

Engaging with parents and families

Tameside Council

Background and context

Two centres in Tameside have developed some simple but effective ways to engage with local parents and encourage them to attend their centres.

Detail

Hyde Children's Centre engages with young parents through a web-based text service. The centre texts them with a reminder about when the young parents group is on and also uses the service to remind families of appointments. They find it very helpful.

Ridge Hill Children's Centre in Stalybridge has developed a range of both simple and innovative techniques, including:

- **Coffee mornings** - Informal regular coffee mornings with menus on the table showing activities and events. Free tea and toast always a good incentive! Many parents have used the coffee morning as their first step into a group activity and having regularly attended for a few months have approached staff for information about other services. This is a session where staff wait for the parent to approach them and are prepared to be patient. There is no agenda here and centre staff feel their families appreciate that.
- **School links** – A learning mentor from school brings new parents along and introduces them to centre staff. As a trusted member of staff, this encourages the parents to attend and begin to build up a relationship.
- **The local hairdresser** - The local hairdresser and local shops give out leaflets/flyers on behalf of the centre, as they have access to everyone in the community. The hairdresser knows lots of mums and young parents, who wait for appointments and chat to the owner, will take her advice and contact us at the centre or alternatively she will introduce the centre personally in the shop. She is an invaluable contact who will offer a cheaper haircut or beauty treatment to children's centre parents and children. Lots of people talk openly to their hairdresser and she will recommend they visit us for help or support with a variety of issues.
- **Seeking out families** - Centre staff also use the school gates, playground, intake meetings and community events to chat to families. A member of staff works out of the community shop alongside volunteers to meet parents and get a feel for the whole community.
- **Walking around the area** - Staff try, wherever possible, to walk around the area instead of driving. It has been a great way to meet people. Shopping at local shops and using other local services has also introduced them to key people they can build relationships with, and gives staff a real sense of being an accepted and trusted part of the community they work in.
- **Incentives** - Word of mouth from other parents who feel they have benefited from their involvement are proving the best advocates for services and offering incentives for bringing a friend along to a session or group has also worked well.

Contact

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