



## Happy New Year from everybody at Connect

*A review of 2007 by Chris Reid, Commercial Director*

Well 2007 is behind us now, and we hope it's been as eventful for you as it has been for Connect! We'd like to wish everybody a very happy and successful 2008 with special thanks for all your continued support, throughout what has been a particularly eventful year for Connect Software.

There have been numerous milestones that we are very proud to have achieved over the past 12 months.

We started the year by moving into our prestigious new business premises at The Director's House in Blackburn. Situated in the highly sought after canal side redevelopment at Eanam Wharf, The Director's House is a Victorian building full of character which will allow us continued expansion over the coming years.

On the subject of expansion, we have significantly bolstered our team with 3 key recruitments over the 12 months. Liz Reid joined us in May to manage our customer service and support team, Anthony Ganley joined as Software Developer in August, and Samantha Hartmann (see below) joined us towards the end of the year to head up southern sales in the role of Business Development Manager.

In May, we firmed up our quality procedures officially through ISO 9001 accreditation which although we

already had quality systems in place helps to reassure our growing client base that Connect continues to operate a 'best practice' approach to software development.

Connect's child safety monitoring system ToddlerTag also featured very heavily in the national and international media over the summer with 2 appearances on the BBC, 1 on ITV's This Morning, a special feature on the Brazilian News at Ten, and countless features in leading daily newspapers. Feel free to browse the news pages of our website for more information on Connect in the media.

Our core products have seen significant enhancement, with version 3 of *ConnectChildcare*™ released in the summer including exciting new features such as automatic grant funding and email merge to name but two. Keep an eye out for our regular technical update in our newsletters from Ian Edmundson, our Technical Director for more details on some of the exciting projects and innovations we are currently working on.

All in all it's been a great year for Connect, something that could only have been achieved with the continued support of our growing client base. For that we thank you, and wish you a very successful 2008.

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## Samantha heads up Southern sales

It is with great pleasure that we'd like to introduce our latest recruit to the growing team here at Connect, Samantha Hartmann.

Samantha, based on the outskirts of London, joins us in the role of Business Development Manager with the specific goal of developing sales of our award winning products in the south of England.

Sam brings a wealth of sales experience with her, having held key positions with companies offering services and products to the UK childcare sector.

We'd like to take this opportunity to offer a very warm welcome to Sam, and wish her all the best in further developing her career with Connect.



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# Monkey Puzzle Day Nurseries

In this section of 'Get Connected', we'd like to focus on our rapidly expanding client base through our regular case study feature. In this our first issue, we thought we'd highlight a recent contract win, Monkey Puzzle Day Nurseries.

Monkey Puzzle are unique in the provision of Childcare to the UK market, as they have adopted a franchise approach to expansion as opposed to the more conventional approach of creating a nursery chain.

Mark Crosby of Monkey Puzzle explained the reason behind this decision, 'We wanted to expand but we didn't want to go down the conventional route of employing managers which most large companies use.

The reason the model is successful is because parents can talk to the owners of the business and we wanted to keep that contact yet develop onto multiple sites. Franchising was the answer since it maintains standards, provides expansion and keeps the owner involved at a local level!

The decision to opt for franchising as the expansion route was taken in 2004, with the first franchisees being recruited a year later. There are now 13 nurseries in locations as far away as Cheltenham, Essex and London. Franchisees are responsible for the day-to-day running of their own individual businesses. What Mark and his team provide is the know-how and the skills.

'We help find locations and assist in the planning process. We provide training so that the franchisee can pass the suitable person inspection by Ofsted.

Help is given in recruiting staff, setting up the nursery, and we provide ongoing support. We do frequent inspections to make sure that all our policies are being adhered to and this maintains standards. It also ensures that everything is up to scratch when Ofsted do their inspections,' comments Mark.

Franchisees are given all the help necessary: plans for daily routines, room layouts, menus and equipment and now through the relationship with Connect Software, the provision of a dedicated management software program to aid and assist in day to day administration.

Faced with stiff competition from other software vendors in the childcare arena, Connect were successful in winning the software contract in July 2007.

Mark explained the reason behind the decision, "We recognised at an early stage that increased government legislation in the childcare sector coupled with the fast paced environment that our franchisees often work in, pointed to a requirement for a more integrated and 'joined up' approach to the management of the business.

Running a childcare company involves changes to booking patterns on a daily basis, and these changes subsequently need to be reflected in a myriad of other areas of the business e.g. registers, occupancy, invoicing, legislative reporting etc. This poses a potential administrative nightmare for our franchisees who need to spend their time working 'on' the business as opposed to 'in' it, and a dedicated software system that provides solutions to this 'paper-chase' was seen to be imperative.

We were aware of a number of software systems in the market that had been designed specifically to manage the changing needs of the sector and started to review the applications available.

Connect Software had been recommended to us through an existing franchisee, Mark Bates, who had already purchased the software to help manage the growth and success of his two existing franchises in Leamington Spa. The review was very favourable so we invited Connect down to our head office for a demonstration of the system.

We were impressed by the *ConnectChildcare*™ suite of software and we eventually selected Connect for a number of reasons. The primary drivers for the decision were based around ease of use, functionality, value and the option to network all the sites together for easier implementation as the franchise develops. Connect ticked all these boxes and more so we decided to purchase a branded version of the software and commence the rollout.

All of our sites now have the software installed, with full support being provided through telephone helplines, online training and regular upgrades, and we look forward to rolling the software out to future franchisees as the business continues to grow!

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# Connecting the Dot2Dots ...a partner profile

Connect Software are always striving to add value to our clients, and recognise that there are requirements that busy nursery owners have within the business that a software package simply cannot address. These include insurance, legal advice and regular risk assessments to name but a few. That's why we were delighted to be invited by Dot2Dot to join their select group of partners brought together to address these common issues faced by all nursery owners.

Over the next 12 months, we'll be working closely with all of Dot2Dot's partners to integrate their reporting requirements directly into our *ConnectChildcare*™ suite of management products. We'll keep you posted of future software upgrades in future editions of 'Get Connected', so keep your eyes peeled.

## More than just an insurance policy

Dot2Dot is not only an insurance policy covering property and liabilities (although cover for these is exceptionally wide). It also has a number of unique features:

- in-depth knowledge of your business
- extra wide cover from Ecclesiastical - an insurer that knows your business
- help with risk assessments, Health & Safety legislation and Employment Law
- pro-active & sympathetic handling of claims
- easy and flexible ways to pay
- exclusive partnership initiatives

For more information on the Dot2Dot package and partner initiatives contact Jackie Hyde on 0161 724 2908 or visit [www.dot2dot.org.uk](http://www.dot2dot.org.uk)



# Bits, Bytes & FAQ's

Technical Report by Ian Edmundson, Technical Director (with some help from Liz)

Winter saw the release of version 3.5 of *ConnectChildcare*™. This version brought with it a number of new features, including our automated nursery education funding module along with Microsoft Word and Microsoft Outlook integration.

As we look to improve our software, February should see the release of our *ConnectChildcare*™ PDA software for mobile phones and PDA units. This new software will allow our customers to use handheld devices to take registers, record accidents and quickly retrieve child data. All child data is synchronised with the *ConnectChildcare*™ desktop/server application.

Late December brought around our first installation on Microsoft's Terminal Services platform. This functionality is now available for our enterprise clients, allowing the *ConnectChildcare*™ application to be accessed over the internet without needing to install the application locally. This gives the nursery managers the full benefits of using a desktop application (i.e. enhanced usability), coupled with the network management benefits of a web based system.

## Did you know?

**Did you know how easy it is to alter dates and figures?**

If you are changing dates or altering figures e.g. times or prices, rather than using the spin buttons or calendar an easier and sometimes quicker way to do this is to highlight the figure you wish to change and type in the figure you want to change it to.

**Did you know how to move from one field to another?**

When entering data e.g. an address it can sometimes become frustrating having to keep selecting the next field/box you wish to enter data into. An easier way to do

this is to select the "Tab" button on your keyboard when you need to move onto the next field/box. This automatically moves your cursor to the next field/box.

If you need to return to the previous field/box simply hold down "Shift" whilst selecting the "Tab" button.

**Did you know how easy it is to multi select?**

Sometimes, you need to select more than one item in a list this can be done easily by holding down the "Ctrl" key whilst selecting the items you require.

Another way to select more than one item is to select the one at the top of the list, hold down the "Shift" button and then to select the item at the bottom. This will select all the items between the top and bottom ones you selected.

**Did you know how easy it is to upload nursery information?**

To upload any nursery information you may wish to send out to e.g. Information packs or newsletters simply go to the site details screen and select the "Documentation Viewer". To add a new file/document select the "Add New" button, highlight the file or document you require, select "Open", give the document a name and select "Add Document".

This document can now be viewed by highlighting it in the list and selecting "View Document or File".

**Did you know how easy it is to e-mail information during an enquiry?**

Once you have entered all the information required for the enquiry form select the "E-mail Documentation" button, select the e-mail template you wish to use, select the "Attach Documents or files to the E-mail" tab and select the documents or files required then select "Create e-mail Document".

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## What are CBT's?

Amanda has been teaching in the software industry for many years. During that time she observed that learners would undergo, on average a day's training and this was not sufficient support to use their new piece of software to its full potential. It is something that we have all experienced, isn't it?

The limitations of traditional teaching facilities encouraged her to develop a real time intuitive support system with which users can confidently learn how to use their software, faster and more efficiently. Connect Software, wanting their customers to be supported with the most up to date teaching methods, have commissioned a CBT for *ConnectChildcare*™.

The *ConnectChildcare*™ CBT course is specifically designed to guide and support users in creating a fictitious nursery site, mirroring their real time working environment. When you start the CBT you will be guided by easy to follow,

step-by-step animated tutorials and workbook exercises, in order for you to create a nursery database that can then be used for training other users and continuation learning.

Like others, don't be too surprised to find that with the thorough support, allowing you to review and recap at your leisure, you find your ability and confidence grows automatically.

**To learn more about the Connect Childcare CBT please follow this link to view a working demonstration model. (enter link or demo address)**



Amanda Randall  
Managing Director of Doctrina Media Ltd

## ConnectChildcare CBT > a revolution in software training

Connect Software is proud to release a ground breaking innovation to help our clients get the most from our *ConnectChildcare*™ management software.

We're always keen to listen to our customer's feedback and as a result, we've recognised that many of our clients would like to have some kind of resource that they can keep with them and refer back to when and where they want to.

That's why we've developed *ConnectChildcare*™ CBT (Computer Based Teaching). That's not to say that we'll say goodbye to the traditional methods i.e. face - face, online, telephone, help files etc. we'll just bring CBT in alongside them and allow our customers to choose the most appropriate method for their settings.

The basic principle behind CBT is as follows:

- CBT breaks our *ConnectChildcare*™ management software down into 5 core areas to make it as easy as possible to find the area that you need assistance with.
- Each module has a voice over with an interactive presentation outlining the various features within the module.
- The presentation can be paused, rewound or fast forwarded so that you can access the area of interest in the shortest time possible.
- Each module has an accompanying workbook which has been designed to guide the user through the software in logical steps. The workbook has been written by qualified trainers who are skilled in the art of teaching, as opposed to a stuffy manual written by technical authors skilled in the art of making the simple...complicated.

It has to be said that *ConnectChildcare*™ CBT is truly a quantum leap forward in the way that software is trained. It's also worth pointing out that Connect Software are the only company that provide a resource like CBT, and as such provides our prospective customers with another great reason to...

**...Get Connected**

**For more information on our products and services please contact us**

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