

# Workforce Development News

## European International Early Years Exchange

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**Linda Baston-Pitt and Lisa Weston of the Old School House Day Nursery, Newmarket describe their experience of an international development opportunity.**



A unique International study project called TEYM (Training Early Years Managers Mobility Visits) organised by Liverpool Hope University and funded by Leonardo da Vinci European Training for the UK has enabled early years practitioners from a variety of backgrounds to share good practice and exchange training opportunities with international colleagues from around Europe.

TEYM strengthens European co-operation in vocational education and training in the early years sector by bringing together a strong partnership from Belgium, UK, Romania, Bulgaria and more recently Portugal and Slovenia.

- It raises the profile of early years care and education within the UK
- This raises the status of early years professionals
- It enables practitioners to learn about innovative and best practice from each other and our international partners
- It can provide a link for further advancement into early years management and leadership training.

On October 16th 2007 we spent eight days in Lisbon, Portugal with nine fellow childcare practitioners from a variety of backgrounds within the childcare sector.

A full programme had been planned by our Portuguese host Teresa Vasconcelos from the School of Education in Lisbon and Petra Luck Award Director from Liverpool Hope University. We visited a wide variety of settings including kindergartens, schools, adult colleges and an orphanage which enabled us to explore diversity, inclusion, childcare and leadership practices. This was also supported by information sharing through formal and informal presentations and discussions about educational systems, curriculum, training frameworks, equality, diversity and political agendas with our international partners. These discussions highlighted many similarities and differences between our practices, which we were able to reflect on as a group each evening.

### What did we gain from the trip?

Renewed inspiration definitely and a sense that like our Portuguese colleagues, excellent leadership and passionate knowledgeable practitioners are the essential ingredients in developing a truly holistic approach to Early Years Education. A model in which the emphasis is on active learning, developing mutual respect and pride between all parties, integrated care and education that have equal priority throughout the daytime routines, where mealtimes are not compromised and remain an important cultural aspect within the family and the setting.

We observed a level of flexibility and freedom that the children and staff had to explore and take risks indoors and out that we feel is becoming increasingly stifled in our country due to excessive health and safety legislation.

We will continue to share and disseminate the valuable lessons that we have learnt from our trip with our fellow colleagues. This will help us all to continually challenge our assumptions and encourage us to reflect on our own practice as well as examine new practice.

**For further information about the project contact Petra Luck at Liverpool Hope University - [luckp@hope.ac.uk](mailto:luckp@hope.ac.uk)**