

WSCC Surestart Centres bringing the service to you

A Surestart Children and Family Centre is a 'one stop shop' for parents, providing information and advice on a range of subjects which are intended to enhance the health and well-being of families.

Children and Family Centre services comprise:

- links with child and family health services, including antenatal and postnatal services and speech and language support
- family support and parental outreach services
- links with schools and the Children's Information Service
- support for children and parents with special needs
- effective links with JobCentre Plus and local training providers to support parents and carers considering training or employment
- a toy library
- occasional family events in different venues across the County.

In West Sussex, there are currently eight rural projects who take these services out to the more remote areas in the County. These cover the Villages surrounding Horsham, Bolney, Balcombe, Haywards Heath, Burgess Hill, East Grinstead, Steyning, Henfield and Chichester. We do this via our small fleet of specially designed, long wheel base, vehicles and Astra vans.



The large vehicle pictured provides a good selection of information leaflets and books on a variety of subjects relating to children and their development, which may be borrowed. The vehicle has

internet access via a satellite dish on the roof and a public access laptop for families to use. Each vehicle carries a toy library where families can borrow toys linked with the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is a joining fee of £2 per family.

Our friendly members of staff on board have direct access to the Children's Information Service who can provide up to date information on a variety of subjects relating to families and children. Queries about benefit entitlement, breastfeeding support, local childminders or quitting smoking, for example, are just a few of the areas we can provide information on and support with. We also sell oral health products at cost price, including child and adult toothbrushes, toothpaste and children's drinking cups.

To find out more about your nearest rural centre and their up to date visiting schedule, please contact the Children's Information Service on 01243 777807 or go to www.wsgfl.org.uk and search for Children and Family Centres. Once registered we can keep you up to date with our forthcoming events so that you don't miss out! We look forward to meeting you out on our travels!



Rural childcare

As the Government extends the free entitlement for three and four year olds from 12.5 hours per week to 15 this autumn and the Independent Safeguarding Authority Vetting and Barring Scheme, see page 13, rolls out, pre-schools and nurseries face yet more change to the already many bureaucratic layers. Childcare providers, both charitable and private, find themselves having to contend with further challenges to the sustainability of their businesses.

Children living in rural villages are able to access local sessional childcare because it is run by attending children's parents. These volunteers often have little idea of the legal status of their group, the potential liabilities and join the committee "to help with fundraising".

Key difficulties are:

- a childcare management committee is formed of volunteers who are responsible for the employment of staff with all the obligations inherent in UK employment legislation. As the Committee are elected annually it is the employer that changes whilst the employees remain in post. The Committee are also legally responsible for all the Early Years Foundation Stage welfare requirements including safe recruitment
- the Free Entitlement funding for three and four year olds does not cover costs for staff, premises, equipment and

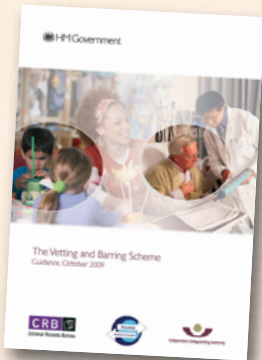
consumables etc. This is why groups need to raise income from extra services such as extended hours, lunch clubs and fundraising

- rural groups are commonly run from village or church halls and are usually required to set up and put away each day with staff costs for this endeavour causing crucial financial loss
- staff are universally poorly paid, required to deliver a complex curriculum that superficially appears as a free for all, must attend termly training, must complete extensive paperwork, are responsible for safeguarding children and commonly work over their paid hours
- recruiting committee members and getting parents to understand the governance and financing of local charitable childcare.

Caroline Rix, Rural Childcare Development Officer

Sussex Rural Forum reports

In each County the Rural Partnership is responsible for organising a Rural Forum meeting twice a year. These meetings are advertised and are open to anyone who wishes to attend. Each covers a topical rural issues or policy. The first two meetings of this year, one in each County, were held in March. Each Rural Partnership takes responsibility for determining actions that might arise from the discussion.



Vetting and Barring Scheme: an explanation

See articles on p10 & 12

The Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) has been created by Government as part of the Vetting and Barring Scheme to help prevent unsuitable people working with children and vulnerable adults. It works in partnership with the Criminal Records Bureau.

The ISA updates, pulls together, and makes more effective the current systems and is being embedded over five years.

The Vetting and Barring Scheme applies to staff, volunteers and those who run organisations that work with children and vulnerable adults on specific types of activity. The Scheme does not apply to informal arrangements within families and communities.

For more information see our website at www.ruralsussex.org.uk or visit the national website at www.isa-gov.org.uk which has full details and has a range of posters suitable for different settings that you can download.

East Sussex Rural Forum

The **East Sussex Rural Forum**, held on 8 March, examined the East Sussex Environment Strategy and Climate Change Board.

Summary of discussion points:

- 1 Effective information exchange, case studies and best practice examples are key to getting more communities to take action.
- 2 Local authorities and partnerships need to engage with local people to release untapped enthusiasm and

energy. The views and knowledge held by local people should be valued more by the 'experts' in the public agencies.

- 3 Clear leadership is required from the Local Authorities. This includes taking difficult decisions. They should also lead by lobbying on behalf of the County for resources and action by others. For example, bus and train timetable co-ordination, out of peak hours services and bus services for rural schools.

4 The planning system could be more receptive to some aspects of addressing climate change, particularly where new technologies or methods are incorporated into the design.

- 5 Incentives, not all financial, would help communities address environment and climate change issues locally.
- 6 More focus is required in both strategies on increasing local food consumption.

West Sussex Rural Forum

The **West Sussex Rural Forum**, held on 23 March, focused on rural affordable housing.

Summary of discussion points:

- 1 Information, case studies and guidance for parish councils and rural communities are needed.
- 2 Strong leadership from parish councils, supported by local authorities and housing associations and the rural housing enabler, is the key to the success of local schemes.
- 3 The housing needs survey is the starting point for any parish council as it provides the essential evidence of local needs.

4 Local opposition to schemes will remain a barrier and parish councils must be supported when this occurs. This opposition can be reduced if the needs of older residents are met within schemes as well as those in more general housing needs.

- 5 Mixed use schemes will be important in the future. Good design is essential if inter-generational schemes are to work well. Schemes that include local infrastructure or service provision are more likely to be supported and fundable such as community shop and meeting space/hall.

Housing with work space would help with viability and meet the trend for home based businesses.

- 6 Schemes which meet higher eco and energy saving standards are more likely to be supported. An exemplar village scheme should be encouraged.
- 7 Structured training and information sessions for parish councils and planning officers could help to overcome some barriers.

If you have any comments to make on these findings or want to add to the discussion, please email these comments to Teresa.Gittins@ruralsussex.org.uk

Parent: "COPES has been helpful with bringing back the bond that C and I lost a long time ago."

Parent: "the sessions that I have had with J have been very helpful for all of us. The strategies and techniques I have used with the children have been very useful and worked immediately."

Child, who scored the service at ten out of ten:

"It was great, I like play."

Child: "COPES helped me to feel better."

Child: "I knew someone was listening."

Parent: "The sessions I had with J have really helped through trying times and helped me manage my emotions and low mood."

Parent: "I'm now fully aware when my children are testing me and this has aided the positive family environment."

School: "K seems happier and is more willing to attend school."

Parent: "We believe COPES assessed the bigger picture of M's life, his views on us, outside interests and school situation."

Parent: "We have gained a greater insight into how T thinks."

Parent: "We now know the life skills he has learnt will make him happier and result in us being a much happier family."

Child: "I wanted to say that I had really good fun with you in our sessions."

Parent: "I don't know where I'd have been without your help."

School: "It was really helpful to have COPES as an independent Chairperson at our meeting with parents."

School: "It was so useful to be able to discuss H with you. Thank you for being our link with the parents."

Meet the COPES Team!



COPES is just one of the projects for families that make up the East Sussex Children and Young People's Team at Action in rural Sussex.

COPES stands for Children's Outreach and Parents' Extended Support Service. The project was designed and developed by Action in rural Sussex to ensure that rural needs were met in the delivery of the National Children's Fund across East Sussex.

COPES is a family support project that offers child led and closely assessed and non-stigmatising help to families both in their own homes, at schools and in community settings.

The project was first opened in 2003. It offered a one-to-one service to pupils, aged five to 13 years, attending schools across

East Sussex. It focused on developing social skills, promoting emotional well-being and motivation to stay in school.

In 2010, COPES is still in great demand. Its continuing strength is that it is able to adapt to meet the ever changing needs of children and their families in our rural communities. We are at present working with 103 schools and over 250 young people and their families.

Each Outreach Worker uses play and a range of therapeutic techniques to give the child or groups of children a space to talk about such issues as managing feelings, evaluating their behaviour, dealing with their anger, relationships, transitions, bereavements and other losses.

Parents are assisted with boundary setting, understanding their child's behaviour and

feelings, their own emotional support and recognising and developing their strengths. They appreciate having an independent professional to discuss such issues as parenting, how to assist their own and their child's learning and being more confident in relation to schools and other agencies within their community. This support contributes significantly to reducing social exclusion.

COPES continually evaluates and develops its work and the skills of its 11 strong group of practitioners. Those working with COPES, the families, the schools across East Sussex and Health and Children's Services professionals are all encouraged to feedback to the Family Outreach Worker when an agreed family package has been completed. Six month follow up evaluations are shared with our partners to demonstrate the sustainability of the work that has been achieved. This empowers COPES to continually assess what works for individual families and the ever changing needs of our rural communities.

Johanna Partridge,
COPES Team, AirS

