Little Me Day Nurseries sees the two-year-old funding scheme as an opportunity to make a real difference for young children and their families, providing emotional and practical care above and beyond the official requirements of the scheme.

The nursery makes the most of its resources, staff numbers and skill sets to establish specific policies and procedures to cater for its two-year-olds, who it recognises may be more vulnerable than other children. These include enhanced staff awareness of potentially vulnerable children whose families may need extra guidance and support; an attendance monitoring policy to contact parents immediately if children do not attend their usual sessions; specially-devised checks mapping children’s progress against Ofsted expectations; and personal learning journals to keep parents involved in their child’s education and progress.

The nursery has recently invested in a new buggy, which can transport up to six children at once, and uses this to take two-year-olds on its funding scheme to a variety of activities at no extra cost. These include soft play, cookery, dance, Stretch ‘n’ Grow, yoga, football and French classes.

The nursery treats each child and family according to their own specific needs, on occasions even providing sessions to children free of charge in extreme circumstances.

An unemployed single mother of a two-year-old child at the nursery was given help with her CV by staff and her child was able to attend the nursery free of charge while she went to interviews. This eventually led to her gaining full-time employment, which meant she was able to pay full nursery fees herself, without the need for Government funding.

Another two-year-old was at risk of being removed from her home by social services, when in addition to attending procedural meetings, the nursery provided the child with full-time care for six months while working with the parents and social services to help get the family back on track.

The nursery is also keen to support children beyond the two-year-old scheme, providing individual help, care and support to prepare children for school and the wider world after they turn three years old.

Happy Kids Childcare
Happy Kids aims to provide good quality, flexible local childcare to disadvantaged children and families. Over 80 per cent of the children who attend its nine settings across Barnsley, Rotherham and Manchester have accessed its two-year-old funded provision. The group has set up a network of flexible, day nursery provision, which has a community-centred ethos. It looks to fill the gap left by the many closures of local children’s centres by actively attracting disadvantaged families to take up the two-year-old offer.

The group embraces the opportunity provided by the two-year-old offer to work on children’s behavioural, communication and emotional skills for longer, and delivers crèche services around the times of courses at adult learning centres to allow parents to access training to get back to work quicker after the birth of a child.

Old Station Nursery
Old Station Nursery in Faringdon, Oxfordshire, secured a £9,500 grant to develop its space for two-year-olds, which caters for 30 children, 14 of whom are funded. As part of the application, the nursery carried out a rigorous ITERS (Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale) assessment of its two-year-old provision and researched how to improve outcomes.

Staff redesigned the layout and added greener spaces to the outdoor area, with opportunities for planting and growing and learning about where food comes from. It has been asked by its early years advisory teacher to accept visitors from other nurseries as a model of good practice.

Finalists

- Bluecoat School and Nursery, Stamford
- Jeffrey’s Corner, Oldham

Criterion
Open to early years settings, schools and childminders offering funded places for two-year-olds under the Government’s new programme

Highly commended
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