



# Portage Service

Information for parents, carers & professionals

Children & Young People's Services



## What is Portage?

- Portage is an early learning support service for preschool children who have complex developmental needs and their families.
- The name Portage comes from a town in Wisconsin, USA, where the first home teaching scheme began. Portage has been established in the United Kingdom (UK) since 1976.
- The Portage Service visits children and their families at home and runs groups to support children's development and socialisation. Groups also provide a supportive forum for parents to talk and share information.

## Who is the Portage Service for?

- This means that the child will have developmental delay that impacts or may impact upon their participation and/or achievement in age-typical play, learning and social experiences.

## How can I access Portage?

- You will need to be referred to Portage or you can refer yourself.
- Most typically referrals are made by health professionals who will have discussed this with you and gained your permission to make the referral.
- A Portage referral form is available on the County Durham Local Offer.
- When we have received the referral a Portage worker will contact you by telephone to talk to you about your child and what we can offer. Together we will decide if you and your child would benefit from the service.

## How does Portage work?

Depending on your child's needs and age we might offer a home visiting service or attendance at a Portage group.

Portage work will be based on the three essential elements of the Portage model:

### Family Focus

We work in partnership with you and your Portage worker will spend time talking to you about your priorities.

### Child-led play

Your Portage worker will spend time observing your child's play to identify individual interests, strengths and emerging skills.

### Structured teaching

We acknowledge that you know your child best. Your Portage worker will work with you to find out about what your child can do already and plan play-based teaching activities that you can do with your child at home so that your child learns new skills in "small steps".

In addition, where appropriate, your Portage worker may:

- Liaise with other professionals involved with your child.
- Support your child's transition into an early years' setting.
- Provide and/or signpost you to relevant information concerning your child and/or the priorities you have identified.

## Who are the Portage workers?

Portage workers are SEND and Inclusion Senior Specialist Support Workers (SSSW) who have qualifications and experience in working with young children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities.

## What families tell us about Portage

*"So much time and care has been given not just to our little boy but to us. We are confident that our little boy will go on to learn new things and continue to do so."*

*"Informative explanation of the service and what to expect, friendly and professional."*

*"Having the support of our Portage worker has been life-changing for my son."*

*"As well as the individual support at home the weekly group was invaluable in giving my child confidence and us the chance to meet other families."*

*"The support both I and my daughter have received has been outstanding. A life-line, emotional support and my daughter's future looks so much more positive."*

Durham Portage Service is registered with the National Portage Association and we base our service delivery on its recommended guidelines.

If you think we could help you and your child please contact us at:

Durham Portage Service

Education Development Centre

Enterprise Way, Spennymoor, DL16 6YP

Telephone: 03000 263 333

Email: [portage@durham.gov.uk](mailto:portage@durham.gov.uk)