

What is Portage?

The Leicestershire Portage Service is a home-visiting service for pre-school children who have special needs. It is based on the common-sense principle that parents are the key figures in the care and development of their child.

The Portage home teaching scheme was developed in Wisconsin, USA, in the early 1970s to meet the needs of young children living in rural communities. The area was called Portage.

The scheme was different from other educational services for young children. Instead of taking children to the Service, the Service was brought to the children and their families in their own home. The home became the setting for the teaching and the parents became the teachers.

What does the Leicestershire Portage Service Offer?

When families join Leicestershire Portage Service they receive weekly visits from a Home Visitor. The Service employs Portage Home Visitors who work with parents within the home. To enable them to work with

the parents the Home Visitors hold a wide range of personal and professional skills. Everyone involved in providing Portage has received a nationally accredited Training Course.

Initially, the child's current development is assessed over all developmental areas: social, language, self-help, cognitive and motor development. This information is used to inform appropriate teaching.

Parents, Home Visitor and Portage Manager decide on long term (approximately 6 months) teaching targets. These are then broken down into small step activities.

One or two of these activities are chosen each week and parents are given help and advice on ways of teaching. The parents keep a record of their child's progress.

Each programme is tailored to meet the needs of the individual child. The emphasis is on the positive - finding out and building on what a child can do. Activities are then designed to boost the child's development in those areas where help is needed - from very early motor skills to the more complex task of using language.



Portage is based on four main activities:

- **Weekly home visits** by trained home visitor;
- **Weekly written teaching activities** designed for each individual child and parents;
- **Teaching and recording** carried out by the parents;
- **Fortnightly supervision of the home visitor** by the Portage Manager.

There is also a Management Committee which has representatives from Education, Health Social Services and the Voluntary Sector, as well as a parent representative. This Committee meets 3 times a year and oversees the general organisation of the Service.

Who is Portage for?

The Leicestershire Portage Service is appropriate for children:

- from birth to 4½ years
- with significant learning difficulties
- who live in Leicestershire
- Who are not at playgroup or nursery for more than 2½ days a week.

Parents need to be able to work with their child for a short period each day, and record this. Portage is one of several services available and it may not suit every family. The Portage Managers will visit to discuss this following the referral to the Leicestershire Portage Service.

To find out more:

If you would like more information or think you know of a family who would be interested, please contact:

Julie Robertson, Joint Portage Manager,
Educational Psychologist

Susan Logue, Joint Portage Manager,
Educational Psychologist

or Sonia O'Connor, Portage Secretary

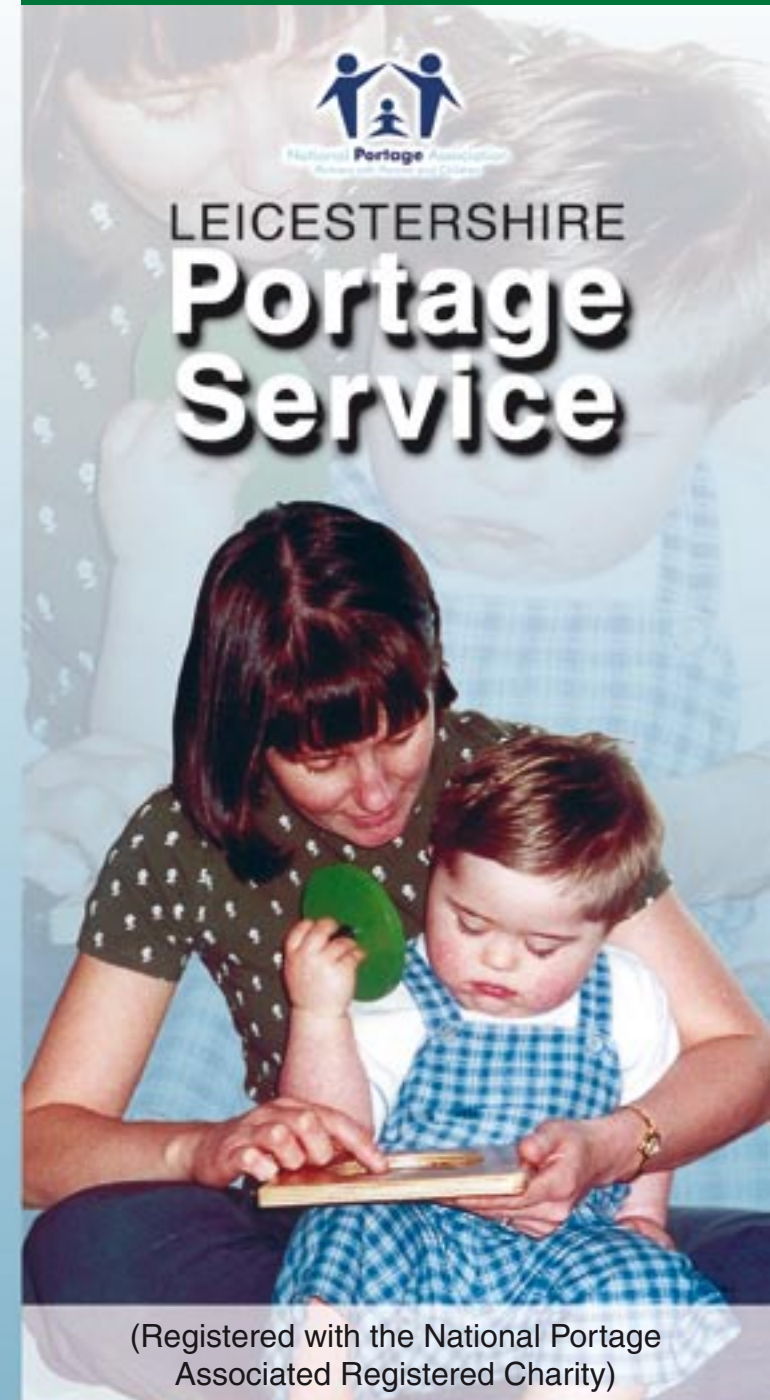
On Telephone Number: 01530 513640

Leicestershire Portage Service
Rothley House
Coalville Business Park
Jackson Street
Coalville
Leicestershire
LE67 3NR

Portage at work



This shows Home Visitor working on this week's teaching activity.



(Registered with the National Portage
Associated Registered Charity)