

## Supporting children's learning and development



digital camera to record their project and create a visual diary. These diaries, several displays, a project information pack, the evaluation document and a presentation (on CD) has been compiled and are now available to loan, providing development staff, practitioners and teams with some useful tools to support creative development in the early years.

### Create2gether

At the end of 2005, 19 PVI childcare settings were linked with a visual artist that was based in their provision for a total of 10 'hands-on' sessions plus additional time for joint meetings and training. The emphasis of create2gether was on collaboration, practice development and increasing confidence. Each setting was given a

### 'Come and Count with us!'

Supported by funding from the General Sure Start Grant the Traveller Education Early Years team have worked with local Traveller families to produce a non-fiction, touchy/feely book for young children called 'Come and Count with us'.

Published in February 2006 the book looks at numbers and colours, and uses photographs of five Traveller children in their trailer. A valuable resource, the book supports the Foundation Stage curriculum whilst offering an insight into Traveller culture and lifestyle.

Available as a 'big book', 'Come and Count with us' has been circulated to all providers of Early Years education in the county, and is also available to buy. Copies have already been purchased by many providers and by a wide range of organisations nationally, including other Traveller Education teams.

**Create2gether and 'Come and Count with us!' nominated for the national Partner in Excellence Awards 2006.**

## Workforce development

### Nottinghamshire Childcare Recruitment Service (NCRS)

The recruitment service has been transformed and now operates more like a high street recruitment agency, able to quickly assist childcare providers fill their vacancies by matching their requirements to potential staff from a database. NCRS have also been active in assisting with the recruitment of whole teams of staff in new daycare settings.

The team have attended many job fairs and recruitment events to attract people to working with children. There is a bespoke course to introduce people to the challenges, joys and benefits of working in a range of roles in the sector, which are available across the county.

A special event was also organised by NCRS to attract more men to working with children. The event was really well attended, with Mansfield Town Football Club coming along to share some coaching skills with delegates - the team were really "on the ball" that day!



### Qualification Training

We are working to government guidelines to promote the development of a more professional early years and playwork workforce.

We provide and support the provision of qualification training through local colleges, the PLA and private training providers. Our support teams have successfully enabled 20 experienced workers to achieve the Level 3 Certificate in Work with Children (APEL). This award is very effective

in accrediting the considerable prior learning and experience of those practitioners who do not have a recognised qualification. Childminders are also increasingly taking up opportunities to obtain level 3 qualifications and we are providing opportunities for them to take the new level 3 Diploma in Home-based Care. Our first childminders to begin this course of study have successfully achieved some units towards this new award.

Research shows that the quality of early years experience is directly related to better outcomes for children, and that a key factor in this is having a well qualified workforce that is graduate led.

Using the government's new Transformation Fund creatively we are supporting the training of practitioners to level 3 and above. We are aware of a new ground swell of interest and enthusiasm amongst practitioners to achieve higher level qualifications. Many more qualified early years workers are embarking on level 4 awards and Foundation degrees. Those with graduate level 5 and 6 qualifications will now have opportunities to achieve Early Years Professional Status (EYPS). Nine people in the county, from full daycare settings, are set to achieve EYPS in January 2007 as part of the first national assessment pilot. The government's objective is to ensure that by 2015 all full daycare settings employ someone with EYPS to lead work with children and parents. The Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) is leading this initiative. Visit [www.cwdcouncil.org.uk](http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk) for more information.

### Continuous Professional Development

We have a strong record in the county of providing a full programme of continuous professional development (CPD) training for all early years and playworkers. Our programme is published in our termly TADO brochure sent to all settings and schools. Training includes new initiatives such as Communication Matters and Personal Social and Emotional Development.

In 2006-07 the government also wants professional development to focus on Birth to Three Matters and the Foundation Stage curriculum in order to prepare for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The EYFS is the single quality framework for 0-5 year olds that will be in place in all settings from 2008 to shape the delivery of improved outcomes for all young children. It is a national priority that those working in early years settings are trained in the EYFS.

We continue to promote the development of leadership skills through our popular Becoming an Effective Leader and Manager course. On the basis of this, as one of only six local authorities in the country, the DfES selected us to be part of a leadership pilot. This has given us the opportunity to explore how this course can be extended locally to better meet the needs of leaders and managers. In addition this year the first eight people successfully completed a Leadership through Effective Personal Productivity course.



## Improving information about and access to childcare

### Matrix Award

It's Official! Nottinghamshire Children's Information Service (CIS) offers high quality information, advice and guidance as it achieved accreditation to the Matrix Standard in April 2006. Matrix assessed the quality of delivery and management of the CIS. The whole team took on a rigorous review of policies and procedures to strengthen operations, then took part in a gruelling assessment where service users and partners were interviewed to verify the quality of services delivered. Nottinghamshire were the first CIS in the East Midlands to achieve this accolade. The CIS is now working towards a plan of continual improvement to ensure it continues to operate to the "Matrix" level.



### Out of hours childcare

In 2005/06, as work-life balance becomes more and more important, the CIS conducted a survey to find out how many providers in the county can care for children outside of traditional 8am to 6pm working patterns. For those working in emergency or public sector services, this may include very early mornings, late nights, weekends, bank holidays and overnight care. We were pleasantly surprised to find how



flexible our childcare providers are. NHS childcare co-ordinators are very keen to link with these providers to help parents in the NHS manage their home and work balance, so we will be repeating the survey soon.

### Information hub

As the Childcare Act came into force in the summer of 2006, the CIS is working to increase the range of information it holds, covering the age range of 0-19. The CIS is involved with developing the web based

directory of services for professionals to use when supporting children and families. Of course, our ChildcareLink website provides a good deal of this information already. The CIS is working to provide a central hub of information, accessible from a range of community outlets, such as children's centres and extended schools, and in a variety of media, including leaflets, websites and face to face discussion. The information won't just be about childcare and early years- it will include much more about support for families delivered by the local authority and partner agencies, such as Job Centre Plus, NHS and Connexions.

## Inclusion



### Hands up for inclusion

The development of inclusive practice in childcare settings throughout Nottinghamshire was supported by the revision and reprint of our Hands up for Inclusion audit pack. The user friendly pack includes a Guide to Good Practice, Access Audit Tool, Inclusion Audit and a booklet explaining how the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 relates to Early Years providers. The pack also includes questionnaires for parents/carers, children and young

people, which can be photocopied and circulated by providers to find out how inclusive children and families consider them to be. Settings that successfully complete the Hands up for Inclusion audit are awarded the Charter for Inclusion.

### Supporting inclusive practice

During 2005/06 a total of £35,464 was spent on the provision of inclusion and special needs training and development opportunities for childcare practitioners. Over £240,000 was used to provide inclusion support for;

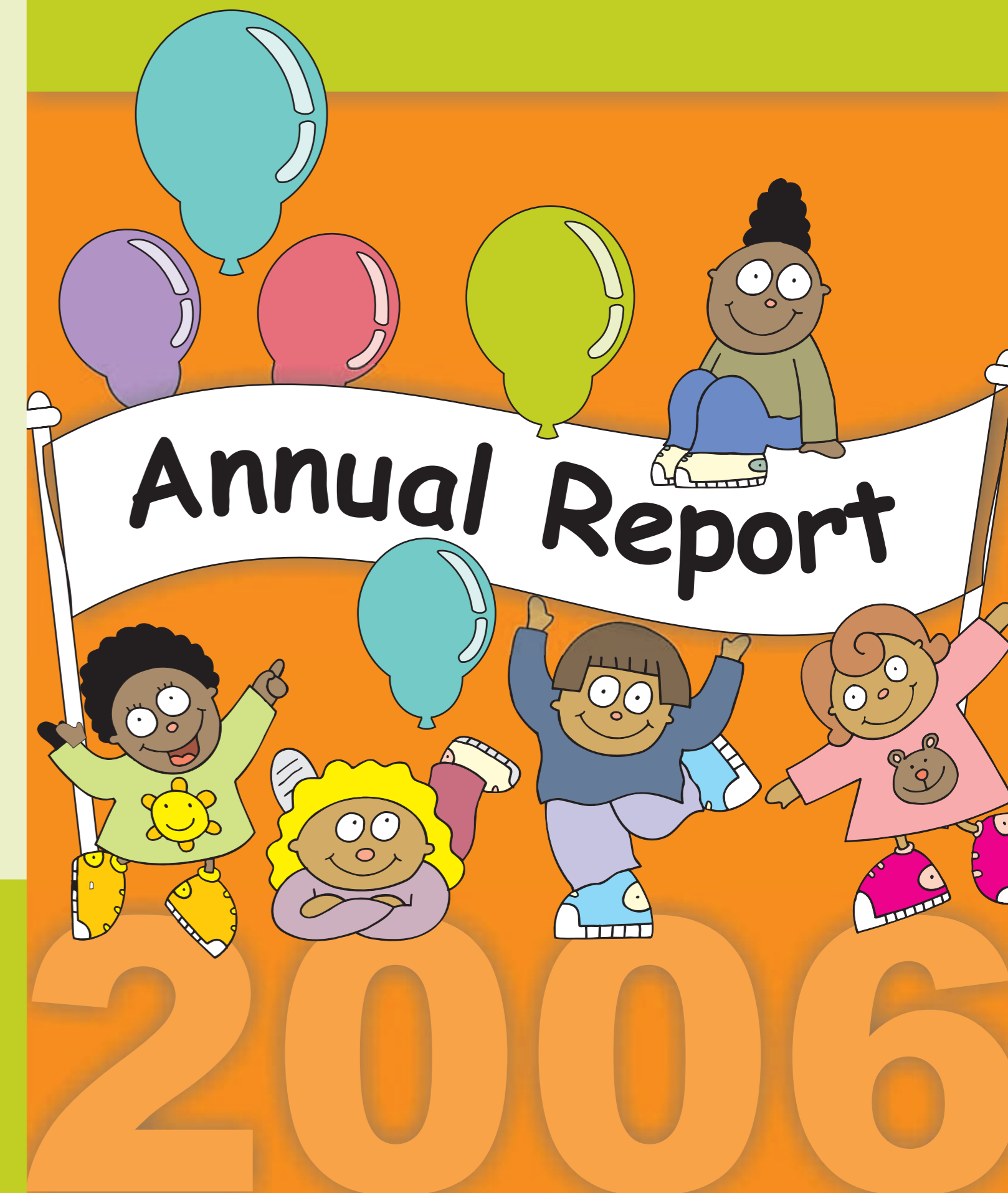
- 74 settings through Childcare Inclusion Funding which supports settings in the provision of quality childcare for disabled children aged 0 to 16 years;
- 80 children through Early Years Education Inclusion Funding which ensures that children

accessing their funded Nursery Education place are able to access the Foundation Stage curriculum appropriately; and

- 16 childcare settings loaned seating and toileting equipment through the Specialist Equipment Loan Scheme which enables physically disabled children to access their chosen provision.

Advice and support to develop effective inclusive practice was available to childcare providers from a number of specialist teams including: Out of School, Inclusion Support Service and the Physical Disability Support Service. Provision was further supported by early years and inclusion workers commissioned from The Pre-school Learning Alliance (PLA), A Place To Call Our Own (APTCCO) and The Play Centre.

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Nottinghamshire  
County Council

Contact us if you would like this information in large print, Braille, on audio tape or in a different language. All information correct at time of printing November 2006

## Big changes for Children's Services

Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) colleagues will be aware of the "Every Child Matters" agenda, through which children's services will be better joined up, with the intention that every child should achieve the "five outcomes" of being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and experiencing economic well-being.

Local authorities have been required to make organisational changes to create one department covering all services for children and young people. During 2006 Nottinghamshire County Council recruited a new Director of Children and Young People's Services, **Bob Garnett**; and new political leadership in **Councillor Joyce Bosnjak** as Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services. We no longer have separate Education, Social Services and Culture and Community Departments. Early Years and Childcare Services will be in a new "Access and Extended Services" block in the new department under the overall leadership of **Dave Marriott**.

For us in the EYDCP this means we say goodbye to Councillor Mick Storey, previously the Cabinet Member for Education, Chairman of the EYDCP and stalwart supporter of early years and childcare issues in high places. Mick has gone on to be the Deputy Leader of the County Council - so we can continue to be assured of support in high places! We are indebted to Mick for his work with us over the past 8 years, many things we could not have achieved without his working quietly behind the scenes. We all say a big "thank you".



Bob Garnett



Dave Marriott



Joyce Bosnjak

The other big change for us is that the grant funding that supports early years and childcare services, which we used to manage through the EYDCP structure, is now included with a large number of other grants in a "Local Area Agreement" (LAA). The LAA is managed by a high level multi-agency board, and through this arrangement the Government expects to achieve greater local flexibility. Because of this the executive decision making function of the old EYDCP is no longer relevant and has been dissolved. Regardless of the funding arrangements, however, the EYDCP remains an important framework for cross sector working and we are retaining the "brand name" for those many activities where we continue to work in close partnership, such as the Training and Development Opportunities (TADO) programme and our Annual Conference.

Along with this change the county has developed a wider "Early Years Strategy" aimed at co-ordinating services for young children across all sectors. We consulted widely on this strategy, including through the EYDCP newsletter and it has now been approved by the Nottinghamshire Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. The next step is to convene an Early Years Strategy Group to manage its progress over the next period. This group will be cross sector and representatives from the private and voluntary sectors, which have contributed so well to the previous work of the EYDCP, will be included.

## Creating childcare places



### Extended services agenda

Extended services pilot schemes focussing on the Dukeries, Eastwood, Manor, Newark High and Sutton families of schools have provided out of school coordinators opportunities to network with a wide range of partner organisations to map existing childcare and focus on gaps in services.

The childcare sector has recognised, for some time, the benefits of high quality childcare for families; providing greater choice and flexibility for working parents/carers and a stimulating, safe, social environment for children. This agenda is an effective medium for conveying the advantages that schools gain from the childcare offer; by raising standards in school and enriching children's experiences.

There is a crucial role for our PVI sector providers to play in working with schools to deliver these vital services.

### Out of school places

Between January and June 2006 the out of school team opened 538 new childcare places for children and young people aged 5-14/16 years. The team continues to strengthen and expand the stock of childcare places open and available in Nottinghamshire.

### Early Years Education

92.19% of all three year olds and 97.9% of four year olds are accessing the Foundation Stage curriculum in maintained schools and in private, voluntary and independent, (PVI), day nurseries and pre-schools in the county.

PVI providers are ably rising to meet the challenges of change and continue to be well supported in the provision of high quality early education by our Early Years Specialist Teacher PVI team. The Government's Ten Year Strategy for Childcare outlined many forthcoming changes in the early years:

- Funded nursery education in the PVI sector, now known as the free entitlement to integrated care and education, has been extended from 33 weeks to 38 weeks per year;
- Parents are to have greater flexibility to request their child's free entitlement over a minimum of three days; and
- A new curriculum for 0 to 5 year olds, the Early Years Foundation Stage, is currently being developed which will incorporate Birth to Three Matters, the Foundation Stage and the National Standards.

## Supporting and sustaining childcare places

### Ofsted preparation

The most dramatic change this year for the out of school team has been a district swap to remove any emotion from the support. The primary benefit with this process has been to provide feedback on both management and practice from a different perspective. This has been a useful mechanism to assist schemes further with preparation for unannounced inspections and has proved to be productive. An audit of settings is now being carried out to see what their experiences have been.

### Rural project

A project focusing on rural childcare and effective ways of addressing barriers to sustainability has been carried out. Keen to respond to the needs of all communities in Nottinghamshire, this has been a valuable piece of work. Project highlights include effective links with the childminding service; development of guidance on transport policy and practice; and, techniques for developing a cluster group approach.

### Support childminding scheme

3 part-time Support Coordinators manage 30 Support Childminders to help/support newly registered childminders through their process of registration. Each Support Childminder receives a bursary of £500 which covers their time and expenses including travel, phone calls and postage.

An evaluation of the scheme shows a decline in childminder resignations within the first 18 months of registration - 60 childminders resigned in February 2004 compared to just 36 in February

2005. To date more than 300 potential childminders have benefited from individual support from briefing to registration.

One of the most significant benefits has been to the growth of childminding groups; there are more than 40 county wide with new members joining all the time.

### Business and marketing support

A marketing toolkit containing tips, ideas and information to support team-based settings was produced by the marketing team towards the end of 2005. This was adapted to support the many Children's Centres opening up across the county. The toolkit is now being developed to support childminders too!

Partnership News has undergone a transformation and newsletters for each of the Children's Centres have been introduced, a process supported by the team.

Marketing health checks have recently been introduced to identify providers in the top 20% most disadvantaged areas needing additional support to ensure their long term sustainability.

Over the year the Business Support team has expanded its range of support services with the addition of a qualified and experienced accountant. This has helped many settings across the county in developing and improving their accountancy and business management systems.

A range of business training courses, including bookkeeping and employment issues have been delivered and the team continue to support business planning, often as part of funding applications

Links with other local authorities and government agencies help the team advise the Partnership and central government on the impacts of policies on childcare businesses, from a financial perspective.

For the future, advice and support to childcare businesses will continue and work is in progress for a new Business Support Toolkit which will be piloted early in the new year.



## Capital grants

### Capital development

2006 saw the opening of our pilot capital projects; with out of school schemes and pre-school settings working together, in refurbished, extended or purpose built premises, now able to deliver the full childcare offer (8am - 6pm) all year round.

We have worked with a variety of internal and external agencies to make this exciting vision a reality. This is a new area of work set to become more prominent in future work.

### Children's Centres



Helping to improve children's life chances Sure Start Children's Centres coordinate services, including health and family support, early years

education, play and early learning, for local families with children under 5 living in disadvantaged communities in the county.

By March 2008, we will have consulted with approximately 3500 parents of children under 5 across the county. Feedback from our community consultations has helped us to shape services in each area, to view feedback from our consultations visit [www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/change4o/children/childrenscentres](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/change4o/children/childrenscentres)

Multi-agency work groups, which have included parents, have been involved in planning new services around the five outcomes of Every Child Matters. This work has also informed the Children's Centre Outcomes Framework, which will guide delivery plans and be the performance management tool for early years services in Nottinghamshire. Commissioned by the Children's Centre Steering group, work groups have guided developments and acted as a communication hub for many agencies and departments and teams. 21 Children's Centres were created

during round one (2004-06) and included the transition of Sure Start Local Programmes to Children's Centre status. By the end of round two (March 2008) there will be 48 Children's Centres in Nottinghamshire, meeting the needs of 70% of the county's young children.

The capital programme for round 1 has created 17 new venues, mainly new builds and some refurbishments. Many of these are on school sites and new partnerships with schools bring many professional benefits as well as being very convenient for local parents. By the end of round 2 another 20 new buildings will have been commissioned.

Each district in the county has a senior coordinator, managing the development and operation of its Children's Centres. Nottinghamshire County Council is the accountable body for all Children's Centres services, but in some districts work has been commissioned out to other partner agencies, creating a rich mixed economy in how responses to need are delivered.

## Enabling access to libraries

### Bookstart Treasure Chests

The Bookstart programme is a universal service operating through local partnerships to circulate a series of book packs to babies and young children between birth and their fourth birthday. In April 2006 the Treasure Chest, a pack for all three year olds, was incorporated into the programme.

Treasure Chest is distributed to children through their Foundation

Stage providers, Early Years and Childcare Services are working closely with colleagues in Library Services, schools, day nurseries and pre-schools, to ensure the effective circulation of these packs.

Eligible children are identified through the Nursery Education Grant termly headcount data, and funding is provided from the General Sure Start Grant to support the delivery of the packs.

Specific packs can be supplied for blind and visually impaired children, for example, dual language books and book packs for traveller children which includes 'Come and Count with us!'

