

# LINKING

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE



*CHILDREN'S LINKS IS A NATIONAL CHARITY WHOSE MISSION IS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES*

→ **SINCE ITS INCEPTION** in 1993, Children's Links has benefited the lives of over 80,000 children. By responding to the needs of children and young people, and identifying gaps, the charity offers advice and guidance on all aspects of service delivery to those working in the sector. This includes those who work with babies, children, young people, their parents or carers, the communities they live in employers and other relevant organisations. Children's Links aims to quadruple its reach over the next three years.

#### **WITH CHILDREN IN MIND**

Children's Links has a professional workforce and expertise across many areas and key to their approach is being learner focused, as Thomasin Nicholds, Business Development Manager, explains: 'Regardless of what we're delivering, whether its training or frontline services to children, we take into account the circumstances and needs of the user. We use different learning tools, which might include the classroom or the Internet, so it is not just a case of one size fits all.'

There is a huge breadth in the work of Children's Links, from improving the experience of family prison visits to the delivery of a mobile play service in towns and villages: 'We work with prison officers to give families a meaningful visit so that they can maintain a family relationship,' says Thomasin. 'A prison environment is alien to a child, and our job is to train prison

workers to give them the skills to improve the environment. It's about making the most of the circumstances in the prison and therefore making the most of opportunities for both the child and the parent.'

#### **EXPRESSION THROUGH PLAY**

As part of the frontline delivery of services, Playranger is an open access mobile play service held in villages and towns where children can come and join in.

The service not only provides a space for children to play but they are actively encouraged to have ownership of the project: 'The participation side of things is so important,' stresses Thomasin, 'We've got a toolkit that demonstrates how to actively engage children in true participation so, for example, they will be involved in decision making and discussions about the play area.'

And this holds true right through Children's Links. There are young trustees on the board who discuss the services provided by the organisation and how to give children a voice. Children's Links also supports groups in local areas that are looking to implement a project.

#### **WORKING FOR CHILDREN**

Michael Robinson is an apprentice in Management Services: 'When I came for an interview the atmosphere was brilliant and since my first day I have been welcomed and made to feel a valuable member of staff. I'm doing a Business Administration

qualification and things are quite flexible here so I'm getting a lot of experience in different areas of the organisation. There is constant support, with tasks to achieve on a daily basis and I am enjoying it more and more.'

Beth Horwood delivers projects directly to children, young people and their families: 'The good thing about working at Children's Links is that from the offset you are part of a team. When I first came in I learnt about my role but I also went around and met different people in the organisation, some of which I shadowed. Children's Links, are very keen to give you a holistic view of the company, which is hugely beneficial.'

'During the induction you get to meet key members of staff including the Chief Executive, so you feel very valued from the start. They are interested in your particular talents and strengths rather than just having a body doing a job. The other joy is that everyone is good at his or her particular role, and we all have different strengths – my colleague is very arty so I can go to her for inspiration when I'm looking for ideas for creative play.'

'We have in-house training but in addition they have allowed me to study for an MSc in Child Studies, which is really relevant to my job. I am keen to keep pushing myself and Children's Links give me the time and the confidence to do just that.'

**CONTACT:** [www.childrenslinks.org.uk](http://www.childrenslinks.org.uk)