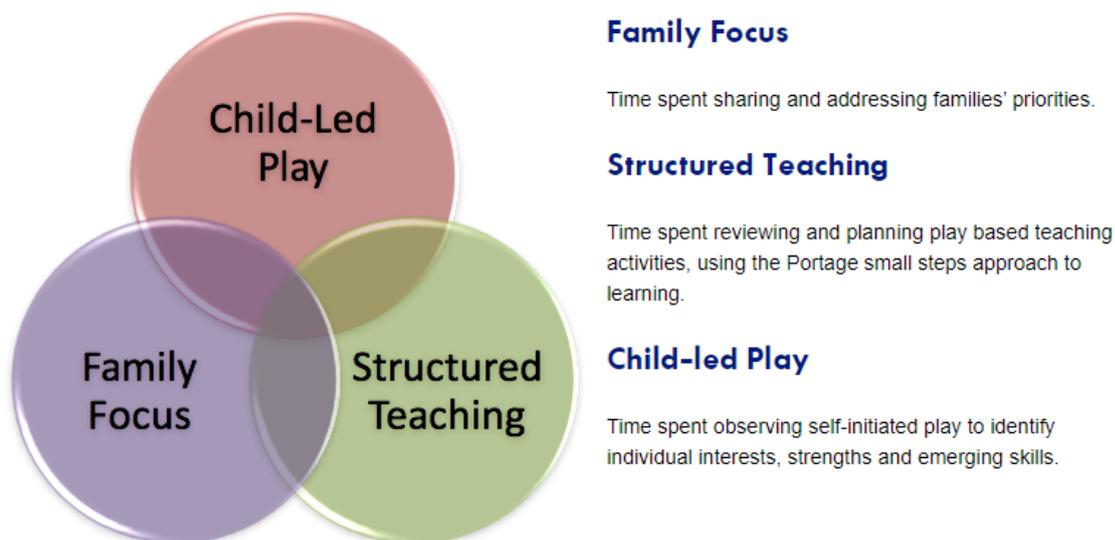


## Appendix 3: Additional Information

### Support Services: Portage

- 1.1. Portage is a non-statutory service that has been supporting families in Kent for over 40 years. It is jointly funded by health and the Council. Portage supports children aged 0 – 5 years with complex needs and delay in at least two areas of development or children with a diagnosis which is likely to lead to developmental delay in at least two areas.
- 1.2. The Kent Portage Service is registered with the National Portage Association (NPA). All Portage practice is based upon the Portage Model, which is a dynamic framework with three essential elements offering a framework of support that respects each family and their own individual priorities.
- 1.3. These are Family Focus which is time spent sharing and addressing families' priorities, Structured Teaching is time spent reviewing and planning play-based teaching activities, using the Portage Small Steps approach to learning and Child-Led Play is time spent observing self-initiated play to identify individual interests, strengths, and emerging skills.



- 1.4. Portage Practitioners work in partnership with families, recognising that parents are the best people to teach their child. Parental involvement is essential in both the planning and delivery of activities to support the child's learning.
- 1.5. The service also offers three different types of group sessions. These are:
  - Sensory sessions for the most complex children.
  - Early Learning for those children becoming more mobile.
  - Pre-school Learning Groups for children with social communication difficulties.

- 1.6. Referrals to the service in Kent primarily come from health professionals in acute and community health services, although the data is not currently broken down by the referring source.
- 1.7. Each full-time equivalent Portage Practitioner works with 12-14 families at any one time. Demand for the service is increasing.
- 1.8. The demand on the service has grown on an annual basis. The increase in referrals to the Portage service started before the COVID-19 pandemic and has continued to remain high. The total number of children referred to the service in 2008 was 270, this has risen to 900 referrals in 2021 and 1049 referrals in 2022. The increase in referrals could be due to increased awareness of the service as well as a general increase in the number of children with additional needs and more complex needs, including the impact of COVID on children's early development.
- 1.9. Whilst the service specification outlines Performance Indicators to evaluate impact, since the COVID pandemic not all the quantifiable measures have been recorded and kept up to date. Therefore, most of our understanding of impact come from the following sources:
  - Parental Survey - The service evaluates the effectiveness and impact of the service using parent/carer feedback via an annual survey. Last academic year 2021-22, 78 parents/carers responded to the survey and the average rating was 4.78 out 5 (5 being excellent) for the overall service received. For group work sessions the average rating was 4.77 out 5.
  - The National Portage Association: Impact Report 2023 reports that 99% of respondents who had received a Portage service felt that it had contributed to their child's progress, with 63% stating it to a 'Great Extent' and 36% to 'Some Extent'. Furthermore, 98% of respondents stated that the Portage service they had received helped support their emotional and mental health needs, with 65.3% indicating it to a 'Great Extent' and 32.8% to 'Some Extent'.
  - Stakeholder feedback - Professional feedback from settings, including nurseries, pre-school and TEP (Early Years Review reference group – Portage subgroup) have stated that a skilled portage worker can have a positive impact in supporting transition into a setting's practice by modelling behaviour and training.