Families Lead the Way in Naming Children’s Centre

Young children and their families have been telling playtrain what Sure Start services mean to them, during a programme of creative consultation activities. We are delighted to introduce them as ‘The Caterpillar Centre’ based at Wollescote School and ‘The Butterfly Children’s Centre’.

The sessions were organised by Lye, Rufford & Wollescote Sure Start to help them develop a new name for their soon to be opened Children’s Centre. Families had great fun moulding clay, making puppets and creating collages and images that told us what they value most about the services Sure Start provide.

Sessions took place during regular Sure Start events and extra drop in sessions held at the local community centre for families not yet accessing any provision proved popular.

Core themes identified from the sessions included:
- Positive Change
- Meeting People
- Feeling Calm & Safe

Local families, staff and governors worked with playtrain to generate lots of ideas for new names that responded to those themes.

The theme of transformation and change proved particularly popular. Inspired by one particular interaction between a mother and her child, the team agreed on two names, one for the newly built children’s centre and for the linked provision based at Wollescote School.

We are delighted to introduce them as “The Caterpillar Centre” based at Wollescote School and ‘The Butterfly Children’s Centre’. The open ended creative activities proved a real hit with children and families and playtrain look forward to sharing the activities and ideas at training sessions for more Sure Start staff.

Fun for All the Family at ArtsFest!

This year’s ArtsFest was packed with all manner of exciting performances and activities with many people travelling from far and wide to join in the last of the summer fun, not least the families participating in a variety of creative activities offered by playtrain.

Drawing on the talents of associate artists, playtrain provided opportunities to make hanging art, create a city of clay creatures and contribute to a giant doodle – shortly to be exhibited at Birmingham Children’s Hospital and pictured below.

Children and young people loved the chance to go on an open-ended creative journey and so too did the mum’s, dads and grandparents who seemed to relish the chance to kick off their shoes and play!
Living Adventurously!

playtrain was delighted to deliver a workshop on inclusive play as part of Newcastle-under-Lyme Children’s Centre’s “Living Adventurously” conference.

The conference took place on 10th July, at the North Staffordshire Special Adventure Playground which recently benefited from the installation of some wonderful new play equipment.

Well over 40 delegates had the opportunity to climb, swing, crawl and explore the various structures and play areas.

“The playtrain workshop provided plenty of creative ideas and inspiration for inclusive play, delegates had a go at making a den and discovered the joy of ‘cooking’ up various paint recipes!”

A particular highlight of the morning was the keynote address by Emma Rigby, a young woman of 24 who was born with cerebral palsy. With the assistance of her friend and colleague, Jane, she gave a brief presentation about herself, which was little short of extraordinary.

Growing up with the support of a family that always encouraged her to ‘have a go’, she now works in a nursery and participates in a wide range of outdoor activities with the Adventure Scouts, and if that isn’t impressive enough, can stand up in a room full of strangers to talk about it all!

Art of Hospital Play

Football posts, giant pictures and huge constructions are not things you normally see on a children’s hospital ward but they were certainly in place during the most recent playtrain artist residency.

Working with Birmingham Children’s Hospital NHS Trust’s Arts Programme, artist Peter Cooper delivered a series of child centred workshops on the day care unit and general Ward

Pete’s task was to design creative play workshops which extended the children’s experience of creativity and created a fun environment in which can be a very stressful place to work.

“Pete achieved this on day one! Allowing the children to have non clinical experiences is a very positive experience for everyone.” said Arts Manager Janet Hetherington.

Pete developed projects which involved everyone including babies, parents and ward staff.

“I challenged myself each week to try and do something more or build upon what I achieved from the previous week.”

(artist — Peter Cooper)

Everyone got messy, paint was everywhere but not one complaint was made. Paint washes away, but happiness remains, and the staff and patients at Birmingham Children’s Hospital enjoyed every moment of working with Pete.

In Brief...

Audiences Central

Our family friendly children’s consultation project with seven of the West Midlands key arts and cultural venues completed in July.

To support the implementation of our findings, workshops on ‘Creative Consultation’, ‘30 Second Fillers’ and ‘Planning with Children Masterclass’ have been devised and delivered by playtrain for venue staff.

Contact Ruth for more details.

Wow, this is Big!

The playtrain early years consultation research project has now completed and the results are due to be disseminated at our ‘Wow, this is Big!’ conference and exhibition from 8th to 12th February next year.

If you would like more information about how children under 5 have been making their ‘voices’ heard and helping arts and cultural venues to make their provision more child friendly, please contact Claire.

Extended Schools Research

Quiet spaces, room to run around and more choice in activities available are what children have been telling us they want from their Extended Schools provision.

The first of our three action research projects investigating how children’s voices are being heard in this new initiative has now completed and the full results of all projects will be available early next year. Contact Claire for more details.
**Training & Development**

**Subsidised courses for creative practitioners who seek to develop specialist skills to support their work with and for children and young people**

Playtrain has great pleasure in presenting details of our professional development opportunities to support West Midlands creative practitioners. Courses and events are funded by Arts Council England, West Midlands and are either free or heavily subsidised. For more details or to book, please contact Playtrain!

**Bob Hughes — Value of Play**

Playtrain is delighted to present a thought provoking seminar with Bob Hughes, author of ‘Evolutionary Playwork & Reflective Analytic Practice’ and ‘A Playworker’s Taxonomy of Play Types’, who will lead a healthy debate around Every Child Matters in relation to the value of play for play’s sake.

**Tuesday 28th November, 2006 (10-4pm) at Playtrain**

For further details or to book please contact Playtrain.

**The Collectors**

The Collectors’ is a new arts project, for children aged 3 to 14 years, to explore issues important to them and participate in cultural activities, facilitated by Playtrain. This project offers an opportunity for children and young people to develop and run their own arts project.

Sessions will take place on Tuesdays and Sundays from September 06 to March 07 at Playtrain.

For more information please contact Ruth.

**The Ecology of Workshop**

This informal event will cover the theory and practice of workshop and is an opportunity for arts workers to discuss and reflect on their own creative practice.

The event will include a talk by Tony Gee, of The Moveable Feast Workshop Company, loosely based around Playtrain’s recent professional development event ‘The 101 Languages of the Arts Worker’.

**Saturday 7th October, 2006 (12-5pm) at The Hub, Birmingham**

To book please contact Playtrain.

**Every Child Matters Think tank (one evening course)** Thursday 21st September, 2006 (6-9pm), at Playtrain offices

This single evening session will provide participants with an overview of Every Child Matters and an opportunity to consider the relationship between policy and practice.

**Keeping Arts Safe (one day course)** Saturday 30th September, 2006 (10-4pm), at Playtrain offices

This one day practical workshop will provide an introduction for arts workers to safeguarding children, young people, vulnerable adults and yourselves, drawing on Arts Council England’s ‘Keeping Arts Safe’ guidance.

**Reflective Practice and Documentation - Introduction (part one of a four day course)** Saturday 14th October, 2006 (10-4pm), at Playtrain offices

The first of four linked workshops, this session will introduce participants to the concept and methodology linked to reflective practice and producing evidence related to that practice.

**Reflective Practice and Documentation – Image Taking (part two of a four day course)** Saturday 4th November, 2006 (10am-1pm), at Playtrain offices

This practical half day workshop will help participants to develop their skills in taking good and useful images, exploring composition, framing and how to create visual narratives.

**Reflective Practice and Documentation – Image Composition (part three of a four day course)** Saturday 11th November, 2006 (10-4pm), at The Hub, Hazelwell, Kings Heath, Birmingham

This day will focus on using Adobe Photoshop as a tool for playing with photos, using colour, graphics and text to create images that best illustrate children’s learning and experiences.

**Reflective Practice and Documentation – Telling a story through creative reporting (part four of a four day course)** Saturday 25th November, 2006 (10-4pm), at The Hub, Hazelwell, Kings Heath, Birmingham

A practitioner-friendly session offering participants the opportunity to explore ‘what good looks like’ in relation to creative reporting.

Details of our Arts Council England subsidised creative workshops for playworkers, early years practitioners and child care workers will be available in our next newsletter. Please contact Ruth for more details.
Meet the Team!

Claire Mills — **playtrain** Director.

“I joined **playtrain** in May 2005, after a period of significant change in the organisation.

What really impressed me was the reputation of the organisation and I was excited by the potential for developing new opportunities and projects with and for children.

I started my working life in financial services (yes, really) where I had the opportunity to try my hand at a variety of roles including customer service management, product training and project management.

I was keen to use my education background in the arts and combine this with my passion for creative learning and project management.

In 2002, I became a Creative Learning Officer for a local community arts organisation. This involved working within a highly values driven environment and gaining experience of managing creative projects and people.

It was this experience of placing values at the heart of practice that struck a chord when the position at **playtrain** became available.

The commitment that this organisation has to a child centred approach, fun, collaboration, client focus, inclusion, inspiration and innovation have made working here a pleasurable challenge!

I look forward to continuing to lead the organisation as we explore our children’s arts programme, the extended schools initiative, new consultation models, how families play and much, much more!”

The End Game

**Ever wondered how to make flubber slime?**

Thought so. Why not have a go at making the following concoction!

**What You Need**

- 2 cups of white glue (water soluble)
- 2 cups of water
- 1 tsp of Borax (available from chemists)
- 3 or more empty plastic containers

**Take care to protect your clothes and hair!**

**How to Make**

1) In one container, make a solution that is equal parts water and glue.

2) In a separate container, make a solution of water with one teaspoon of borax mixed in.

3) Stir both solutions well

4) In another container mix a little of each solution together

5) Now get your hands stuck in and knead the mixture together!

6) Eventually the mixture will become like a rubbery egg white, lovely.

7) You could add glitter, food colouring, sand and all sorts of things to it to change the texture and colour.

Try experimenting with it—how far does it stretch, does it bounce, make a noise, what can you create with it?

**Parent guidance should be used with this activity.**