



# FAMILY LIFE

## EYE SPY SOMETHING BEGINNING WITH W

Sharon Mallon feels a familiar warm glow as she watches her 21-month-old daughter Evie make a pretend brew for her pals in Kingscliffe Day Nursery. Everything is reassuringly all right in Evie's world. She's happy she's getting on well with her playmates and, most importantly, she's being well looked after by staff.

For Sharon, such peace of mind comes not by popping her head around the door of the Loughborough nursery but with the click of a computer mouse.

Forget Big Brother, this is Big Mother.

Kingscliffe is kitted out with webcams which allow parents and grandparents to log on and look in on their little darlings.

Like millions of working mums, Sharon was shocked and appalled by the BBC's Nurseries Undercover documentary which showed children being mistreated by staff at a nursery in Stoke.

Many were left wondering whether similar abuses could be happening behind closed doors to their own children.

The revelation this week that education watchdog Ofsted took action against almost 400 substandard childminders last year is bound to deepen their sense of unease.

Sharon, however, has no such worries. "It is not about looking in on Evie every minute," says the mum, who works in advertising. "I probably only have a quick peek a couple of times a day."

"Being able to do that gives you peace of mind. I know that even if I'm not watching, another parent could be. The fact that the cameras are there is good, because we all know the nursery has nothing to hide."

Alexis McConnachie, proprietor of Kingscliffe, which takes children as young as six weeks, believes the webcam system helps parents put natural con-

**DON'T WORRY,  
NURSERY KIDS.  
BIG MOTHER IS  
WATCHING YOU  
- THROUGH  
A WEBCAM.**

**ADAM WAKELIN  
REPORTS**

cerns about leaving their children in the care of others into perspective.

"The BBC programme showed one employee in one particular nursery to be bad egg," she explains. "Yet that sows seeds of fear in parents' minds about the whole industry."

"Sometimes mums and dads do overly concern themselves, but you've got to remember that these are precious children. Being able to have a quick peek is bound to put their minds at rest."

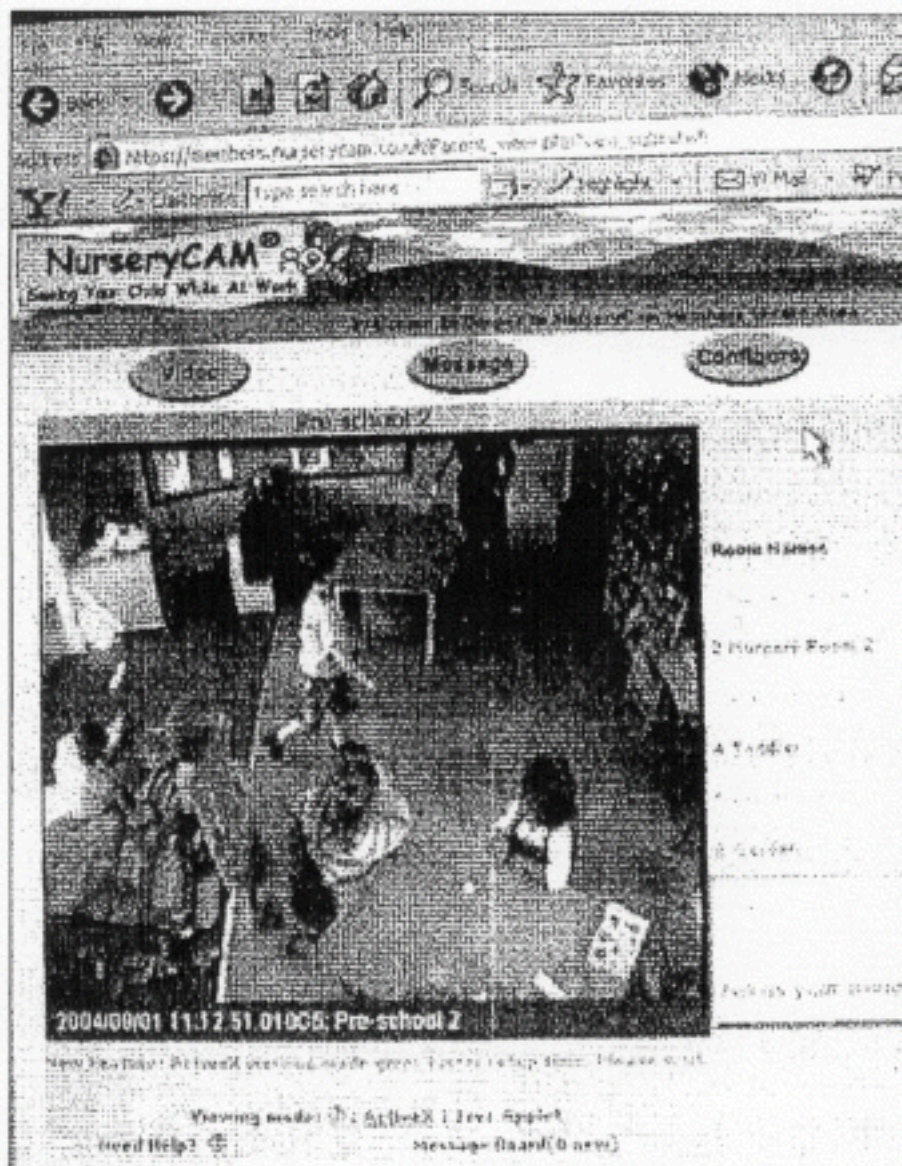
"We didn't have any hesitation in installing the system. If you've got nothing to hide why would you? We felt confident in putting ourselves on show."

Webcams offer much more than the chance to make sure your child is safe, she points out. "They also give you an ever-present window on their development."

"You can see them doing creative activities, learning new things or even just having their lunch," says Alexis. "It allows parents to feel really involved in their child's day."

Sharon agrees. "It's lovely to see what Evie's been up to," she says. "I can pick her up and talk to her about what she's been doing. To actually see her making cups of tea for the other children, getting on so well - it's lovely. They progress so much at her age. It's nice that I'm not missing out."

Evie's grandad is also using the internet to monitor her



**WE CAN SEE YOU:** Above, parents' eye-view of children at Kingscliffe nursery, looking at the website, below left, and Florida Choudhury looking after children under the webcam's watchful eye



growing up - all the way from Houston.

"He loves it," smiles Sharon. "The last time her saw her in person was last December. She wasn't even walking then. When he first saw her on the internet I had to tell him what Evie was wearing. She had changed so much he was struggling to recognise her. That won't happen any more."

Access to Kingscliffe's webcam pictures is strictly regulated says Alexis. Pass codes, encryption technology and oth-

er security checks ensure no one can log on without the express permission of parents and carers. Those who have permission also only have the ability to look in on rooms in which their child is likely to be. Viewing is limited to half an hour a day.

Again, the care and safety of the children is of paramount importance, she stresses.

Sharon dismisses the argument that the webcams are indicative of overprotective parenting.

"I don't think I'm being over-

protective," she says. "It's about feeling involved and having peace of mind. When my daughter goes to school she will be able to tell me about her day and whether she's had any problems. At the moment, she can't."

"I think webcams are the way forward. In five or 10 years' time most nurseries will be wired up."

For more information on the type of system installed by Kingscliffe, log on to the Nurserycam website:

[www.nurserycam.co.uk](http://www.nurserycam.co.uk)

## PROBLEM COLUMN



WITH FIONA CAINE

### Husband jealous of new baby

**Q** I am worried about my daughter. Her son is four months old. He's a lovely little boy and is loved by everyone.

However, when she visited last week I could tell that something was bothering her and she cried and told me that she thinks her marriage is falling.

It seems her husband is jealous of his son and has accused my daughter of wanting to spend more time with the baby than with him. It's caused some nasty rows and they often go for long periods without talking to each other.

**A** Adjusting to the arrival of a new baby, especially a first one, is not easy.

Some people are totally unprepared for the impact that this always has on family life.

Your son-in-law clearly hasn't come to terms with this and needs to understand that he is not the only one being affected by the new arrival.

I suggest your daughter has a talk with her husband and explains that she, too, is feeling confused. Then she needs to ask for his help. She seems to have assumed total responsibility for the baby's care.

If he takes a more active role in looking after the baby, not only is he less likely to feel jealous, but he will also be able to spend more time with his wife.

You could buy him a book that might help - *The Sixty Minute Father*, by Rob Parsons. It's an informative and helpful read about his role in this new relationship and as there is also *The Sixty Minute Mother*. You could buy the pair so he doesn't feel you are attacking him.

Write to or e-mail Fiona Caine if you have a relationship, sexual, marriage or family problem.

Fiona regrets that she cannot enter into personal correspondence.

[mail@fionacaine.net](mailto:mail@fionacaine.net)

**TOMORROW'S  
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