



Portage is a home visiting educational service for pre-school children with additional support needs and their families. We thought we would share some insights from some of our home visitors with you.

My name is Heidi and I applied to be a Portage Home Visitor to use my skills and experience of working with adults (as a trainer) and working with young children (as an Early Years practitioner & SENCO) and to spend more time working with families. My own children were growing up fast, so I thought it was a good time to try something new.

I love being a PHV because every day is different. We work with a wide range of families and their children. It is a privilege to be invited into homes and be able to work closely with families to support their children. I am usually on the floor having lots of fun. I enjoy being creative and seeing how my planned games and resources work each week. I like to share my observations as much as possible to get the parents involved and help them to enjoy playing with their children as much as I do! For some children, play is very challenging and that's when it's great to be part of an experienced team who provide support and help with ideas.

We are a very supportive and experienced team and observations from an Educational Psychologist form part of our ongoing training and support opportunities.

Each week I arrive with my big bag of toys. We all have different ways of working but I like to use songs to build anticipation and support routines. I love to think of different activities that will appeal to specific children and help to motivate them. Sometimes our play is open ended and sometimes it is structured. I especially enjoy sensory/messy play and physical games outside if the family have a garden. It usually takes me a few weeks to get to know the child and find out what the parents would like to work on. We then agree some outcomes to work on together, which are written up. There are also opportunities to liaise with other professionals and use videos to keep in touch with families and support their learning.

Many families are struggling when we start visiting. They are so appreciative of the time we give to them each week; the understanding and practical advice we can offer. It's a very rewarding job and I'm always sad to say goodbye to the families I have worked with.

Sharon from the Crawley team added, "I enjoy working directly with families in their homes as you can really get to work on different interventions with each individual and review the impact week by week. We use small step outcomes to help the child and family develop confidence with communication and learning skills through play activities."