

Training and employment support – lessons from the work focussed services in children's centres pilot

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Westminster Background Information

- **230,00 Residents**
- **42,000 Children and Young People**
- **12,500 Children under the age of 4**
- **17,500 aged 5 – 14**
- **Over 17,000 residents with no qualifications**
- **9940 children under 15 living in households dependent on workless benefits**
- **Queen's Park ward has LSOA 1st in CP Index**

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Approach

- Through LAA in partnership with JCP
- Child Poverty Pledge signed up Sept 08
- Success in bids for Child Poverty Pilot
- Director of Children's Services CP Champion
- Westminster Works

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Westminster Works

Westminster Works represents the City's strategy to tackle unemployment and to provide people with the skills and opportunities they need to find and sustain employment.

The aim is to bring all training and employment initiatives in Westminster under the Westminster Works network to ensure continuity, maximise resources and avoid duplication of services.

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Child Poverty Pilots 2009 -11

1. Work Focused Services in Children's Centres
2. Local Authority Child Poverty Innovation Pilot

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Work Focussed Services in CC's

Additional resources for families:

- 3 full time Jobcentre Plus Parent Advisers in Queen's Park, Church Street and Harrow Road Children's Centres working within Children's Centre teams
- A Next Steps Careers Adviser
- E learning opportunities for parents from the children's centres
- Courses tailored to the needs of parents for those nearest to employment to those furthest away.
- A pack developed by Women Like Us aimed at employers to promote family friendly policies as being good for business
- A pack developed by NIACE aimed at training/learning providers offering practical tips on making their services accessible to parents
- Sessions to support job search activities in the children's centres
- Advice on Childcare

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Related Initiatives

- Family Recovery Programme
- School Gates Initiative
- Westminster Works ESF/London Councils programme
- 2 Year Old Childcare Pilot
- Extended Schools Disadvantage Subsidy

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Partners

- Jobcentre Plus
- Westminster City Council
- Paddington Development Trust
- Paddington Waterside Partnership
- Local Colleges
- Workers Educational Association
- Action for Children/Bayswater Family Centre
- Women Like Us
- Local Schools
- Libraries
- Preschools
- Nurseries
- Save the Children
- Next Step Careers Service

And many more!

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Challenges

- Time constraints
- Cost of childcare to support parents in training/volunteering
- Capacity of workforce
- Linking related work
- Training space with on site crèche for activities
- Debt and other financial issues
- Complexities and inconsistencies of benefits system & childcare funding
- Lack of part time jobs and family friendly employers
- Current economic climate

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Learning

- Focus on best outcomes for families when developing employability services for parents
- Lack of stable, affordable, quality childcare greatest barrier to employment for workless parents
- Parents are keen to participate in training when this is made accessible to them
- The additional in work financial benefits from the LAIP have supported parents into work

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Learning

- No targets/limited appointment times – advisers able to spend more time with parents
- Unlimited time to engage with parents –on average takes three/four contacts with the parents before they sign up to the pilot
- JCP able to engage with parents they would not normally engage with.
- Advisers able to have one to ones with parents whilst children are using the childcare facilities
- Enhanced partnership working – comes from organisations working side by side and gaining an understanding of each other's organisation/priorities
- Advisers need to be flexible, proactive and approachable rather than great technicians
- Change in perception

Case Study

NJ is a lone parent who was living on benefits with a 4 year old son in private rented accommodation.

NJ met with the JCPPA at an open day organised at Essendine School to promote the Helping in Schools course. She joined the course which took place over 10 sessions and involved volunteering in a school. The WFS pilot paid for the childcare for parents on the course.

Towards the close of the course the JCPPA supported NJ with an application for a classroom assistant at Wilberforce School. NJ was successful in the application.

NJ then joined the LAIP pilot prior to starting work. She met with the financial adviser who supported her in her application for Discretionary Housing Payment. She also sought advice for childcare from the LAIP project lead and found a breakfast club in the school where her son had started in reception. The pilot pays for the breakfast club.

I had been concerned that it is seen the only route into economic well being for children is to have parents in employment as soon after birth as possible. It has always been my belief that children are likely to be confident and successful in life if they start out with secure attachments with their parents.

I had also been concerned that mothers were being encouraged into childcare employment simply because they are parents and without secure childcare options for their own children.

I am pleased to acknowledge that the way that the employability service is working in our children's centre is having a positive benefit on the opportunities available to parents to improve their learning skills, training and employment possibilities.

Parents are feeling empowered to make choices about their futures and the needs of the children is not regarded as of secondary importance but is integral to the lifelong learning of the family.

Wendy Rowlett, Deputy Head of Centre, Portman Early Childhood Centre

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