

EYPS

THE PROFESSIONALS

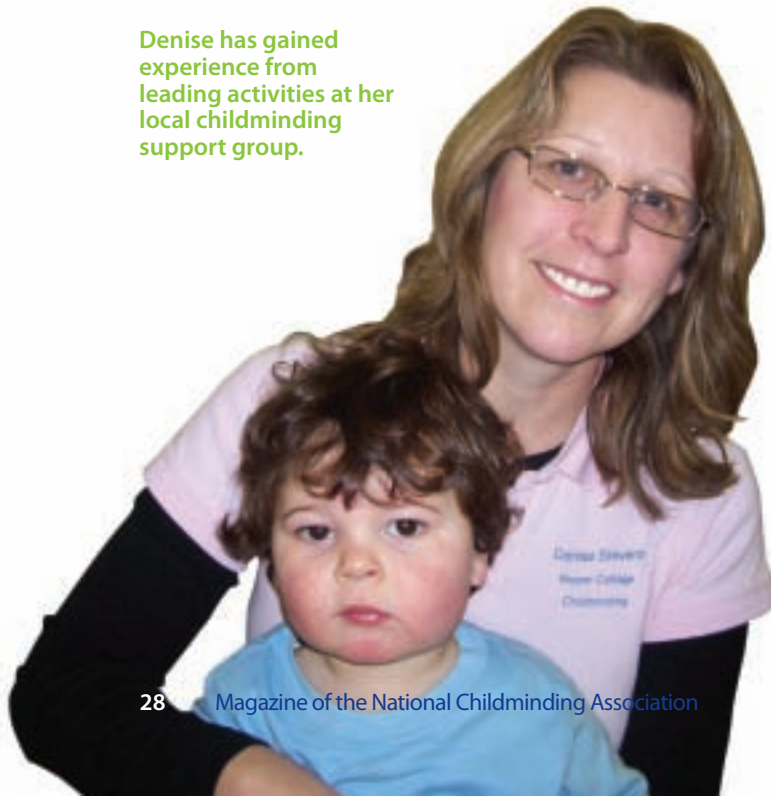


Have you ever wondered what an Early Years Professional is, and how childminders can get involved?

“EYPS helped me to recognise what I do well and to believe in myself”



Denise has gained experience from leading activities at her local childminding support group.



Lizzie McAteer and Denise Stevens are two childminders who have gained Early Years Professional status (EYPS). Lizzie is a qualified teacher from Ledbury in Herefordshire, and has been childminding for four years. Denise, a graduate childminder from Ross-on-Wye, started studying for EYPS two years ago.

Gaining EYPS means that they have achieved a graduate-level qualification demonstrating that they meet a series of national standards in working with children from birth to five. Lizzie and Denise now act as role models to other childminders in the area, leading and supporting them to improve their practice.

Lizzie and Denise both appreciate the support of Herefordshire Council in setting up the Herefordshire Children Come First approved network and the opportunities for continuing their professional development. The network is county-wide covering 80 miles in total, and 69 per cent of network childminders have, or are working towards, a level 3 qualification. Lizzie and Denise are the only two childminders with EYPS in the network – and in Herefordshire.

Leading activities

Network childminders run support groups in each of the nine children's centres in Herefordshire. This helps recruit childminders onto the network, as well as providing a way in which Lizzie and Denise can lead good practice for other childminders.

Denise says, "I was worried about how the other childminders would respond to me leading activities during the childminding support group. But it's been lovely – they've been really enthusiastic and supportive. One of the popular sessions that I did was on story sacks – I took some I'd made myself and then used them during the session with the children. I also prepared a handout on how to put a sack together and the benefits of using them."

Mentoring

One of the ways that the network and local authority makes use of Lizzie and Denise's expertise is by engaging them as quality mentors, which means they support other childminders that need or request help. Lizzie supported childminder of 13 years, Cathy Smart, with her written policies. Cathy says, "Lizzie is brilliant. I can talk about what I want to write but when it comes to putting pen to paper, it's a different matter. Lizzie didn't tell me what to write, but she

“It gets a different side of my brain working after being with the children all day”

helped me understand what I needed to do, and work out ways to express myself. It is fantastic that I can ask her things; Lizzie has qualifications that I don't, and if she can help me then I'm grateful for that.”

Denise supports new childminders from the point when they've had their first briefing through the registration process and during the first year of their childminding career. Lizzie and Denise are also leading other childminders by being tutors. Lizzie teaches the Diploma in Home-based Childcare one evening a week, and Denise uses her degree in computing in business to develop and run IT training for childminders. She runs basic introductory courses, as well as ones on writing and laying out newsletters, and digital imaging supporting childminders who'd like to provide photographic evidence for observations.

New experiences

There are different ways to gain EYPS status, which take different lengths of time. Denise decided she wanted to take her time over the EYPS so that she was well prepared and had time to think about her evidence. She says, “I took the long route to EYPS which took me 15 months. I felt that the longer route would give me more time to develop my experience. I could take my time looking into things and working out the best way to demonstrate how I met the standards. I did work experience at a local nursery to learn about a different setting, which was really interesting. For EYPS you need to show how you work with children from birth to 5 years old, and at the time I was mainly caring for children in the 3 to 5 age group, so the nursery also helped with my understanding of the under 3s.”

Being an EYP has also provided opportunities to get out and meet



other people. Lizzie says “since I started childminding, I have always taken every opportunity for training. It gets a different side of my brain working after being with the children all day and it's great to network with other childminders – working on your own can be quite isolating.” And Denise enjoys the exchange of ideas that comes from doing EYPS. She says, “I've learned so much from other people as well as the studying that I've done.”

Self-confidence

As with other training and areas of professional development, gaining EYPS has given Lizzie and Denise a huge boost in confidence. Denise realises that it's hard to be objective

Lizzie has been able to help support other childminders in the area.

when working on your own. She explains, “it's hard to get feedback for my work, so more than anything, achieving EYPS gives me the professional reassurance that I'm doing my job well.” Lizzie says, “EYPS helped me to recognise what I do well and to believe in myself.” ●

Could you be an Early Years Professional?

Early Years Professionals can work in a range of roles in group settings such as nurseries and children's centres, and as home-based childcarers. They lead practice, support other practitioners and are central to helping children develop from birth until the age of 5.

Training to become an EYP is open to childminders in England with different backgrounds and qualifications. To achieve EYPS you will need a degree qualification and GCSEs in English and Mathematics. The pathways to EYPS can take from 4 to 15 months, depending on previous experience. There is funding available for childminders who want to achieve EYPS through the Graduate Leader Fund. Ask your local early years team for more information.

To find out more about EYPS, contact the Children's Workforce Development Council by calling 0113 244 6311 or visit www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/eyps