

The journey to becoming a Community Childcare and Early Learning Hub

Hub membership



Recruit providers to your Hub using a range of strategies:

- Face to face meetings with local providers
- Press releases in local newspapers informing people about the Hub and what it's aims are
- Online publicity and social media strategies, such as a Facebook page
- Use existing relationships or networks with local providers to 'spread the word'

The experience of existing Hubs in indicates the most successful way of recruiting providers was with a proactive, personal approach i.e. visiting providers individually to create relationships before asking them attend a group meeting.

Implementing the Hub



Organise launch meeting with the recruited settings to:

- Provide more information about the aims of a Hub
- Work together with all settings to create a shared vision and give everyone a sense of ownership
- Identify the needs of the local area in relation to the aims of the Hub, for example:
 - what quality improvement settings would like?
 - are there enough two year old funded early education places to meet demand
 - are there good links between settings in order to provide blended childcare ?
 - Is it easy for parents to find out about availability of childcare ?
- Organise how often meetings will be held and where e.g. half termly taking it in turns to host

Hub staff see regular meetings as an opportunity to highlight local childcare issues and needs; increase communication/networking between different local providers; and increase understanding of the Hub project among providers.

Action plan



Create an action plan using the information gathered from all the settings to create a common set of aims for the Hub.

- What do you want to achieve
- How are you going to achieve it
- Timescale of actions

An example template can be found in the resources section.

Quality Improvement



- How are you going to monitor quality improvement of the different settings? E.g. Provider self-evaluations, Ofsted data, quality improvement plan
- How are you going to identify areas of quality improvement? E.g. Questionnaires to providers asking them to identify areas, looking at last years data to identify gaps in areas of learning, identifying areas of excellent practice within the Hubs and using Hub settings, audits of quality such as ECERS/ITERS or ECAT.
- Who is going to provide the training? Hub settings? Can you link with the Local Authority quality improvement team?
- Cross moderation between settings
- Tracking of children's progress from early years settings to school. Does it happen already? Is the information being used effectively?

Blended Childcare



- Is everyone clear on what blended childcare is?
- Is there a need for it in the area? Does it already happen?
- How can settings work together to make blended childcare possible?
- What is the best way to share availability of settings with parents e.g. website, social media?
- How will parents know about the Hub? Website, marketing, local press releases etc

Supporting the expansion of quality childcare places, with a focus on two year olds



- Have you linked with the Local Authority to find out the need for your area?
- How many settings and schools already take funded twos?
- Are there are other settings interested but either in need of training or more information? What can you do as a Hub to support them? E.g. Offer training, link them with similar settings
- Are there other areas of childcare that are not meeting the needs of the local families e.g. Holiday cover, evenings?

Lessons learned from Year 1

Critical Success Factors



- A common vision and a clear set of values and aims, agreed upon by all parties
- A strong hub lead with the ability to encourage, persuade and lead others.
- Financial support to free up the hub lead to dedicate time to forming the partnership and focus on quality improvement
- A personalised approach - meeting individually with providers, especially in the early days, to promote the hub and recruit members
- Flexibility to work around the time constraints of providers, and cascade information to people unable to attend meetings
- Key performance indicators to keep the project on track and encourage regular reflection of what's working well and what needs to be improved
- Open channels of communication, including a willingness to listen to others and accept constructive criticism
- Good links with the local authority in relation to the funded 2 year old offer.

Common challenges and solutions



Attracting providers to the hub: In some hubs areas, there is no existing culture of joint working or information sharing. It has been challenging for some hubs to recruit providers and build a network from scratch.

Potential Solutions

- having a clear narrative about ‘what’s in it for you’ can help attract providers to the hub. If providers feel that they are getting something in return for their time e.g. free training or publicity they will be more inclined to join.
- identify and work with the ‘key’ childminders to help engage others—in an area where there are a lot of childminders there are often those who are regarded as ‘leaders’ who can encourage others to get involved.
- meeting face-to-face and one-to-one with providers is often more effective than mailshots, emails or group meetings.

Common challenges and solutions



Lack of resources to implement the hub: This was a commonly mentioned challenge as the hub is not a full time job for any of the hub leads, some of whom feel that they are struggling to devote the time needed to make the most of the hub.

Potential Solutions

- Draw on all existing networks and relationships to promote the hub, and use any available support locally e.g. Family Information Service.
- Hub leads need to block out dedicated time in their diaries to work on hub activities to prevent competing demands taking over.
- Create a hub culture where all members are signed up to working and learning together, rather than the hub lead feeling the pressure to 'do everything' and 'have all the answers'.

Common challenges and solutions



Getting multiple providers together for meetings. Hubs have found it difficult to get providers, particularly those in the private sector, to attend meetings.

Potential Solutions

- Think about having 2 meetings on the same day: one in the morning and one in the evening to encourage and boost attendance. This is the approach taken by Homerton.
- Accept that it may not be possible to get all providers together for every meeting and have a system in place for providing feedback and updates to those unable to make the meeting.

Information available to help set up your Hub



- Case Studies
 - Quality Improvement in a hub
 - Setting up a hub
 - Creating a network of providers
- What are the benefits of being a childcare hub
PowerPoint presentation
- Frequently Asked Questions about Community Childcare and Early Learning Hubs
- SEND Information resources

Resources available to help set up your Hub



- Poster/flier to recruit childcare providers
- Poster/flier to recruit parents
- Childcare provider information sheet
- Key Questions for operating a Childcare Community and Early Learning Hub
- Press release template
- Action Plan template
- Checklist for opening