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Starting out - it's the Little Steps that count

Those first steps in life are all important - especially when children start their education.

That's why Hertfordshire County Council has got together with local Lions clubs in the county and a national charity in a pioneering project called Little Steps.

Aimed at teachers and child care workers in nurseries, schools and pre-schools, Little Steps offers training and support material about PSE - personal, social and emotional development - in the Foundation Stage.

"Children in early years education don't learn unless they are happy, secure and motivated, so their personal, social and emotional development is paramount," said Children, Schools and Families Early Years Advisor Megan Wilcox. "Little Steps is a valuable resource with lots of good ideas on helping children to develop."

The training pack Little Steps is produced by Tacade, a leading charitable organisation working on emotional well being projects. Spearheaded by Harpenden Lions and eight other Lions clubs, £20,000 - half of it from local donors - was raised to pay for 400 packs for schools and nurseries across Hertfordshire.

"It's a brilliant partnership," said Megan. "The Lions have provided the money and we supply the expertise in the training sessions. We want to make sure that every pre-school and nursery in the county has the opportunity to benefit from it."

As one of the first authorities to use the packs so extensively, Hertfordshire played a major role at the national launch of the Little Steps pack at the House of Lords earlier this month. Megan and fellow early years advisor Katharine Weston gave a presentation on the project and guests included Children's Minister Margaret Hodge.

Madelaine Lee, head of Batford Nursery in Harpenden, who was part of the team piloting the Little Steps materials, also attended the launch.

"As a resource it's exactly what you need," said Madelaine. "It's practical and supportive and brings parents in, enabling them to join in with the school. We've been using it for a year and find it's really valuable for people working with young children."

Neville Osmond, life skills officer for Harpenden Lions said: "We have been working in close partnership with Hertfordshire advisors, Tacade and our own loyal donors to benefit the life skills work of our local schools. We are thrilled by the results, which will enable over 25,000 three to five year-olds to benefit each year. We all wish the county's team every success in their further roll-out of Little Steps."

Notes for Editors

Lions clubs taking part in the project include Berkhamsted, Harpenden, Hemel Hempstead, St.Albans, Stevenage, Tring and Watford.

Tacade is a leading not-for-profit charitable organisation working in the field of personal, social, health and citizenship education (including drug, alcohol, tobacco and sexual health issues) for children and young people.

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