

A. Introduction

In accordance with my Terms of Reference I held Workshops with Parents and Specialists working with Disabled Children in order to agree the principles and guidelines for the establishment of a Toy Library at Bykhov.

These Workshops were a planned development of the Workshops and Presentation Sessions I had held in previous Phases of the Programme, particularly the Workshops held in December 2007, which focused on developing the partnership roles of parents, the disabled child, families and supporting professionals, and their participation in early years development and education of children with disabilities. Similarly, these Workshops built on elements of the Basic Portage Model Workshops held in February 2008, and they were in response to earlier requests by participants.

They reflected:

- The Recommendations contained in my Report of the Workshops held in March 2006
- The Needs Analysis developed at the Workshops in Bykhov in October 2006
- The resulting Activities Plan by SDC

In preparation for the Workshops, I identified best current practice and models in the UK, and brought materials and information which I handed to CCF for translation and ongoing use as appropriate.

Two participants came from Toy Libraries established in the last year by CCF in Kobrin and Orsha. Their experience and input were very useful, whilst they also stated that they gained from participating in the Workshops at Bykhov (feedback notes are attached).

Lists of those attending are with CCF in Minsk. Parents and professionals came from Bykhov and the surrounding area, in addition to the two already mentioned from Kobrin and Orsha.

Staff from CCF Belarus also attended as participants and enablers.

B. Objectives

Building on the previous Workshops and Recommendations, the overarching objectives were practical ones, focusing on the establishment and running of Toy Libraries, and on their sustainable use by families, communities and services.

Ongoing development of partnership working was emphasised so that mutual support between specialists and parents was enhanced by using the Toy Library as a resource and as a tool for the continuing play and education of children with disabilities.

An immediate objective was the establishment of a Toy Library at Bykhov, and the content and methodology of the Workshops focused on this aim which, according to the participants' feedback, was achieved.

C. Methodology

The Workshops covered the following topics:

- The Purpose of Toy Libraries:
 - Emphasis was on their being much more than a box of toys for lending.
 - They are part of Early Years Educational Provision, with targeted support to address specific needs of each child and each family

- They are also a befriending, supportive service to parents and carers (including grandparents and siblings).
- They are a resource for Professionals in an informal setting.
- How to establish a Toy Library, exploring issues such as:
 - Why are you setting up a Toy Library
 - Who will be the Users, including their age range and numbers
 - What will you offer, including discussion of play group activities
 - When will the service be available
 - Where will it take place
 - How will you keep it going particularly after the current Project ends
 - Who can help you
- Practical issues in having a Mobile Toy Library
- Day-to-day administration and organisation

Preparations for the Workshops included a Course File for each participant (translated into Russian by CCF) which included copies of the PowerPoint Presentations.

The thrust of the training methodology was to ensure that the participants owned any outcomes of the Workshops, and that models and methods were not imposed upon them. Throughout the Workshops, participation was encouraged through discussion and personal input and this methodology was valued by all the participants (see the attached Summary of Evaluation Comments by the Participants).

Specific use was made of current best evaluated practice in the UK. This was demonstrated and explored during the Workshops in order to enable participants, in accordance with their own situations, to address the issues involved, to develop their own answers, and to set in train the establishment of the Toy Library in Bykhov.

D. Recording

Contents of the Workshops were recorded by CCF staff, and the materials used are on file.

E. Outcomes and Follow-On

It was agreed that the objectives of the Workshops were met and that practical steps would be taken to establish a Toy Library in Bykhov in accordance with the principles and practical guidelines which had been explored and developed. An Action Plan will be implemented by CCF.

Accordingly, the establishment of the Toy Library will take its place as an element in the Home Based Care Programme.

John Harris
26th March 2008