

## Marketing Guide for Childcare Providers in Devon

### Contents

Introduction .....	2
Support for you .....	2
Choosing a name for your setting .....	2
Logos .....	3
Advertising your setting.....	3
Job vacancy service.....	4
Using websites to promote your business.....	4
Promoting your business.....	5
News Releases .....	5
Basics for preparing news releases .....	5
Posters.....	8
Leaflets .....	8
Brochures.....	9
Portfolios .....	9
Photo Albums.....	9
Newsletters .....	9
Clothing.....	9
Signage.....	9
Communication .....	10
Marketing action plan .....	11
Monitoring and evaluation .....	11
Generating extra income in your setting.....	12
Contact Us .....	12

## Introduction

This guide is aimed at helping childcare providers in Devon to achieve marketing success. It has been produced by Devon County Council's Early Years and Childcare Service. We promote and help to set up good quality, local and affordable childcare.

## Support for you

Although this guide is aimed at providing answers, readers may well have further questions. A dedicated team at The Early Years and Childcare Service is on hand to offer support. Please do call us and we'll try and help.

### Support available:

- Marketing
- Business
- Funding
- Recruitment
- Training
- Quality Improvement
- Registration
- DISC Devon's family information service
- General childcare information

## Contact us

<b>Phone</b>	<b>0800 056 3666 (Mon – Fri office hours)</b>
<b>Email</b>	<b><a href="mailto:eycs@devon.gov.uk">eycs@devon.gov.uk</a></b>

## Choosing a name for your setting

Choosing a name is an important stage in establishing your provision. The choices are endless but whether you are setting up as a company or a voluntary organisation there are rules and laws governing your choice of name. The simplest name to trade under is your own name and in the majority of cases this presents no problems. If you are setting up as a company under any other name you will need to select a name that is not already in use.

Companies House regulate business names and publish a series of guidance booklets. Contact them on 0303 1234 500 or visit their website: [www.companieshouse.gov.uk](http://www.companieshouse.gov.uk). You can search their website to see if your name is already in use and find out what name restrictions there are in England.

If you are setting up as a charity similar rules apply but the governing body is the Charity Commission. Contact them on 0845 300 0218 or visit their website: [www.charitycommission.gov.uk](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk). They might ask you to change or amend your name if it already exists. If you are not a charity or a company there are no restrictions to your choice. However, names can be overused. For example there are currently nearly 100 registered charities and companies using 'Busy Bees' in their name. It's easy to see why this is a popular choice but there probably isn't room for any more! Also avoid names that are copyrighted or used as trademarks, for example 'Mickey Mouse' or 'Winnie-the-Pooh'. Contact Intellectual Property Office for advice on 0300 300 2000 or visit [www.ipo.gov.uk](http://www.ipo.gov.uk).

DISC (Devon's family information service) holds lists of all registered providers in Devon so you can ask them to search for a particular name to make sure you are going to be unique and to avoid being confused with another setting of the same name. Contact DISC on Tel: 0800 056 3666 or visit [www.devon.gov.uk/disc](http://www.devon.gov.uk/disc).

Once you understand the guidelines how do you choose a good name? Think about your customers - what will appeal to them?

## **You can base it on:**

- your location - village or street
- the local school, leisure centre or community group if you are associated with one
- something you think makes you unique or describes your service

## **Examples of setting names:**

- Blue Bus Special Needs Creche gives you several important pieces of information
- Exeter Under 5s tells you immediately that the group specialises in under 5s
- Turning Point Creche
- Phoenix Out-of-School Club
- White Rabbit Pre-School

Sidmouth Seedlings is a lovely name but this could be anything from a two hour a week parent and toddler group to a full day nursery. Consider the pros and cons of each option and then make your choice.

## **Logos**

Logos contribute to the first impression a potential customer may have about you before they really know anything about you. Your logo should be clear and unfussy, ideally reflecting who you are and what you do.

There are several options for logo design. You can employ a designer to produce a logo for you, do it yourself or turn it into a joint project and use artwork produced by your children. If you do it yourself there are design packages available off the shelf at various prices.

## **Some points to consider:**

- what do you want your logo to say? Are you a serious organisation focused on learning, or a fun place to play at? Conservative or funky, traditional or modern? The better you understand yourself the easier it will be to create a logo
- you may need to shrink your logo to put it on headed paper and business cards. When you design it make sure it still works at the smallest size you think you'll need
- letters and leaflets often get photocopied - does your design work just as well in black and white?
- a multicoloured logo can be expensive to reproduce. Single or two-colour options are more cost-effective

## **Advertising your setting**

Most providers find they need to advertise at some time, perhaps to increase the uptake of places. Television is generally too expensive for the vast majority of providers. Radio and newspaper advertising is more accessible and there are a range of more focused opportunities.

### **Radio**

It may be more effective to join forces with other providers and place joint adverts, especially for radio advertising. Advertising sales personnel can be very persuasive on the phone. Do not be bullied or agree to anything you think is too expensive. If you think they are expensive tell them, as there is nearly always room to negotiate, especially if you are a non-profit making organisation. Ask who listens to the station and make sure it fits the profile of the people you need to reach. If you want to increase the uptake of places at a nursery, a station aimed at the over 50s, for example, is unlikely to help you even if they are competitively priced!

## Newspapers and magazines

Newspaper advertising is charged by area and each paper will have a rate for a single column centimetre (SCC). Advertising space is defined as so many centimetres down by so many columns across, so a 10 x 2 is an advert 10 cms in height by 2 columns across. If you want colour, this will be added on top either as a flat rate or as a percentage of the SCC rate.

To work out how much space you'll have, ask what the standard column width is. This way when you are planning your advert you won't try and cram too much in. Some publications will help you with design and layout but there may be a charge. Remember to include all the important details - who you are, contact information, the area you operate in and any logo you might have. Your wording then needs to focus on the benefits you can give your customers. For example, you might offer flexible opening times or a collection and drop-off service. Perhaps you have a music specialist in your group or a really good outdoor space.

You could ask for some editorial space to go alongside the advert. They may be more willing to do this than to reduce the price. Find out what other sections the paper runs and try to link in with them. Lifestyle sections might be interested in a feature on Work-Life Balance which you contribute to. If the paper prints daily find out which day has the best circulation. Consider smaller circulation titles like parish magazines and community newsletters. These smaller titles can be very cost effective and might target exactly the area you are interested in. Don't forget telephone directories. Basic listings can be free.

Think about the timing of adverts and who you want to see them. When do parents start looking for places? When do parents listen to the radio - on the school run, during lunch or at the weekend?

## Job vacancy service

There may come a time when you need to recruit new members of staff. We can support you by promoting your childcare vacancies for free in a number of ways:

- online at [www.devonjobs.gov.uk](http://www.devonjobs.gov.uk)
- online at [www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk)
- in print in Devon County Council's weekly Choice bulletin (for 1 week).

More information about the job vacancy service, including how to submit your vacancies, can be found on the [Recruitment pages of the EYCS website](#). Alternatively you can contact us on 01392 385398 or email [childrensworkforce-mailbox@devon.gov.uk](mailto:childrensworkforce-mailbox@devon.gov.uk).

## Using websites to promote your business

DISC (Devon's family information service) holds lists of all registered providers in Devon on its web pages [www.devon.gov.uk/disc](http://www.devon.gov.uk/disc). This free service allows parents and carers to search for childcare and other services in their area. Having your business listed on the DISC website is a great way to promote your Setting. The DISC team can also create a link from the DISC site to your website if you have one. Have a look to see what other providers say about themselves.

## Ever thought about having your own site?

Website software is becoming cheaper and easier to use all the time. Online website builders can take you through a step by step process. Ask your parents to see if there are any technically-minded types. Could they be willing to donate some of their time to put together a site for you? If they do, remember to keep it simple. Pictures are great but too many can make the site very slow to load remember to follow your e-safety policies when using the internet. You can read more about e-safety on our [Safeguarding pages of the EYCS website](#). If you have big chunks of text to include put them on as attached PDF or word files.

## **Include all the basic details about your setting:**

- type of childcare offered
- location
- opening times
- number of places available
- price per session
- activities offered
- qualifications and skills the staff have
- what your customers say about you
- what you do differently/better than other providers
- short term or emergency cover
- if special needs are catered for
- how can people contact you?

**The BT Community Website Builder** allows registered UK charities, non-profit making organisations and volunteer led groups or organisations to build and maintain their own website free of charge. Using the community website builder, groups can create their own self-editable website for their organisation. It's easy to use, no programming skills or knowledge required. To find out more visit [www.btck.co.uk](http://www.btck.co.uk) or email [support@ik.com](mailto:support@ik.com). The scheme is run by BT Volunteering and IK Software Limited. Sample websites and eligibility criteria are available on the site.

Have a look around for local community sites or regional sites for parents. Events listing can also be useful. If you are having a fair, jumble sale, cake sale or anything similar you may be able to get a free mention in a listing section.

## **Promoting your business**

### **News Releases**

News releases or press releases are on way of getting your message across to people you are trying to reach. The 'media' include television, radio and websites as well as the printed press. When published, news releases offer free publicity and are perceived to be more credible than adverts.

### **Basics for preparing news releases**

- become familiar with your local media to find out what their style is
- find out what their publication deadlines are to time your releases correctly
- get the names of key contacts – Education correspondent or News Editor
- check how they want to receive releases – post, fax, e-mail
- include children in your stories
- avoid jargon (gets someone from outside to read your release and check its readability – if they don't understand it, the journalist won't!)
- think in pictures! A giant teddy bears' picnic might not be groundbreaking but it's a great photo for the local paper.
- get written parental permission for all children to be photographed/filmed
- include the first name as well as the surname of any adults you quote. Explain how they are related to the story – parent, nursery manager, Bigtown MP etc.

### **What makes a story newsworthy?**

There is no guarantee that any release you send out will be printed, but you have a head start in working with children and young people. Childcare providers play an important role in the local community and many readers are parents/grandparents. The media knows this and is attracted to stories connected to children.

## Ideas for stories

- ST stories – firST, oldeST, youngeST, neweST
- celebrations/events/fundraising/trips (like a teddy bears' picnic)
- new research figures
- photo opportunity – a good picture may be used with just a caption underneath
- staff gaining qualifications/new staff appointed/long serving staff retiring
- play and concerts – pictures usually taken during dress rehearsals
- positive Ofsted reports
- family stories – new staff member used to attend the setting or third generation of children now attending

## Alternative places for sending releases

Magazines and newsletters published infrequently (monthly or less) can be good sources for features. Check their deadlines, as they can be eight weeks prior to the publication. Local businesses may have newsletters or an intranet interested in stories relevant to their employees.

## Tips for writing a news release

- avoid handwriting – type you release
- put your contact details on it
- use double spacing
- leave reasonable margins and print on one side of the paper only
- number the pages. Put –more- at the bottom if more pages follow and –end- at the end of the text
- if you want members of the public to contact you include your details in the release. If you have contact details just for journalists include them after the word –ends-. Make sure the person you name will be available once the release has gone out!
- spell numbers one to ten. For 11 and above, use numerals
- accuracy – spelling and punctuation must be perfect. Get someone else to check it!
- include an attention-grabbing headline to introduce the story
- be succinct. Keep releases to one side of A4, two at the most
- the first paragraph is the most important. It should put the story in a nutshell and sell the idea to a journalist. It should answer the questions Who, What, Where, When and Why
- in subsequent paragraphs include relevant quotes and any figures and statistics
- include the most relevant information at the beginning as editors cut releases from the bottom upwards
- notes for editors can be added after main release as a subsection. You could give brief details of your setting
- if the story refers to other organisations make sure they approve the release and show them a draft copy

## Using photographs

Including a photograph with a press release always increases the chances of publication and helps the story stand out from others on the page. For example, if you extend your provision to include a breakfast club, a picture of a child with a 'smiley sausage' for a mouth would work well. Children and adults dressed up or shown with their artwork would be appealing.

Put a full caption on the reverse of the photo in case only the photo and not the story gets published. Name the people pictured from left to right and add a caption e.g. a sponsored teddy bears' picnic was a great success this week at Smarties Nursery.

The picture must be clear and focused with the subject centred and prominent in the photo. Sometimes newspaper printing can be poor quality and a poor photo will be hard to make out. If you employ a professional photographer include a credit on the photo. Written permission must be obtained from everyone who appears in a photograph. This must state that they give permission for their image to be used. They must be aware of where the image will be used. Where children are included obtain consent from the parent or guardian. For more information please visit our [e-safety policy](#). You can read more about e-safety on our [Safeguarding pages of the EYCS website](#).

## **Listing names in photographs**

Pictured L-R with children from the nursery are John Smith (parent), Fred Bloggs (MP for Anytown), Jane Brown (Smarties Nursery Manager), Samantha Green (chair of Anycounty).

## **Distributing news releases**

News releases are better off coming direct from you because you are the most newsworthy aspect of the story. The media don't want to talk to a suit – they want a real worker from the childcare coalface who has in-depth knowledge of the points mentioned in the release.

## **Health warning**

Although news releases are a very cost-effective way of getting media coverage the edited result may not be exactly what you wanted. You cannot check any articles before they go out so there is an element of risk. If you feel you have been seriously misquoted or misrepresented you can ask for a correction but this is rarely needed.

## **Sample news release**

Some useful points to consider when putting together a news release:

- your logo
- date of sending
- headline to grab attention– in bold and a larger font size. Often easier to write this after the release has been drafted. Make them want to read on!

First paragraph – the story in a nutshell:

- who – name of the provider and any key individuals
- what is the story about?
- where is the provider located or the story happening?
- when did the event occur or will it happen?
- why is it happening? What is new?
- what are the benefits?

Subsequent paragraphs – will expand on this and may include sentences like “The event has been organised as part of National Awareness Weeks /Days i.e. National Play Day which aims to increase awareness of childcare throughout the UK”.

Quotes then follow – these can be from a spokesperson for your organisation, your guests or attendees at an event. Make sure the quote adds value to the story.

- for further information contact – designate someone to deal with any press enquires. Add their contact phone, mobile and email details for day and evening.
- notes for Editors – Brief details of your setting and any projects you refer to in the release.
- photo Opportunity – If you plan to give one include the date, time and location at the end. Put in bold to attract attention.
- number all pages – e.g. 1 of 2 etc
- your address, your phone number, your email, your website.

## Posters

Posters are not just larger versions of leaflets or flyers – they should have strong images and hardly any text. Resist the temptation to get all your information on a poster – rather use it as a means to redirect people towards more information. Use a phone number or e-mail address to show them where to go for more information.

- your selling points as bullet points
- always include contact details
- use a big picture or photo and less text
- leave some 'white space' – areas with no text or pictures – it makes the poster easier to read
- pictures/images and the main message must be readable from ten feet away
- put the most important information at the top of the page
- red lettering on a blue background is very hard to read but black on orange stands out well
- test your posters out. Can you read them from ten feet away? Show them to someone not connected to your setting. If they don't understand the message, re-write it

### **Posters can be placed in the following locations free of charge or for a small donation/fee:**

- Local shop
- Post Office
- Pub
- Village/Town Hall
- Church/Church hall
- Library/mobile library
- Local employers/colleges/schools
- Local credit union/bank
- Doctors/dentists/osteopaths/homeopaths etc.
- Council Information Points
- Staff rooms
- Local Children's Centre

Make a list of all the places you have left posters so that you can go back to all of them from time to time to check they are still in good condition and current.

## Leaflets

Leaflets are often A5 size. They are used to give out to anyone who wants to know more in detail about you. Try not to cram too much information in but make sure you include everything someone might need to understand your business. Include a contact name so they can find out more.

### **Things to include:**

- Your name and any business name you use
- Your contact details (address, telephone numbers, email, website)
- A logo if you have one
- Selling points – a brief description of your service and how you can benefit the children in your care
- Your charges, hours you provide etc.
- Relevant qualifications and experience
- Some photos/pictures, perhaps showing different aspects of your care e.g. a safe play area will help to illustrate the text. Include both sexes from as wide an age range as possible, showing ethnic diversity and special needs. Always get written parental permission for children pictured.

Use 12 point type size to make it easy to read. Leaflets or postcards are useful for door to door leaflet drops if you are hoping to attract more children from a certain area. You can also leave a stack on shop counters or public buildings. Check out if you need permission first.

## Brochures

Brochures can offer more detailed information about your setting than a poster or leaflet. They can be used as more “heavyweight” promotional items for prospective parents. They can also be useful if you ever decide to bid for funding. It is always a good idea to include several photographs (with written permission from parents for children included) to make the text more readable.

- Name, address, contact details, logo if you have one, any charity or business numbers
- Welcome page for parents by the leader, manager or chair
- Session details and fees
- Example day
- List Policies you have and include the actual policies that have to be shared with parents i.e. safeguarding, complaints, equal opportunities/Inclusion etc.
- Your approach to play, education, social development etc.

## Portfolios

In a portfolio you can keep more information about you and your team, for example, certificates from courses, copies of promotional items and any other policy documents. The portfolio helps parents/carers to see why you are the best choice for their childcare so make sure it does this. If you are a childminder write up your CV and take photographs of activities you arrange for the children. If you work with other providers or local schools include examples of how you get involved. Take your portfolio to show large employers such as the NHS.

## Photo Albums

Photo albums can be used to show prospective parents. Use them to highlight different aspects of your setting such as healthy eating at meal times or a day trip out. Add a date and caption to every photo and ensure you have written permission for their use (see the [e-safety policy](#)). Have a maximum of 20 carefully selected photos – just enough for a parent to flick through easily.

## Newsletters

Newsletters provide a good way to keep in regular touch with parents and anyone else in the local community who you think should know about you. They can offer a window on your setting so pay attention to detail, choose topic with care and match the style to your reader.

Use the newsletter to reinforce your message of high quality childcare. Don't mix your messages or overload each issue. Focus on what's really important – retaining existing customers, encouraging referrals and attracting new customers. Include information about what you have done, anything new, special achievements etc.

Try to include photos (with written parental permission where appropriate) to illustrate the stories. Make sure copies are distributed widely – perhaps the local primary school can help. Send copies to all decision makers to maintain your profile with them.

## Clothing

Clothing bearing your logo can create a smart image when worn by children and adults. Bright colours are safer as they can be seen more easily.

## Signage

Clear signage on a building is a good way of communicating who you are and what you do to anyone passing. Your name, logo, telephone number and e-mail address should be shown. Signs should be readable from 15 feet away.

Home-made signs look amateurish – parents may be adversely influenced before they've even set foot inside the door. Good quality signs give a professional impression and will help instil confidence in those who see them.

## Communication

Consider two main audiences: a) parents/carers b) decision makers such as school heads, community groups, parish/town/city/county councillors, funding bodies and MPs. Communicate regularly with them to build relationships and help them understand what is important to you and why you are doing such a good job.

Parents may enjoy coming to an open day and meeting staff and carers. An MP may like to read a brief newsletter article about your plans to extend a building, while the town or parish council may be interested in hearing in detail about it and feeling involved with it at a community level.

By carrying out various marketing activities your setting can reach a defined audience as part of a Marketing Activity Plan. Focus on your key selling points to promote your “brand” using logo, photographs and selected promotional items like posters.

Think about distribution of promotional items – where will your audience read your message? How long will they have to read it and how often will they see the message repeated? Queues often form in petrol stations, doctor’s surgeries, post offices, shop windows and police, fire and ambulance stations, offering captive readers a good long look at information such as a poster. Larger employers such as hospitals and offices may also let you use their notice boards.

## Marketing action plan

Your setting may have the best Ofsted report in Devon and you may have highly motivated staff and excellent facilities – but what use is that if you don't do any marketing and nobody knows about it! By creating a simple annual 'marketing activity plan' you can remind yourself of what you need to do and share out the jobs. Brief, regular meetings can provide feedback on results, updates on current issues and a chance to plan ahead.

### Sample marketing action plan

Activity	Action Dates	Who is Responsible? (staff name)
Update Photo Album	24-Jan ( <i>dates are a guide</i> )	
News release - children plan new playground	05-Feb	
Newsletter - Spring	08-Mar	
Design new logo	03-Apr	
Finalise new logo	19-Apr	
Update Photo Album	23-Apr	
Produce publicity leaflet	02-May	
Order t-shirts with logos	07-May	
News release - teddy bears' picnic	26-May	
Newsletter - Summer	01-Jun	
Attend parish council meeting	15-Jun	
Update photo album	02-Aug	
Update poster	07-Aug	
Develop new website	12-Aug	
News release - new building signage	14-Aug	
New building signage	18-Aug	
Newsletter - Autumn	24-Sep	
Update photo album	04-Oct	
Finalise website	21-Oct	
News release - Christmas play	03-Nov	
Update photo library	09-Dec	
Newsletter - Winter	14-Dec	

### Monitoring and evaluation

It is a good idea to note where enquires come from. This information can then be used to tell you which part of your marketing activity works best (and which is least effective).

You can list all your marketing activities (word of mouth, event, newsletter) and show how many enquires were generated by each activity and how much each activity cost. In this way you can work out all your marketing spending on a cost per enquiry basis. Future marketing spending can be focused on the areas that bring more results.

## **Generating extra income in your setting**

### **Fundraising**

Organisation events are a great promotional tool as well as being a good opportunity to raise some additional funds. This is easier if the club is a not for profit organisation but don't be put off if you are a private business as they are also a brilliant opportunity to build relationships with existing families and meet new ones, as well as publicising your club. Whatever your clubs management structure is, it is good practice to show how the money raised will be used to benefit the children either; to take part in or buy something they may not have been able to without their contribution. Planning events can take time and a lot of hard work but also are a lot of fun.

### **Fundraising ideas:**

Raffles, auctions, jumble sales, car boot sales, discos, parties, bbq's supermarket bag packing, summer picnics, sponsored events, school fetes, cake stalls, treasure hunts and talent shows.

### **Seeking sponsorship**

Businesses receive many demands for their sponsorship or charitable donations these days so attracting financial sponsorship is unlikely to be easy unless the company may benefit in some way, potential donors often want to feel their donation has achieved a purpose, asking for help so the children can have a special trip or buy a piece of equipment is more likely to be received positively than a request for money which will be absorbed into the clubs general funds. Asking for gifts of money can be difficult, so encouraging gifts of goods or services maybe easier to obtain. The most likely sponsorship is where the club gains more benefit than the cost to the donor, i.e. you might be more successful asking your local shop for food rather than money, remember businesses may have surplus stock that would be costly to you but they might not value too highly, and is great way to support and build links with local businesses in your area.

### **Contact Us**

For further information on any of the topics raised in this document please contact us:

Early Years and Childcare Service  
Kingfisher House  
Western Way  
Exeter  
EX1 2DE

Phone: 0800 056 3666 (Mon – Fri office hours)

Email: [eycs@devon.gov.uk](mailto:eycs@devon.gov.uk)

Website: [www.devon.gov.uk/eycs](http://www.devon.gov.uk/eycs)