadvantaged areas of the County.
3. Sure Start County Durham is based at County Hall, Durham. It delivers the SureStart agenda for Durham County Council and includes the Childcare Information Service as part of its work. For further information contact Julie Bailey, information officer for children's centres in Derwentside on 01207 XXXXXX.

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Example press release No 2

TV Presenter Opens NCH Children's Centre in Nottingham

Release date: 11th July 2006

Children's TV presenter, Dave Benson Phillips, opened the new NCH Children's Centre in Nottingham on Saturday (8 July).

The BBC and Disney Channel presenter told stories and sang to a group of local children before signing autographs and enjoying some of the fun activities on offer such as a football shootout, teddy bear's picnic and disco. There was also a balloon release to mark the occasion.

Dave said: "This Centre gives such great support for local families. They lend a hand with everything – from day care to helping parents get training or a job. Thanks to everyone who's made this a brilliant day – I just hope they enjoyed my reading of the Hungry Caterpillar!"

Karen Lunt, programme director of the NCH Children's Centre, said: "It's been fantastic to have Dave here to open the new Centre. The children have absolutely loved it. We hope it inspires lots of local families to come and visit us – there's no need for an appointment, they can just turn up and find out what we're doing."

The Centre will offer a vital service to support local families with early learning; day care provision; child and family health services, including antenatal services; support for children and parents with special needs; and other services that support families. The Centre will also have links with Jobcentre Plus to support parents who wish to consider training or employment.

The Centre is open Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm, for all families with children under five in the area. For more information contact Ian Lunn on 0115 XXXXX or visit the Centre at Minver Crescent.

Ends

Notes to editors

- Dave Benson Phillips is a children's TV presenter on Playdays on the CBeebies Channel, the Playhouse on Disney Channel and Planet Cook on CBBC
- The Centre is based at Minver Crescent with a satellite base at Amesbury Circus
- NCH is one of the UK's leading children's charities, working in partnership to run nearly 500 services for more than 160,000 of the UK's most vulnerable children, young people and their families
- For further information visit www.nch.org.uk
- Interviews available on request from the media team on 020 XXX XXXX

Working with broadcast media (TV and radio)

When dealing with TV and radio (ie broadcast media) remember that 'airtime' is short so it's important to keep your story snappy. Think about the whole package – does your story lend itself to being filmed or recorded? Who could you offer for interview and what would they say? Is there plenty of human interest in the story?

You are more likely to attract broadcast media if you can explain to them how your story could look or sound on TV or radio. If it's for local TV think pictures and filming opportunities that demonstrate the story you are trying to tell.

Think about what you want your spokesperson to say and how they will say it. Don't try to say too much – keep it short and to the point. At the most, choose three points that you want to communicate and aim to get these points across to the listener or viewer in your answers.

Don't forget get to 'enlist' positive parents from your centre who can champion your services and give a parent's perspective.

If you or your team are appearing on TV, you should look smart, businesslike and comfortable. Just stay calm, be positive and know your facts.

For radio, you don't always have to go into the studio, as you can participate by phoning in. The radio programme will give you more details.

Media ideas

By now you'll know what makes a story and when you have one, how to package it up for your media contacts. Below are some ideas that you may want to pitch to the media as possible 'media hooks':

- If you want to give your story a profile boost you can invite local celebrities and high profile figures to attend a special event or an open day but research their interests to confirm what's likely to appeal to them first, or they might not be interested.
- Promoting key milestones is always a good idea, such as your centre's first, or tenth birthday with a special open day or community activity that involves families and stakeholders. If you've just signed up your 50th family – would a case study profile make an interesting read?
- Get parents and children involved in publicity by organising a drawing competition to create a new piece of artwork for your centre or fundraising event to buy new learning equipment.
- Hire a bus and take your services out into the community or use a mobile display in shopping and community centres to show parents what Sure Start Children's Centres can offer them and how they can get involved.

Media Case Study

Here's an example of how staff at Willow Children's Centre have made the media work for them.

How to get the media on board

CASE STUDY

Opening your doors to a national newspaper might sound like a daunting prospect – but that's exactly what Willow Children's Centre in Islington did – and it's had a significant impact on its own profile and on that of children's centres nationally.

"We had a full page article in a supplement of The Guardian," says Centre Head Paul Church. "It was fantastic and had a knock on effect with the local media who covered the story and again highlighted the work we do here," he explains.

"We've had media coverage of big events before such as our summer fair, but since the article in The Guardian we've seen a big increase in media coverage. The papers get in touch with us quite often now which never really happened before."

"It all happened in a roundabout way," says Paul. He was approached by a reporter working on the education supplement of The Guardian who was looking for a story. It just happened this reporter had seen coverage of an MP and DCSF visit to the centre and thought he'd find out more.

The local authority press office liaised with the journalist and Paul to arrange a visit. As the centre has 10 male members of staff and a dedicated dads' group the article would be timed to coincide with national Take Your Dad to Nursery Day. A reporter and photographer visited the centre to look around the facilities, interview and take pictures of Paul, a male member of staff and some of the dads with the children. A press officer from the authority organised and supervised the visit together with Paul to ensure it ran smoothly.

The feature headlined 'Men at work' focussed on the centre's male workers, its dads' group and how the centre is targeting this traditionally hard to reach group of parents.

Since then, and as a result of the publicity it created, the centre has attracted another 20 dads to its dads' group and it's been inundated with calls from other centres all over the country that want to know more about its services and how it attracts media interest. The centre's rising profile has instilled pride in parents and boosted staff morale.

"When the centre is in the press I make sure I photocopy it and send it to parents and staff," adds Paul. "They think it's great."

Photography

Every time you have a story or are holding an event, think about pictures. The most successful photos are ones that illustrate the story that you are trying to get across.

If you are taking your own pictures for a paper or for a newsletter, always try and include people. It brings them to life and there's more chance a paper will use them.

If you are presenting a photo opportunity to a paper, radio or TV station, again include people in the mix to ensure interest.

Whether you are taking your own pictures or arranging for the local media to take pictures there are legal issues that you'll need to consider. See page 37 for details.

Technical Information

- Local media prefer digital images rather than prints, but check in advance with your journalist contact before you send your picture.
- If you are taking the pictures yourself on a digital camera, set it to the highest resolution setting.
- Save your pictures as jpeg (filename.jpeg) or tif files (filename.tif). These are the two main types of images used by newspapers and magazines.

TAKING PHOTOS YOURSELF



TOP TIPS

- ✓ **Look through the pictures in your local newspaper for inspiration.**
- ✓ **Simple line-ups of children and staff make for uninspiring photos or TV footage.**
- ✓ **Local newspapers do not favour pictures of big groups. They want their readers to see everyone in the image clearly, so big group pictures stand less chance of being published than a smaller group shot.**
- ✓ **Zoom in as much as you can on the subject matter and have as little background as possible.**

Legal issues and consent

Parents should be given advance notice and asked to sign a consent form allowing their children to be photographed during a media photo call or special visit. This also applies to photographs that are supplied to media separately.

Consent forms for children and vulnerable adults must be signed by their parent/carer.

Unless otherwise agreed, if a person consents to have their photo taken the image(s) taken can only be used for publicising the event/publication/broadcast/ programme for

which they are taken for and not for anything else and nor should they appear elsewhere.

We've included a template consent form that you may want to adapt for your own use. You may want to seek legal advice to confirm that the document is legally binding for your specific situation.

Consent Form

The [INSERT SURE START CHILDREN'S CENTRE NAME HERE] produces a range of published materials and web enabled information. To ensure that the [INSERT NAME] Centre's material is engaging, motivating and inspiring we illustrate with supporting words, text, and images (moving and still) which we collect from individuals. Using personal data, enhances, motivates and inspires audiences to read and engage with our materials.

The [INSERT NAME] Centre needs to collect consent prior to publishing personal data to ensure the rights of the individual are acknowledged, to maintain an audit trail and control the use of personal data. This minimises any risk to individuals and reassures individuals of the appropriate controls when consent has been given. The [INSERT NAME] Centre holds all personal data and consent in a secure environment and controls access and use of personal data for 5 years only, after which all personal data (including photos) are securely destroyed. Consent should be given:

- For children below 12 years of age.
- Here an individual is considered to be part of a vulnerable group as described in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 c47. Full details of the Act can be found www.opsi.gov.uk. This is regardless of their age.

For young people between the ages of 12–16, personal consent is all that is required. However additional consent from parental/guardian whilst not essential is recommended.

All persons over 16 can sign for themselves.

Each individual (and parent/guardian where applicable) should be given a copy of this signed before any personal data is collected.

Individuals, their representatives or host organisations may wish to keep a copy of this form.

Legal clauses

Signing of this form gives agreement for the individual named to take part in the collection of personal data for [INSERT NAME] Centre thereby giving consent to the full use of the material by the [INSERT NAME] Centre. This may be in any of its media applications; which reasonably promote or advertise the aims of the [INSERT NAME] Centre. This will include the use by [INSERT NAME] Centre approved organisations and commercial educational magazines. The personal data will not be used for any other means. I agree to notify the [INSERT NAME] Centre before speaking to the press/broadcast media concerning collection of my personal data. The copyright of any material which is generated as a result of this shall be assigned to the [INSERT NAME] Centre. This agreement is covered by the law of England and Wales.

Supplier Details _____

Company Name _____

Today's Date _____

Supplier Representative Names _____

Consent Form

Personal Data Consent

Tick (as appropriate) **Please print where possible.**

- I am the parent/guardian of this child aged 0-12 years.
 - I am the parent/guardian of a vulnerable person covered by the terms of the Act Protecting Children and Vulnerable Groups.
 - I would like a pseudonym to be allocated by the [INSERT NAME] Centre instead of the "real" name when text is published about me or my child.
-

FOR OFFICIAL USE

Personal details

Individual's name _____

Address of individual _____

Name of parent/guardian _____

Address of parent/guardian (if different from above) _____

Signed (parent/guardian or individual)

Date

And finally...

Building a positive profile of the work that your Sure Start Children's Centre is doing increases service uptake and creates a wider opportunity for your work to be celebrated and recognised. It also improves your local reputation and that of children's centres nationally.

You should always make sure that the following points are covered in your marketing and communications activities:

1. Know your key messages and make them part of everything you do.
2. Build and maintain positive relationships with parents, community partners and local media contacts.
3. Always remember that all your communications activities have an impact on the reputation of your children's centre.
4. Proactively engage parents, partners, the community and the media with your initiatives.
5. Keep parents, partners and the media regularly updated with developments, initiatives and your success stories.
6. Monitor what impact your marketing activities are having and keep reviewing what works or not, as well as updating your ideas and approaches. This will help you to continue to reach new parents respond to local changes and maintain a profile within your community.

Where you can find more information and help

Electronic copies of this toolkit, templates and examples are available on the Sure Start website www.surestart.gov.uk/resources

Contacts

Keep contact details handy, as you build up your relationships with people who can help you to promote your centre.

CONTACT DIRECTORY



**TOP
TIP**

- ✓ **Include email addresses, daytime and out-of-hours phone numbers**
- ✓ **Make a note in your directory about the type of activity that relevant people and organisations can help you with.**

Key Contact Directory

Contacts	Details
Parents	
Volunteers	
Local Authority	

Contacts	Details
Local press	
Radio	
TV	

Contacts	Details
Community groups	
Local education groups	
Local business supporters	

Contacts	Details
Local health organisations and staff	
Family Information Service	
Local celebrity supporters	

Contacts	Details
Local MPs and councillors	
Leisure centre contacts	
Jobcentre Plus office	

Willow

Children's
Centre



Willow Children's Centre is a state-of-the-art, purpose-built day centre for children run by Islington Council. The centre provides nursery and pre-school care and education for up to 70 children aged from six months to five years old.

The centre is based off the Holloway Road and close to Tufnell Park. Children attend Willow on both a full-time and part-time basis with flexible hours between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday.

Get in touch now to find out more or to arrange a visit at one of our open days.
Call 020 7527 1990/11 for more information.



ISLINGTON

Willow Children's Centre

Holbrooke Court
Tufnell Park Road
London N7 0PG

Telephone:
020 7527 1990/11

Email:
willow.ayci@islington.gov.uk

Willow Children's Centre



Get in touch

Willow Children's Centre
1A Holbrooks Court
London
N7 0BF

Telephone 020 7537 1996/1
Email willow@ycislington.gov.uk

Opening hours:
8am to 6pm Monday - Friday

Get in touch now to find out more or to
arrange a visit at one of our open days.
Call 020 7537 1996/1
for more information.



ISLINGTON

About Willow Children's Centre

Willow Children's Centre is a state-of-the-art, purpose-built day centre for children run by Ilkington Council. The centre provides nursery and pre-school care and education for up to 70 children aged from six months to five years old.

The centre is based off the Holloway Road and close to Telford Park. Children attend Willow on both a full-time and part-time basis with flexible hours between 8am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

Joining Willow

We have room for up to 70 children at any time. This includes:

- 12 babies (6 months to 2 years)
- 24 toddlers (2 to 3 years)
- 34 nursery children (3 to 5 years)

Places are open to children living in Ilkington and other London boroughs. Fee-paying, reduced-rate and free places are available depending on your family circumstances. Contact us for more information. We also offer a holiday scheme for children from 6 months to 7 years.

Why come to Willow?

As a local-authority run children's centre, you have the reassurance of knowing that all our staff are professionally qualified and supervised. Our team include experts in childcare, child development, education and welfare. We also have the latest facilities, including:

- large purpose-built accommodation with the latest security and safety features
- newly landscaped outside play areas including all-weather covered spaces
- advice and support for parents from the Family Services Team.

We provide high quality early years education and childcare which is exciting, stimulating, challenging and meets the needs of each child. We believe that all children should have the very best care and education, establishing firm foundations on which to build a lifelong love of learning. We also understand that parenting is not always easy and to we support parents with high quality advice and information wherever needed.

Willow is the community

Willow is your children's centre. We are here to help and support local families with children. We also have meeting and reception rooms available for hire. You can get more information from our reception staff.

The Family Services Team

It's not always easy being a parent. Our specialist Family Services Team is there to support you. Weekly 'stay and play' sessions give you the chance to meet other parents and find out how to help your child develop and learn, while your child plays in a safe environment. We can also give you information about:

- healthcare
- finding a childminder
- using other council services
- careers and employment.

Individual appointments are available alongside our scheduled sessions.

Get in touch to find out more - contact details are on the back of this leaflet.

You can download this publication or order copies online at:
www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications

Search using ref: DCSF-00222-2008

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