

Providing power to the parents

**~ how broadband is transforming parents' involvement in their children's
nursery development ~**

The problem facing many working parents is ensuring that they're playing as active a role as possible in their child's development throughout the whole week – not just the weekend. While nurseries and crèches provide detailed information for parents on their child's development, there can be no substitute for seeing your child taking their first steps or enjoying a party with their friends.

While OFSTED, the Government appointed education regulator, promotes an open door policy between parents and nurseries to encourage parents to drop in at any time to see their children, in practice, this isn't so easy for parents with full time jobs.

According to Teletoddler's market research, over 95 per cent of parents would like to watch their children while they are at nursery over the internet as this would allow them to 'drop in' on their child without leaving the office. Kinder Castle Day Nursery, in West Yorkshire, spotting this gap in the market, took the decision to use technology, specifically broadband, to enable parents to 'virtually' visit their children.

They approached Teletoddler, the nursery security specialists, to provide a solution for the newly-opened nursery. Teletoddler's online monitoring service uses security and computer technology designed especially for day nurseries. The Teletoddler solution fits high resolution colour cameras into each of the different playrooms, which can then be viewed online. The nursery streams the content over a broadband connection. Parents are given a secure log-in which can be accessed on any internet-enabled computer or device. Once logged in, parents can view their child's playroom to see the activities that are going on. Security, of course, is of paramount importance. Parents only have access to the room where their child plays and the communal play area outside, and each session online lasts for six minutes before the user must log in again. There are also no cameras in private areas such as the sleeping areas.

In addition, Rachel Wright, the nursery owner, has the ability to post messages on the webcams to alert parents in advance to events during the day. For example, if the children are baking biscuits at 2pm, Rachel can add this underneath the webcam pictures. This allows parents to plan their 'drop in' around specific events during the day and to share the moments together.

Another advantage of the Teletoddler system is that all the pictures are digitally recorded. In the event of an accident, the nursery manager can go back and see exactly what happened, even if he or she is not actually on site. It also means

that when a child does something amazing, such as take his first steps or bake his first biscuit, the moment can be recorded on a DVD to keep forever.

The recording function also plays an essential security role for the nursery itself. As the cameras can be accessed remotely, the service also functions as an intrusion protection device. If a conventional burglar alarm is triggered, the nursery owner must physically check the building. However, the cameras installed by Teletoddler start recording when any motion is detected, therefore nursery owners such as Rachel, can be alerted at home to any disturbance. She can then securely log in at home to see whether there is an intruder, or if it's merely a false alarm.

“Parents have been delighted with the service since we introduced it to Kinder Castle and we've found it's been a major factor when selecting a nursery,” said Rachel Wright. “At first the staff were slightly nervous about being filmed, but they hardly notice the cameras now. The fact that we are willing to film our staff shows how proud we are of the team, and that we know they are consummate professionals.”

“As a working parent it is difficult to leave your child at nursery and miss out on so much of his day to day activities,” says Jo Dales, a parent from Huddersfield. “I find it incredibly reassuring now that I can watch my child through the day and it certainly allows me to be more involved.”

“Most people have access to the internet at work and so provides the perfect way for parents to monitor their child,” said George Bathurst, managing director at Teletoddler. “The system is secure and gives parents piece of mind with the click of a mouse. Although the system was primarily designed for monitoring the children in the nursery, the advantages of the system in terms of personal security and staff performance are equally valuable for the nursery staff themselves.”

"Broadband is about more than speed," said Duncan Ingram, managing director of BT Openworld. "It's about providing services and applications which will help to enhance our lives. Teletoddler's innovation is a great example, providing an effective and essential application for parents, using broadband. Thanks to this, parents can be reassured and check on their children quickly and easily from any internet enabled PC."