Dynamique Childcare

East Midlands EARLY YEARS STRONGER PRACTICE HUB

Daring to dream.....

Hi I'm Katie, I'm 41 and mum to two girls and wife to Neil. My background is performing arts and teaching. In my 20s I worked as a professional dancer and choreographer and freelance dance teacher. In 2009 I gained my PGCE and spent 10 years teaching in Secondary Schools before moving into early years and becoming a childminder in 2019 and love my job!

A few years ago I found out about the East Midlands Stronger Practice Hub, I attended a conference at the Pen Green site and was bowled over by the level of expertise, vision and energy!

I found out about supervisions and decided to sign up. After all, who was there to look after me? Who was there to bounce ideas off and help me in times of need, or heaven forbid, to expand and make a sustainable business?

Enter Felicity! She has been my fantastic mentor for about a year now and her guidance and expertise has been invaluable at guiding and shaping my business.

What started as a 'I have just taken on an assistant and having problems with x, y and z', has developed into 'I have just received a STRONG in all areas of my Ofsted inspection, now have 3 staff members and have won an award!'

Ofsted raising standards improving lives

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Pen Green Centre for children and their families

kingswood Children's Centre and Community Nursery

But how....

I never set out to expand. I really only took on one assistant to support a SEND child with challenging behaviours. At the start of our supervisions, talking about these difficulties was the main focus of our sessions. Felicity reassured me that I was doing everything right and that I was already going above and beyond for this child. The support we were able to offer and subsequent Autism diagnosis really did have a transformational effect on him and he eventually transitioned successfully to mainstream school nursery.

Our focus then shifted. I had seen details from the council emerge about expansion grants. I was turning children away every day. I just didn't have any more floor space to accommodate any more children. But how could I make it work? I couldn't build an extension. It would have to be a huge cabin surely and the council were only offering £810 to expand EYFS spaces-so it just wouldn't work. I began talking to other childminders who had multiple assistants, visited their settings and found out about how they utilised staffing and space. I spoke to the council who suggested I apply for BOTH a grant to expand EYFS and WRAP AROUND spaces. The wrap-around grant was significantly higher and if I focused on accommodating SEND children, (which I was already doing) then I would surely have enough money to build a cabin in the garden and could then use both my house and cabin between myself and staff. I started talking the idea through with Felicity. It really helped to have someone else experienced to talk the ideas through with. Suddenly, this became an achievable goal!

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What then transpired was hours of time dedicated to a planning application, completing numerous application forms, asking for quotes, using Chat GTP to support me in writing business plans, writing cash flow forecasts and researching and evidencing the need for more childcare spaces. Even the local schools were supportive and one supplied a written support statement.

Eventually-success! The two grants were awarded and in September 2025 I took on a second staff member, built a cabin with sensory room equipment and created an outdoor decking area off the playroom and kitchen which is now used daily by the early years children. The setting grew overnight from 7 EYFS children to 9. We opened another day a week and took on 4 more wrap-around children. This included a sibling at a special needs school, which was just brilliant for my existing family, having all their children (from three schools) in one place!

Now it is February 2026, I have a new member of staff ready to start next month-who will cover staff during school runs and be available for ad hoc cover and should ratios continue to expand. We have just been inspected under the new framework and achieved STRONG in all areas and we recently won a Childcare Coram Pacey Award runner up 'Best wrap around provider' for the cabin!

I am so proud of what we have achieved and it just goes to show, you don't need to have it all figured out...just take the first step and the rest, as they say, is history.

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