

Case Study: Building Connections through the Early Years Stronger Practice Hub

Alex Leigh, Childminder in Morley, Leeds

St Edmund's
Early Years
Stronger Practice Hub

Context

St Edmund's Early Years Stronger Practice Hub (EYSPH) supports early years settings across West and South Yorkshire to improve outcomes for children in their local area across the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), through focusing on key areas of development identified as local priorities. By providing accessible opportunities for professional development and peer networking the EYSPH is driving a strong, connected network of early years professionals to improve outcomes for children they care for.

This case study explores how one of our EYSPH members – **Alex Leigh**, an experienced childminder— has engaged with the Hub and how it has supported her development as a practitioner, mentor, and leader within the early years sector.

About Alex Leigh

Alex Leigh has been a professional childminder for 14 years and is based in Morley, Leeds. She's a valued and active member of our EYSPH community and is passionate about providing training opportunities for childminders, supporting others, and raising standards across the early years sector.

Like many childminders, Alex was actively seeking opportunities to improve her practice and connect with other practitioners. While committed to improving her own provision, Alex found difficulty in finding a space where everything she wanted, relevant training, networks for childminders, was all in one place.



"Before I joined the Hub, I felt I needed help and support and didn't know where to go to find it."

What the Early Years Stronger Practice Hub has Offered

Alex discovered the Early Years Stronger Practice Hub through one of the "Grand Day Out" events on Eventbrite. At the event, Alex met Belinda, a childminder and key member of the community. Her welcoming attitude and experience in early years left Alex feeling inspired and excited to involve herself more.

"The support I have received has made me confident in showcasing what I do – this has benefited my ability to present my offer during my Ofsted inspection."

"We share ideas for our practice, organise training sessions and support each other. It's great to speak to people who have the same passion for improving outcomes for children."

Since joining the EYSPH, Alex has accessed a wide range of opportunities...

Targeted Webinars

- Preparing for Ofsted inspections
- Presenting documentation confidently

CPD for Leaders

- Training on delivering CPD to other childminders: In-person event: **Childminder Visitor Session**

Pedagogical Learning

- Using storytelling and physical movement to support learning
- Alex was chosen to participate in an an EEF programme 'Outdoor Thinking'

Impact

The Hub's learning and networking opportunities have been instrumental in Alex's professional growth. She has become an active community member, connecting with other childminders through her own WhatsApp group.

Alex has applied her learning to her own setting, specifically by integrating physical movement into storytelling to improve children's understanding and language development. The ability to share experiences and common issues has significantly boosted her confidence, particularly when preparing for inspections and articulating her setting's strengths.

This involvement has also equipped Alex to become a confident trainer and mentor, transferring her personal growth into a professional ability to help others.



Going Forward

We were so impressed with Alex's commitment to her own and others professional development that we asked her to become our Childminder Strategic Partner! Alex now works with the St Edmund's EYSPH team and our other partners to shape the future of our hub to best serve the early years sector in West and South Yorkshire. Ideas include:

- More Role-Specific Networking Spaces: Forums dedicated to the job-roles within the early years workforce to explore role-specific challenges and ideas.
- Increased In-Person Events: More events like "A Grand Day Out" that combine CPD with socialisation for both practitioners and children.
- Continued Practitioner-Led CPD: Practitioners leading professional development opportunities to empower other practitioners to train, mentor and support others in the sector.

Alex's journey demonstrates how one practitioner has unlocked her potential by connecting with a professional community.



"As childminders, we often work alone – but that doesn't mean we have to feel alone."

Get Involved

If, like Alex, you would like to enhance your practice and grow in confidence through working collaboratively, sign up [here](#) to become a member of the St Edmund's Early Years Stronger Practice Hub. Access FREE resources, webinars training and events. Join us and be inspired!

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