

Early Years Commissioning Team Guidance Notes

Internet & Communication

Branding and your identity

You will need to decide on your image and the impression you wish to create. This can include your name, your logo, the colours and fonts used and also some key words. You might include your vision statement. These elements of your brand or identity should be used for all your promotional activities and resources and will therefore become familiar within the community and hopefully synonymous with good quality childcare.

Website

The majority of parents will start with the internet when they begin to think about childcare services. It is essential that you have an effective and attractive website which is easy to navigate and provides all the essential information. Your website can be as simple or as complex as you want. A web designer can set up your website or you can buy a package and create one yourself. It is an advantage to have an element of the website that can be easily and regularly updated. This will allow you to headline anything new such as extra sessions available or reminders about upcoming events.

Make sure that you have clear and concise information so that parents can see what you can offer. Include session times, whether you offer the free entitlement and costs where appropriate. Most importantly make sure that your contact details are prominent and clear and that enquiries that come through your website are regularly monitored and responded to quickly. Set up an automated acknowledgement email if possible.

Explore whether you can link to other relevant websites such as Schools, Children's Centres and Ofsted. Ensure that you subscribe to Surrey County Council tool for parents Childcare Finder and update your entry regularly so that parents can see that you have vacancies.

Accessibility

Whether you are developing a new website or updating an existing one it is really important that you make sure that you use key words so that people searching online can find you. Include the words nursery, pre school, early years foundation stage and free entitlement as well as any others which will bring you as high as possible on the results page. It is also really useful to include software that can record the number of visits to your site and the click count so that you can review how effective your website is and how people use it. You can link this to data that you collect about how customers find you. It is a great idea to put yourself in the place of potential customers by searching online to see how easy it is to find you and to find out all about your setting. Enlist a friend or colleague to do the same and gather feedback. You could also explore whether you have a presence on any other forums or network sites such as mumsnet.com as this is another way in which potential customers begin to form an impression of your service. A positive post on one of these sites can be invaluable.

Ensure that your website can be accessed from a handheld device. Many parents will do their internet browsing on mobile phones and if your site is not mobile friendly it could count against you. If they successfully make contact with a competitor you may miss out on their business. This particularly applies to any forms and documents that can be completed online.

Social Media

Parent Updates -Consider creating facebook and twitter accounts to help you to communicate with your parents and potential customers. It is an advantage if you have a member of staff who is competent with networking who is happy to take on the responsibility for maintaining these accounts. Parents also enjoy the opportunity to update you on their children via their own accounts.

Professional Updates – Take the opportunity to share information on the latest professional developments.

Staff -Make sure that all staff have read and understood your social media policy as careless or thoughtless posts can have a detrimental impact on reputation.

Parentmail and Text Alerts

Maintaining open communication with customers is a very effective and positive marketing tool. Sending regular updates via email and text maintains an open dialogue and raises your settings profile within the community. It is also an excellent way to encourage parents to talk about and promote your childcare provision.

Further advice

For further advice regarding marketing, or details about training, contact your Early Years Commissioning Team on email: childcarebusinessadvice@surreycc.gov.uk