

Portage and Pre-School Home Teaching Policy - 2010

The policy document of 2008 was reviewed after consultation with the Portage team, Portage Supervisory/management team and the Portage Development Group.

As a registered service the NPA Code of Practice and Ethical Guidelines 2006 have been adhered to throughout the policy.

It is to be read in conjunction with the other relevant policy documents of Beacon Hill School and North Tyneside Council, which are all kept in the Portage office - Child Protection, Lone Working, Complaints/Grievance Policies, Equal Opportunities, Continuing Professional Development, Bereavement, Health and Safety, Data Protection and Staff Safe Guarding Policies.

The policy fulfils the following aims of Beacon Hill school:

- That promotes a happy, healthy atmosphere of security, trust and respect
- That actively develops parental partnerships for the benefit of the pupils

Portage is a service that values and respects the family through its work. A Portage worker is one who gives a regular amount of time on a weekly/fortnightly basis to the education and development of the child within the family setting, who supports the family in deciding what is important for themselves and their child. The Portage Service Level Agreement with parents emphasises the need for mutual trust and respect and sets out clearly how the parents are partners in the service delivery.

- All partners include, involve and inform each other.

The Portage Team in North Tyneside is founded on the principle of a multi-agency model. 29 participants have been trained at Portage Basic Workshops over the last 3 years. They have been from Special schools, Additionally Resourced Nurseries, Children's Centres. Educational Psychology, SALT and Physiotherapy.

There is an understanding that information relating to a child's needs will be shared between relevant professional involved with the children and families. The Head of Portage is a member of the core team on the Special Needs Team, which meets monthly to refer very young babies and children to the appropriate services.

Portage visitors will try to arrange joint visits with other professionals wherever this is appropriate. The 2 professionals will then discuss joint target setting and share these with parents.

- That develops high quality inclusion within and beyond Beacon Hill.

Portage is a service that supports children with special educational needs to achieve optimum progress. Portage Visitors will support families in transition to educational settings or to access playgroups, Play Matters sessions or any other community group the family wants to join in with their child eg. Local Children's Centres, Music and Movement sessions.

- That celebrates achievement for all.
- That empowers all individuals equally and so meets diverse needs

Portage visitors involve parents/carers in setting targets for their child. Parents are encouraged to record progress and celebrate achievements, no matter how small, with the Portage visitor as part of the weekly visit.

Newly trained Portage Visitors will work through a programme of Core Competencies which extends their skills under a range of headings and ensure that they have met the standards expected of visitors by the NPA.

The Aims of the Portage and Pre-School Home Teaching Service

- To provide effective early years structured teaching for children who have additional support needs.
- To support parents/carers in promoting their child's learning and development.
- To work with others to provide a holistic service to parents/carers and children.
- To facilitate the successful transition from one phase of Early Learning opportunities/education to the next.
- To provide Early Years Action Plus and Statutory Advice as part of the process of meeting a child's additional support needs.

Principles

The National Portage Association is committed to promoting services that are -

- Family Centred
- Well co-ordinated
- Accessible
- Competent
- Accountable
- In partnership with other agencies.

" Portage is most effective when it is both a source of support for individual children and families and a link by which other services are accessed and used effectively." NPA Code of Practice and Ethical Guidelines 2006

The Portage Model is characterised by:

- Regular home visiting - weekly or fortnightly visits are offered.
- Supporting the development of play, communication, relationships and learning for young children within the family. Portage Visitors complete initial assessments, set long term goals in agreement with families and break these down into achievable targets which are reviewed at least every 6 months, in consultation with parents.
- Working together with parents/carers within the family, with them taking the lead role in the partnership that is established. Planning individual activities and encouraging parents to carry these out and record their child's progress throughout the week.

- Helping parents/carers to identify what is important to them and their child and plan goals for learning and participation. Observing and assessing child and then, in discussion planning long term goals
- Keeping a shared record of the child's progress and other issues raised by the family. Using agreed pro forma documents as specified by the NPA. All Portage Home Visitors should be familiar with the NPA guidelines on confidentiality and adhere to the general rule that no information is to be disclosed to another agency without parental consent, except in the case of issues of Child Protection. Information about individual children will be kept under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998.
There are digital cameras available for the PHV to record a child's progress. Use of photography is discussed with parents at the initial visit and is agreed to within the Service Level Agreement parents sign with their PHV.
- Responding flexibly to the needs of the child and family when providing support. Working to the agreed model of Portage visits - Child led play, Structured teaching activities and Family Focus.
- Portage Home Visitors accessing support through regular team meetings, on behalf of the family they work with.
Portage Visitors in North Tyneside are drawn from a variety of Pre-School settings and services and commit to the equivalent of a day a week to the Portage service. This enables them to visit their family or families and attend Supervision meetings.
- Working closely with other agencies. Establishing Service level links and individual family links with other professionals and agencies. Joint target setting and visiting where appropriate. Visiting children in other settings eg. Multi sensory rooms, playgroups etc.

Service delivery should be responsive to the key themes, desired outcomes and developments in government strategy for early intervention and family support including Every Child Matters (DFES 2003) and Together from the Start - Practical Guidance for Professionals working with Disabled Children (0-3) and their Families (DFES 2003). All Portage Home Visitors have undertaken training on the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum document.

Management Group

- The North Tyneside Portage and Pre-School service is managed through Beacon Hill School and is overseen by both a Development Group and Committee of Governors, which meet once per term to discuss relevant Service issues.
- The Head of the Service provides a written report on the Service to each of these groups once every term.
- There is a balanced membership of parents/carers and representatives from both statutory and voluntary sector organisations who provide services to families with children with additional needs.
- The Management group has the responsibility to: Review service outcomes, review measures of family satisfaction and advise on standards and developments in service delivery.

GUIDELINES

1.Entry & Discharge Criteria

Referrals:

In line with NPA guidelines it is recommended that all Portage services operate an open referral system, accepting referrals from families themselves as well as other agencies.

- The North Tyneside service works with children from birth up to the time they enter a formal Early Years Education and Cultural Services setting.
- The service is available to any child who:

"is experiencing significant developmental impairment or delays, in one or more of the areas of cognitive development, sensory or physical development, communication development, social, behavioural or emotional development;

or

has a condition which has a high probability of resulting in developmental delay."

(From "Together From the Start Practical guidance for professionals working with disabled children (birth to third birthday) and their families". DfES LEA/0067/2003-10-13)

Referrals can be made using the Service referral form or taken over the telephone and the necessary information recorded on the service referral form. Where an agency is making a referral for a child and family, it is essential that the referral has been fully discussed with parents/carers and their permission obtained.

A waiting list will be maintained if necessary. Priority of take up will be determined by a balance across the following criteria:

- Depth of need.
- Breadth of difficulty
- Length of time on waiting list
- Number of other providers currently involved
- Parent/carer views

Where a waiting list does exist the Head of Service will continue to arrange initial visits to newly referred families. They will be informed of how long it is likely to be until a Portage Visitor is available to work with them.

Service Level Agreement

This is discussed with parent/carer during the Initial Visit by the Head of the Service and, if the involvement of the service is agreed, it is signed by both parent/carer and their allocated Home Visitor during the introductory visit.

Discharge Criteria

Visits may be gradually phased out, suspended or withdrawn when:

- Child is placed in an Education & Cultural Services Early Years setting for any length of time.

- A child is attending 4 or more half-day sessions in an Early Years setting, other than Education & Cultural Services and is deemed to be settled, with their educational needs being met confidently by the establishment.

(When appropriate, the Portage Service will liaise and attend transition meetings with the designated Early Years area SENCO. The Service will also liaise directly with the area Educational Psychologist and files passed over accordingly.)

- Family requests temporary or permanent cessation of visits.
- There is a succession of unexplained failed visits.
The procedure, in this instance, is detailed below:
 1. From the outset parent/carer will be informed of discharge policy.
 2. Unless formal notification of cancellation is received from parent/carer prior to visit, the Portage appointment will be kept.
 3. Cancellation will be recorded in visit notes.
 4. Non-attendance at a scheduled visit will be recorded by leaving a non-contact slip with the family. This will be recorded in visit notes.
 5. After two consecutive and unexplained, missed appointments or two appointments missed in a four visit cycle, a parent/carer will be sent a supportive letter of enquiry re non contact and requesting response from parent/carer. A copy of this letter will be sent to Special Needs Team.
 6. Lack of response to enquiries or a further unexplained missed visit will result in formal discharge.
 7. If there are concerns about a parent's/carer's capacity to maintain appointments for reasons relating to personal circumstances, the Portage Team will liaise with him/her and with other agencies agreed by parent/carer in order to mitigate the problem.
- Programmes of work are repeatedly not followed through.
- Parent//carer is not present during teaching sessions on consistent/regular basis.
- Where there are fears for staff safety through threatening or abusive behaviour.

2. Service Evaluation

When it is agreed that Portage visits are to cease parents are invited to complete an evaluation questionnaire. This feedback is kept on file for monitoring purposes. After a period of 6 to 12 months a second evaluation is sent. Again feedback is monitored.

The Service will be monitored and evaluated through systems in place in Beacon Hill and in line with the National Portage Association and Local Authority. Part of the development of the North Tyneside Service was for monitoring by a neighbouring service to be completed annually.

An annual Action Plan will be drawn up by the Head of Service, in consultation with the Management group, and this will be included in the Beacon Hill School Progress Plan. Progress towards targets is discussed at monthly School Progress Meetings and then evaluated at the end of the year (in March)

Lynn Scorer collects data regarding the number of referrals received, uptake of the service, numbers of families visited and referrals on the waiting list (where appropriate). This will be collated annually (in March) to facilitate analysis of performance, inform budgetary and staffing requirements for the service and ensure an effective use of resources.

3. Responsibilities of PHV's and Supervisors

Portage Home Visitors have a range of responsibilities as set out in the NPA Code of Practice and Ethical Guidelines. These include their work with children and families, Attendance at Supervision and Team meetings, Monitoring and evaluation, Working with other agencies, Training, Professional Development and Promoting the aims and values of the National Portage Association (NPA).

Portage Supervisors are required to have responsibility for the day-to-day service management, they may also have a number of families to visit and are required:

- To undertake to provide the link between the Portage team and the Management Group
- Organise service delivery and training in accordance with NPA recommendations
- Act as contact person for the Service, carry out initial visits to families, organise events where families can meet informally.
- Offer supervision and support to all members of the team - (accompany on home visits where appropriate/assist in report writing etc.)
- Evaluate Service Delivery and report service outcomes to the Management Group.
- Play an active role in the local multi-agency network, including supporting children from Portage through transition into an Early Years setting.
- Organise training for parents and early years workers from other agencies to support the inclusion of children with additional needs, including the delivery of the Portage Basic Workshop. Organise in-service training for the Portage team, which must include Child Protection and Disability Equality Training.
- Maintain own Professional Development
- Promote the values and aims of the NPA as an individual member and as a member of a registered service.
- Keep their team up to date on developments at regional and national level within the NPA.

The Portage Service requires administrative support to assist in the ordering of resources, payment of invoices, minuting of meetings, receiving and relaying messages to the appropriate personnel and typing/photocopying of reports for Governors, Management group etc.

This responsibility is fulfilled within the existing administration team within Beacon Hill.

4. Equal Opportunities - refer to Beacon Hill and NPA policy documents

The Portage Service is available to all Pre-school children with developmental delay in one or more areas, regardless of race, religion or gender.

"It is expected that all Portage Home Visitors should have respect for all children, parents and colleagues they are working with, regardless of their background or circumstances" (P.37 of NPA Code of Practice and Ethical Guidelines 2006)

Portage Home Visitors need to be sensitive to the requirements of particular families and respond appropriately (eg. Booking interpreters for families where English is an additional language, removing shoes at the door etc) It is expected that all Portage Home Visitors will attend relevant training in relation to Disability Equality training. It is a condition of registration with the National Portage Association that Supervisors organise this for their teams.

5. CPD for Portage Home Visitors (PHV's)

There is a system of Continuous Professional Development being developed within the Portage service for the Portage Home Visitors. They are required to complete a 'Core Competency' booklet as part of their supervision. This covers 5 main areas - Family Partnership, Multi Agency

working, Continuing Personal Development, Continuing Professional Development and Planning, Recording and Sharing Activities.

They are expected to undertake relevant Training Opportunities offered through the NPA, Local Authority, Beacon Hill or their own work settings. Training records are to be held as part of their Individual Supervision files.

They work under supervision until they have completed the Core Competencies and have received the certificate for this. (For North Tyneside this may take in excess of 12 months because the team members only work for Portage one day each week)

6. Child Protection - Refer to Beacon Hill Policy & NPA Code of Practice 2006

The Service follows the principles developed by North Tyneside Council Local Safeguarding Children's Board. Parents/carers are made aware of the Portage Service commitment to these principles during the Initial Visit. It is agreed with parents at this stage that Portage is a partnership and as such they are expected to take an active part in the Portage visits. This means that the PHV should not be left alone with a child for any significant length of time.

All members of the Portage Team have up to date Child Protection training. All PHV's have enhanced CRB 's which are kept on file in the Portage office.

Where a child is the subject of a Care Order the Service undertakes to attend meetings and/or to provide reports, given reasonable advance notification.

If Portage visitors have concerns regarding children they should initially report their concerns to the Service Manager - ie. Helen Jones or Judith Moore, Deputy Head, who is one of the designated Child Protection officers for Beacon Hill.

Similarly if allegations or suspicions are made against a member of the team these must be reported to the Service manager. Parents/carers will be advised of how to progress this course of action.

7. Complaints against staff - Refer to Beacon Hill Policy Document.

The Portage Service will ensure that the number of complaints received is minimal by ensuring that the Service is operated to the highest professional standards.

This standard will be maintained by:

The Recruitment of suitably qualified staff

The provision of ongoing training

The provision of formalised supervision, monitoring and appraisal systems

Seeking regular feedback from service users

Implementing a procedure for reviewing service policy and practice, both in light of any complaints and as part of a strategic service development plan.

8. Safeguarding of Staff - Guidelines for Home Visitors Refer also to Beacon Hill Lone Working Policy Document

As Portage is a home visiting service there needs to be agreed, specific guidelines and procedures for members of the team to follow.

Many of these have been drawn from the Beacon Hill Safe Guarding Code of Conduct and the Educational Psychology Service Staff Safety and Security Policy. (September 2006) These documents will be available to read in the Blue file kept in the Portage Resource base for the PHV team to access at any time.

The Head of Service will arrange for training on Lone Working for all members of the team through North Tyneside Council.

All PHV's have a mobile phone provided for them by the Portage service. This is for their use in order to maintain contact with their families, other professionals and contact the Portage office.

Professional Judgement

All members of the team will:

- Understand the responsibilities which are part of their role and be aware that there may be sanctions if these are breached.
- All adults will act and be seen to act in the child's best interests.
- Avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions or question their suitability to work with children.
- Take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour.
- Always discuss any misunderstanding, accidents or threats with their supervisor.
- Record discussions and actions taken with justifications.

PHV's will NEVER use their position to gain access to information for their own advantage and/or a child's or family's detriment.

Visits

- The Head of the Service has a timetable to show the visits of each member of the team.
- All members of the team have agreed to text the Portage office when they have completed their visit. This is particularly relevant at the end of an afternoon where the Home Visitor may be going home rather than returning to their place of work. They have been provided with a mobile phone specifically for this.
- PHV's are not obliged to stay in a situation in which they feel uncomfortable. (eg. If the parent they usually visit is not in and they are left alone with an unfamiliar adult) They should use their own judgement in cutting short the visit and leaving at the earliest opportunity.
- If a PHV feels that a visit is likely to be difficult they should discuss this with the Supervisor who may accompany them, if this is appropriate.

Transportation in Cars

- PHV's may on rare occasions be called upon to transport a child in their car. This should always be discussed with a Supervisor first.
- They should NEVER do this alone - preferably always with a parent present.
- PHV's MUST ensure that they have an appropriate car seat in their car and that they are insured for such transportation.

Dress and Appearance

- It is expected that PHV's will dress in a manner appropriate to their work - decently and safely for the tasks they need to perform.
- No clothes likely to cause offence, misunderstanding or embarrassment to be worn. (eg. Slogans, very revealing etc)

Gifts

- It has been agreed that PHV's can send the child they visit a birthday card but are advised not to purchase gifts.
- Gifts received from families are disclosed to the team at Group Supervision meetings and recorded in the minutes.

Bereavement - Refer to Beacon Hill Policy Document

- A number of children referred to Portage have life limiting conditions.
- PHV's are advised to refer to the Beacon Hill Bereavement policy.
- In the event of the death of a child receiving Portage Home Visits the PHV will contact the Head of Service and either contact the family themselves or request that the Head of Service does this. If they feel able to deal with the situation themselves this is acceptable. However if they feel they require support at this time this is the responsibility of the Head of the Service.
- The Head of Service and/or the PHV will attend the child's funeral and maintain contact with the family via telephone or letter until it is appropriate for this contact to cease.

Lynn Scorer - Head of Portage and Pre-School Home Teaching Service

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