



Welcome to Edition 8

WEST LOTHIAN FAMILY CENTRES

Early Years Champion, Professor Susan Deacon (author of *Joining the dots: A better start for Scotland's children*) highlights the many benefits that the family centres' service offers communities. See the report www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc

Within West Lothian we have two main family centre locations providing support services across the entire county.

One site is in the East; Livingston Family Centre (Eliburn) the other in the West; Whitdale Family Centre (Whitburn).

Plus access to two satellite sites; Bathgate Early Years Centre and Addiewell Early Years Centre.

In this issue we will focus on a snap shot of two group-work opportunities

'Pop in and Play' and **'What About Me'** developed and delivered as part of the family centre group-work service

Margo McCreight, Manager
Whitdale and Livingston Family Centres

Our aims are:

- To work in partnership with parents/carers in the process of identifying and striving to meet their child and family's needs (minimum intervention)
- To provide an environment that enables each individual child to fulfil their developmental potential.
- To promote and continue to develop the Family Centre service as a resource for the community and partner agencies.
- The menu of service available can easily be viewed as a three prong approach: – Family support/assessment; Centre based group-work activities; Outreach including supported Childminding opportunities.
- The uptake, engagement and retention of families within our family centre service are impressively high. We believe this to be so, as our strong focus is on relationships from a backdrop of nurture. Each family has a dedicated key-worker who stays focused throughout the family's journey from introduction to transition into community support networks.
- The route of access to this free service is by referral, your health visitor or other professional engaged with your family will hold knowledge of our service. We would encourage you to have a chat with them if you feel that your family could benefit from additional support.

Pop in and Play

'Pop in and Play' aims to:

- Introduce parents/carers and children to the family centre service
- Offer parents/carers and children new experiences together
- Help promote children's all round development through play
- Promote positive relationships
- Provide parenting support

This group takes place in the family centre playrooms which are set up with a range of activities and resources to welcome both children and parents along. The group runs on a rolling programme, each weekly session lasts 2 hours duration.

Qualified Nursery Officers are available throughout the group to lead the activities and support each family to have a fun and enjoyable session.

The group was developed as an open session to family centre families, nursery parents and local families in the community. It is now established as a fantastic introduction to the services and other groups on offer at the family centre.

One parent quoted in her recent evaluation "*I was very nervous of attending the family centre as I didn't really know what went on. Now after coming to the pop in and play I have put myself forward to attend the WAM group*".

Hazel Blackwood, Assistant Manager,
Livingston Family Centre

What about Me

'What about Me' (WAM) aims to:

- Raise self esteem and build confidence in the parents/carers
- Have parents/carers feel comfortable in participating in activities and discussion points
- Help parents/carers to form supportive relationships and develop self help skills
- Work together effectively to facilitate transition onto 'Getting Through the Day' group-work programme.

The group was developed with a group of parents in 2004 and has grown in popularity to a point where it is available on a rolling programme. The group runs for a 6 week block each weekly session lasts 2 hours duration.

The programme is varied with pamper session; speakers covering a range of topics for example internet safety, health issues; crafty sessions. One exercise is when the parent draws a picture of themselves, this instantly creates laughter. The pictures are then passed to the other person and each of the parents write something positive on each picture this creates a lot of emotion and support within the group.

An important aspect of WAM is the peer support that the sessions create. Each programme is devised around the needs of the individuals attending. Ground rules are established at the beginning and respected throughout. The Adult Wellbeing scale is carried out both at the beginning and end of the 6 week block. A recent end of group evaluation highlights, "*...it would appear from the self esteem scales that there was a definite decrease in feelings of anxiety and an increase in parents' ability to relax*".

An added bonus to this group is the opportunity afforded to the child whilst their parent engages in time for themselves. This is the high quality key-worker, nurture experience provided in the centre playrooms. A 6 week play activity programme is set to reflect the learning need of the child/ren using the principles of the Pre Birth to Three Document www.educationscotland.gov.uk/earlyyears/prebirthtothree/index.asp

A photographic learner's journey is recorded and shared with the parent. A recent end of group evaluation highlights that "*Parents felt advised on plans and given feedback on sessions. This contributed to good attendance throughout the group*". Also "*We have started drawing together and story time*".

Whilst another parent commented "*I was able to relax knowing that my son was being well looked after*".

Health visitors value the change noted in the parents who participate in WAM. Supporting its continued delivery by indentifying those who would benefit and referring them into our service specifically for this experience. Often as a starting point which leads onto successful engagement in the more structured parenting programmes more widely available.

Jennifer Douglas, Nursery Officer, Whitdale Family Centre