

Training Opportunities for Parents in Westminster

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Twenty-two parents from workless households, in some of the most deprived wards in central and north Westminster, have embarked on an eighteen month training course which will earn them an NVQ2 in *Children's Care, Learning and Development*.

Local mothers with children under the age of five were recently invited to a coffee morning at a local community centre, where they had the chance to register interest in the project and to meet with representatives from local SureStart childcare centres. Thirty-five candidates were interviewed by a panel, and security checks carried as part of the selection process.

The course, which starts in January 2007, will comprise of one day a week being spent at college and 2-3 days spent at a local childcare facility, to gain practical work experience and potential employment. Child care will be provided for the duration of the training period and basic skills and ESOL training will be given, where required, prior to the start of the course.

The qualification, will be funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) London Central, under its Local Initiative Development Funding Programme (LIDF), which tackles the adult skills gap among disadvantaged and ethnic minority groups.

London has the highest unemployment rate in the UK at 30%, compared to the national average of 25%, with inner London standing at 36%. Child poverty rates are among the highest in the country at 24% (and reaching 35% in Inner London), compared to 19 per cent for Great Britain as a whole. Many unemployed people fall within ethnic minority groups and one of the barriers to women with young children entering employment is the lack of affordable childcare facilities.

The project is the result of a partnership between the LSC, Job Centre Plus, Westminster SureStart, Westminster Adult Education, Westminster Children's Society and Westminster CC – Economic Development and Children's Services Department.

Jill Lowery, Area Director of the Learning and Skills Council in London Central said, "The project is an excellent example of organisations working in partnership to create employment opportunities for hard to reach minority groups, while filling vacancies in a sector suffering from a shortage of registered childminders."

Andrew Waite, from Westminster SureStart said, "Apart from and tackling worklessness, child poverty and social exclusion in central and north Westminster the project will increase the number of childcare workers in the area, providing additional work and educational opportunities for local residents.

Candidates who were not successful on this round have been referred to Westminster Adult Education Services to access ESOL, Basic Skills or alternative childcare courses, where necessary.

Ends

For further information please contact: Lynn McSweeney, Regional Press Officer, LSC London on 020 7904 0663, email: Lynn.McSweeney@LSC.gov.uk.

Notes to Editors:

Learning and Skills Council

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for planning and funding high-quality vocational education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world-class standards. Our vision is that by 2010, young people and adults in England have the knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. Established in 2001, we work nationally, regionally and locally from a network of offices across the country.

SureStart

Sure Start is a Government programme which aims to achieve better outcomes for children, parents and communities in England by:

- increasing the availability of childcare for all children
- improving health and emotional development for young children
- supporting parents as parents and in their aspirations towards employment.

It is also central to the Government's drive to tackle child poverty and social exclusion. The City of Westminster now has 3 SureStart Programmes.