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## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **It's kids play for The Co-operative Bank's Manchester Corporate Banking Centre**

The Co-operative Bank's Manchester Corporate Banking Centre has helped two women entrepreneurs expand their children's nursery services business with funding to acquire a third nursery in Frodsham.

Corporate Manager at The Co-operative Bank, Dave Loughman provided a funding package of over one million pounds for Widnes based Chris Devlin and Gill Dillon, a former teacher and a former nurse.

The two entrepreneurs launched Playmates 13 years ago, providing childcare for kids aged from three months to five years old. The new nursery will be the two women's third premises, with another two Playmates nurseries located in Widnes.

Playmates provides high quality childcare for over 90 children and employs 27 full time nursery staff across its two current premises – an extremely high staff to child ratio. Both nurseries have an excellent reputation and have received glowing Ofsted reports.

The new nursery in Frodsham, Homestead Day Nursery will enable Playmates to double the number of childcare places available and create new jobs. The previous owners have now retired and work has begun to modernize the premises and facilities.

Joint Director of Playmates, Chris Devlin said: "Thirteen years ago we identified a need for good quality childcare where the child comes first before anything else. We've worked hard to establish this and have built up an excellent reputation in the process.

“In our early days we faced blatant sexism from some of the other banks we approached – one bank manager even asked if our husbands were happy about us setting up a business! The Co-operative Bank has always been extremely supportive and worked with us to help grow Playmates and make it the success it’s become.”

Corporate Manager at The Co-operative Bank, Dave Loughman said: “Both of the directors have banked with us since Playmates launched and they’ve developed an excellent reputation across Widnes. Their acute business sense coupled with backgrounds in teaching and nursing has given Chris and Gill a strong foundation on which to build such a successful childcare business.”

**-Ends-**

**Picture Caption:**

LtoR: David Loughman, Corporate Manager at The Co-operative Bank, Chris Devlin and Gill Dillon, Directors of Playmates

**For further information contact:**

Adele Mandy, Pete Wrathmell or Daniel Kennedy

SKV PR

Tel: 0161 838 7770

Fax: 0161 839 2904

Email: [adele.mandy@skvpr.co.uk](mailto:adele.mandy@skvpr.co.uk)

Duncan Bowker

The Co-operative Financial Services Press Office

Tel: 0161 903 3819

Mobile 07810 756 137

e-mail : [duncan.bowker@cfs.coop](mailto:duncan.bowker@cfs.coop)

**Notes to editors:**

ISDN facilities are available for broadcast media interviews.