

MARCH 2016

# Children's Centre Leader



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 SUPPORTING FAMILY CHOICE
- 3 BIRTH REGISTRATIONS
- 6 FF2 CHAMPIONS IN KENT
- 8 THE RURAL WAY
- 10 PARENT EMPLOYABILITY
- 12 RECLAIMING QUALITY

AT THE FOREFRONT

## Supporting Family Choice

by James Hemsall

You've been telling me you want to ensure children's centres continue to be at the forefront of delivering high quality services, safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, ensuring life changing interventions, and destigmatising services for those families that need those most. All of which, in turn, open up a realm of new opportunities and possibilities for the communities we work with.

The current climate remains a challenging one. Last issue, we talked about how now is the time to rethink and reenergise the children's centre offer before we need to resuscitate it. We have been promised a Department for Education (DfE) led consultation to inform the future of children's centres.

However, it has now been postponed until the summer. So, instead of a period of rethinking and reenergising, what we have, unfortunately, is a stagnant stage, rather than a 'business as usual' - one pending a consultation that may or may not happen.

The damage such inertia can cause at a time when local areas are making budget decisions is potentially huge. What centres need is a central direction and steer, and I fear we are months, possibly even years away from that. And then it might be too late for much of the excellent practice out there. So, in the absence of a national focus and the risk of ever decreasing circles, local areas need to be resolute in their drive for excellence, accountability, and the

(continued on page 2)

## Welcome

Welcome to the March 2016 issue of Children's Centre Leader.

This issue celebrates partnership working with a birth registrations project in Northumberland, explores rural issues on p8. Consider the meaning of quality in children's centres on p12 and employability for parents on p10. Also, celebrate the good work of champions in Kent raising the take up of the 2-year-old early years entitlement.

Let us know what you think by emailing: [cclr@hemsalls.com](mailto:cclr@hemsalls.com)

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