

EARLY YEARS MATTERS



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CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE... THE EARLY YEARS FRAMEWORK // ISSUE 18 // AUTUMN 2010

Working
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Curriculum for
Excellence is here



All systems Glow



Early Years Framework





The Early Years team (left to right): Avril Robertson, Trisha Boyd, Jane Stirling, Jean Carwood-Edwards, Fiona Marshall, Jacqué Fee



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Dear colleagues,

This new issue of *Early Years Matters* comes to you at a hugely significant time. *Curriculum for Excellence* is now officially under way, marking a major milestone for everyone in Scotland.

The priority going forward will be to build on the momentum and the team here at Learning and Teaching Scotland will continue to work hard to bring you the latest information and facilitate the co-ordination of ideas and best practice.

Included in this issue is a preview of the eagerly awaited revised National Guidance **Pre-Birth to Three – Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families** due to launch towards the end of the year, and complementing this, a multimedia resource to support practitioners as they bring the guidance to life. **Minister for Public Health, Shona Robison MSP**, talks about the importance of collaborative working to achieve better outcomes.

Reflecting our commitment to reliable and relevant research, there's an update on the most recent findings from the **Growing Up in Scotland Study**, and some personal views about what it's like to undergo an **HMIE inspection**.

We also look back on the first ever **International Early Years Glow Summit** and look ahead to the **Scottish Learning Festival 2010** – the largest learning festival in Europe. Busy times but exciting times!

I couldn't go without wishing a very fond farewell to two familiar faces on the Early Years team – Annette Burns and Linda Lauchlan, who both finished their two-year secondment with us this summer (read their experiences on p20) – and extending a warm welcome to two new members of the team, Trisha Boyd, seconded from her post as Quality Improvement Officer, Argyll and Bute Council, and Jacqué Fee, formerly Assistant Director of CAF Research and Development Centre and Course Director of the BA Childhood Practice and BA Education and Social Services Degrees at University of Strathclyde. See you next issue,

JEAN CARWOOD-EDWARDS
EARLY YEARS TEAM LEADER



Our Chief Executive talks to EYM...

Bernard McLeary, Chief Executive of Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS), talks to *Early Years Matters* about *Curriculum for Excellence* and our youngest children.

LTS has a firmly established record of delivering education reform and contributing to the ongoing transformation of Scotland's education landscape.

In the spring of this year a robust 20-month review of LTS was completed by the Scottish Government. This review, involving the Education Secretary, senior civil servants and 40 stakeholders, represented well-informed views on Scottish education and acted as an accountability check to ensure that we're delivering on our remit.

I'm delighted that the outcome of the review was very positive and we have been retained as a non-departmental public body and have been given responsibility for three key areas – the curriculum, assessment, and Glow and ICT. In addition, we have welcomed staff from Learning

Connections, a former division of the Scottish Government, to LTS as part of our newly formed Communities team.

Not only does this entail delivering the curriculum 3–18, but also keeping it under review, supporting the delivery of *Curriculum for Excellence* and providing advice and support to the education system as a whole.

Early years learning plays a huge role in this. At LTS we have a fantastic team dedicated to supporting quality practice working closely with all early years settings and partner agencies across Scotland. As well as offering essential support for the implementation of the new curriculum, the team facilitates the sharing of ideas and practice across local authorities. This support includes multimedia and online resources, regular conferences and seminars, the facilitation of National Early Years Groups and, of course, the regular publication of this very magazine.

For the increasing numbers of Glow users, the team has also created a fantastic Glow Group which allows teachers and early years practitioners to see and share good practice and debate and discuss issues and ideas.

At LTS we are acutely aware that important and valuable learning starts long before a child turns 3! We know

that what happens from pre-birth to 3 can set future patterns and influence life-chances. *Curriculum for Excellence* therefore needs to build on strong and positive foundations, hence the team is currently working with key partners to revise the National Guidance, *Birth to Three*. The updated Guidance, *Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families*, will support and inform practice across Scotland. It will be enhanced with new information on pre-birth and brain development and tie in with the philosophy behind the *Early Years Framework* and *Curriculum for Excellence*. The guidance, including an exciting new DVD and CD resource for CPD, will illustrate practical case studies and make important links with current research to support evidence-based practice.

As we enter a new term and schools and early years settings across the country work towards full adoption of *Curriculum for Excellence*, it will be more essential than ever that practitioners are able to take advantage of the support, resources and information that LTS provides. Together, I'm confident that we can secure positive outcomes and a strong future for Scottish education and Scotland's youngest children. ●

Creating a new national guidance and multimedia resource to support all staff who work with and for children under 3 years

Supporting and co-ordinating National Networks

Working with practitioners and partners towards implementing Curriculum for Excellence

Working with practitioners who are building the National Assessment Resource

Chairing and contributing to the meetings of the National Quality Assurance Group (NQAG)

Creating an Early Level Glow Group for the collaborative NQAG process

Supporting and developing the National Early Years Glow Group

Highlighting updated news, information research and examples of good practice on Early Years online

Early Years online

Supporting practitioners to become more research-engaged to improve evidence-based practice

Partnership working with Scotland's Colleges and universities towards developing a shared agenda

Contributing to national Early Years qualification developments

Working collaboratively with national bodies and agencies

Working with Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People

WHAT'S KEEPING US BUSY?

Planning the Early Years Saturday Conference
13 November 2010



CARE COMMISSION MOVES CLOSER TO SCSWIS

The Public Services Reform (Scotland) Bill, to establish a new scrutiny and improvement body, Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS), received Royal Assent on 28 April 2010.

Part of a move to simplify the scrutiny landscape, the new body for social care, social work

and children's services in Scotland will take on the existing responsibilities of the Care Commission and Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA), along with responsibility for leading on the inspection of services to protect children currently undertaken by HMIE and the inspection of the integration of children's services.

Work to develop the structures and operational procedures for the new body is now well under way, with SCSWIS due to come into effect on 1 April 2011. Until then, business will continue as usual within the existing

organisations to deliver the current work programmes and ensure as smooth a transition as possible.

MORE INFORMATION:

To read more about the transition to SCSWIS, visit www.scotland.gov.uk/topics/health/scrutiny

**GLOBAL
HANDWASHING
DAY PLANNED FOR
15 OCTOBER 2010**

The Handy Andy schools' and nurseries' pack by Health Protection Scotland is used by the Care Commission as best practice on hand hygiene for children. It's an excellent resource and is fully downloadable.

www.washyourhandsofthem.com/the-campaign/childrens-pack.aspx



SSSC: CHILDHOOD PRACTICE AWARD FOR ALL MANAGERS IN DAY CARE OF CHILDREN SERVICES

The Childhood Practice award which enhances the professionalism and leadership skills of those who work with children will become a requirement for all managers working in day care of children services from 1 December 2011.

Childhood Practice will be the required qualification for all managers of services for the day care of children when they re-register with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) after 2011. This includes managers of nurseries, crèches, playgroups and out of school care. The awards currently available that meet this requirement are the BA Childhood Practice and Postgraduate Diploma in Childhood Practice.

The new qualification not only makes sure that all managers meet the same regulatory requirements and that there are no differences in the status of their awards but also ensures better outcomes and advantages for children and their parents. Evidence shows that well led services achieve better outcomes for children partly because the people who are leading have a strong sense of where they want to take the service but also so that they can work across a range of services such as education, health and social services. The Childhood Practice award is about equipping people who work with children to have the skills they need to be able to achieve this.

Frances Scott, Qualifications and Standards Manager at the SSSC said: 'We want children to achieve the best possible outcomes and it is essential that the staff working with them have the highest level of skills and knowledge. The Scottish Government's decision to include all managers and lead practitioners sends out a clear message that everyone who cares for children has an important role to play. I am pleased that Scotland's education providers have risen to the challenge of ensuring that the Childhood Practice award is available across the country.'

Launched in 2008, the innovative Childhood Practice award is one of the first work-based awards in Scotland where entry is based on vocational qualifications (VQs)

and the experience people have gained in their career to date.

MORE INFORMATION:

Visit the [Childhood Practice awards pages on the SSSC website: www.sssc.uk.com](http://www.sssc.uk.com) to learn more about the qualifications, to download *Issue 3 Childhood Practice newsletter* and the updated *guidance booklet for employers and learners*, and to read our [FAQs](#).

If you have any other questions about Childhood Practice please email [Nina Roberts, SSSC Education and Workforce Development Adviser](mailto:nina.roberts@sssc.uk.com), at nina.roberts@sssc.uk.com





HMIE: LOOKING BACK – LOOKING FORWARD

By **Kate Cherry**
HM Assistant Chief Inspector

With holidays over, young children are excited about their next moves, whether starting nursery, going to a different playroom or into Primary 1.

It is good for us to take stock and think about the new term. Looking back over the last year, some of the key developments in the early years sector show signs of change on children's learning outcomes and have the potential to make a real difference.

The *Early Years Framework* stresses the importance of children and families having the best support as early as possible in the child's life. *Getting it right for every child* is now a shared principle in how we work with children. *Curriculum for Excellence* is opening up opportunities and

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“It was really helpful to have the professional dialogue with the Managing Inspector to give background information about our establishment.”

“Although initially daunting, we found the experience to be positive and it has left us on a real high to continue to improve the playgroup.”

engaging children much more in making decisions and having choice in their learning.

Our models of inspection, introduced last year, are giving HMI an increased opportunity to engage with staff about these key developments. During inspections, we have enjoyed more professional dialogue, learning with staff and sharing effective practice. In turn, this has helped build capacity across the early years sector.

Feedback from staff who have had inspections in the last year has been very positive.

‘The time the inspector took with staff was helpful for improvement and progression. It was really helpful to have the professional dialogue with the Managing Inspector to give background information about our establishment.

‘Although initially daunting, we found the experience to be positive and it has left us on a real high to continue to improve the playgroup.’

Staff like the time to engage with the inspector and share their work more fully. They appreciate the interaction with staff on a professional basis and the advice being given.

The inspection builds from the centre's own knowledge about itself and allows each to share strengths, areas for further development and improvements brought about through self-evaluation.

Where now for the next steps? Early years colleagues are not known for being complacent and there is a real desire to build on what is working well to make children's outcomes even better. Children already come to pre-school with a thirst to learn and they are rarely disappointed in having fun in their play.



Can we make sure we are ‘*Getting it right for every child*’?

We now have to:

- sustain and build on existing good practice – don't throw out what is working well
- focus more on the depth of engagement of children in their learning and introduce more challenge
- take responsibility as staff and be accountable – individually and collectively
- know the implications for practice and for young learners
- understand what active learning approaches mean, in particular across transition points
- benchmark children's progress and assess effectively.

We will continue to work together to open up learning and share the examples of good practice from centres in *Curriculum for Excellence*. ●

GETTING THE EARLY YEARS RIGHT



Public Health
Minister

**Shona
Robison**

This Government is absolutely committed to getting the early years right for every child.

Delivering the outcome that our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed is not the responsibility of any one Minister or any one portfolio. Ensuring that this happens has implications for us all and I work closely with my colleague Adam Ingram, the Minister for Children and Early Years, on this agenda.

three social policy frameworks, including the *Early Years Framework*, and I know that at a local level the NHS works closely alongside its community planning partners to deliver on the early years.

I am well aware that the early intervention agenda requires input from all sectors and all levels, using the *Getting it right for every child* (GIRFEC) methodology – the delivery mechanism for the social frameworks – which has been successfully piloted in Highland. The evaluation of the GIRFEC Highland Pathfinder has shown not only improved outcomes for children – which is the main goal

“ ..our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed... ”

As Minister for Public Health and Sport, I know how valuable a role NHSScotland plays in early intervention and supporting children and their families in the early years. The Equally Well Ministerial Task Force has once again highlighted the importance of the early years of life in addressing health inequalities. The Equally Well test sites in East Lothian and Midlothian are delivering learning on this issue.

I have recently asked NHS Boards, as part of their annual review process, to report on how they are contributing to the delivery of the

of what we do – but also business benefits, increased staff satisfaction and improved relationships with the third sector.

Although all services play a key role in taking an early intervention approach, antenatal services and maternity services more generally are vital in identifying those children who, even before they are born, will require additional and targeted support. That is why I have set up a working group to consider how antenatal inequalities can be addressed. The recommendations of this group, the engagement with stakeholders on

GETTING IT RIGHT FOR EVERY CHILD

SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

refreshing the Maternity Services Framework, and the forthcoming Care Pathways for Vulnerable Families being developed by NHS Quality Improvement Scotland will all be underpinned by the 'Getting it right' approach.

There are a number of other relevant initiatives being taken forward at a Scottish Government level. They are:

- supporting NHS Lothian by investing £500k to help them develop their parenting strategies and employ parenting co-ordinators
- investing £250k in Barnardo's Scotland to develop a group-based parenting programme for vulnerable, young first-time mothers, and supporting an external evaluation
- investing £1.6m to fund the testing of the Family Nurse Partnership early intervention programme in the City of Edinburgh over the next three years, supporting first-time teenage parents. The project will support up to 145 teenagers over this period, from early pregnancy until their child reaches the age of 2.

I am proud of the way that we in the Scottish Government and local partners have begun to work together to deliver on this agenda. I know that we have a way to go and that there are a number of obstacles and challenges to overcome. However, I am also aware of the many examples of good practice and good partnership working that exist across all sectors and am optimistic about the future. ●

With the Newborn Hearing Screening Programme (NHSP), families are to have their child's hearing assessed shortly after birth. The rationale behind NHSP is that early identification affords deaf children better outcomes if supported by sensitive early intervention (Yoshinaga-Itano 2003).

An educational audiologist is an experienced teacher of the deaf with an additional postgraduate qualification. Educational audiologists work with families to provide support that facilitates the natural attachment between parent and baby by ensuring a positive approach to deafness. Key features also include developing the confidence of parents to make informed choices and providing services in partnership with families. *Getting it Right for Every Child* provides a framework and ethos to facilitate this approach.

Educational audiologists continue to provide support as children progress through

school. Acoustically appropriate classrooms are key to the development of successful and confident learners. Listening is affected by a number of factors including the hearing of the child, age and classroom environment. We hear with our brain and unlike adults, children do not have a fully mature auditory brain until the mid teens (Flexer 2004). Also young children do not have sufficient language and life experience to 'fill in the gaps' of speech missed by background noise. Therefore, if all children are able to hear more clearly and more consistently, they have an opportunity to learn more.

As an educational audiologist I provide advice on good listening environments and on acoustics and amplification equipment for school buildings.

As always, good practice with deaf children will benefit all.

Brian Shannan
Educational Audiologist
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ALL SYSTEMS glow[®]

FOR INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

Collaborating digitally via Glow through 'Glow Meet' sessions is becoming increasingly common practice, not just at Learning and Teaching Scotland but also within educational establishments across Scotland. In May of this year the LTS Early Years team took things one stage further by hosting their first ever International Early Years Glow Summit.

JEAN Carwood-Edwards, Early Years Team Leader explains, 'We're always looking for new ways to use and showcase the potential of Glow so taking it on a step from national intranet to one that could facilitate international collaboration seemed only natural. We could share what we do here in Scotland in relation to *listening to children* while also exploring what other countries are doing – all of which would help in our quest to support practitioners to implement *Curriculum for Excellence*.

'We presented the idea of an international summit at a conference for LTS staff. The Chief Executive of LTS who is very forward thinking, gave it his full backing. So the support for the summit was there from day one.'

Virtual unknown

Planning a virtual summit, however, is quite different from planning a conference. Says Jane Stirling, Development Officer with the Early Years team and lead Planner for the summit, 'Glow is a protected and secure environment but it has the facility to give access for specific purposes such as international partners. So we set up a steering group and invited key international early years contacts to log in as our guests.'

There was also the small matter of how to encourage debate without everyone talking at once. 'We wanted the summit to be an opportunity to talk about the importance of listening to children rather than participants simply being talked at,' says Jean. 'In advance of the summit, we asked that delegates indicate if they would like to speak, at which point the microphone and camera would come over to them. We had to plan in that amount of detail.'

Leaving nothing to chance, the team even factored in a trial run with the technology. Says Jane, 'Because it was a new initiative for our international partners we linked up with each country in advance to give them a flavour of how they

would be interacting on the day.' We were supported throughout process by the expertise of the Glow team.


Scaling the summit

Given the careful planning that had gone into the event, there was a real sense of anticipation in the air when Monday 10 May 2010 – the day of the summit – finally arrived.

In all, seven countries were represented in the Classroom of the Future at LTS, including host country Scotland, Iceland, Italy, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Sweden. Every country had a nominated presenter, plus their own invited guests from the early years community. 'We were keen to ensure a good range of skill sets and knowledge,' says Jane. 'Scotland alone had representatives from early years settings, colleges and universities, the Scottish Government, HMIE, local authorities, Care Commission and SSSC.'

Adam Ingram, Scotland's Minister for Children and Early Years, launched the session before handing over to presentations and Q&A sessions by each country, conducted in English, followed by a presentation by Tam Baillie, Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People.

Throughout, delegates were able to see one another via a large screen, ensuring that the debate still retained that all-important personal touch. 'The further we got into it, the more relaxed everyone became and the more fun the exchange was,' says Jean, 'including the



“It was fascinating to hear what other countries are doing in terms of their education approaches and the amount of learning that took place was incredible.”

Icelandic representatives jokingly apologising for their wayward volcano – and asking Tam Baillie if he could please ‘fix it’!

‘It was fascinating to hear what other countries are doing in terms of their education approaches and the amount of learning that took place was incredible. One delegate even commented afterwards that they could have sat with a textbook for a month and still they wouldn’t have learned anything like as much about early education in the different countries.’

The Glow bug

Such was the buzz following the inaugural summit that the Early Years team is already in talks about

a second summit. ‘Involving relatively little planning and requiring minimum cost, the summit proved just how doable it is to collaborate not just across Scotland but internationally too, overcoming the usual barriers of time, distance and money,’ says Jane. ‘We’ve definitely got the bug – the Glow bug.’

Adds Jean, ‘Digital collaboration is definitely the way forward. The summit represented an important bridge to the future – and a very solid one at that.’

MORE INFORMATION

A video of the International Early Years Glow Summit is now available to watch online at www.glowscotland.org.uk

NEW EARLY YEARS TEACHER SPECIALISM

Professor Aline-Wendy Dunlop, Jackie Henry, Joan Martlew and Malcolm Wilson, Childhood and Primary Studies Department, University of Strathclyde

“ I am thoroughly enjoying the course and the ongoing professional dialogue with my fellow students is really inspiring. The e-learning format is not only allowing me to access an excellent range of resources but also be in touch with teachers from a wide range of settings all over Scotland, which in itself is an excellent resource. ”

(EARLY PRIMARY TEACHER PARTICIPANT)

THE Early Years Teacher Specialism is a new Postgraduate Certificate offered through internet based learning (e-learning) at the University of Strathclyde for GTCS registered teachers. The development of the programme is funded by a grant from Scottish Government. The Childhood and Primary Studies Department also offers an on-campus taught programme in Early Childhood Studies that runs on Tuesday evenings during term time. Although there are some programmes on offer, many teachers feel they have been lacking opportunities for continuing academic development in recent years. This new certificate course is made up of four modules, all of which are offered online:

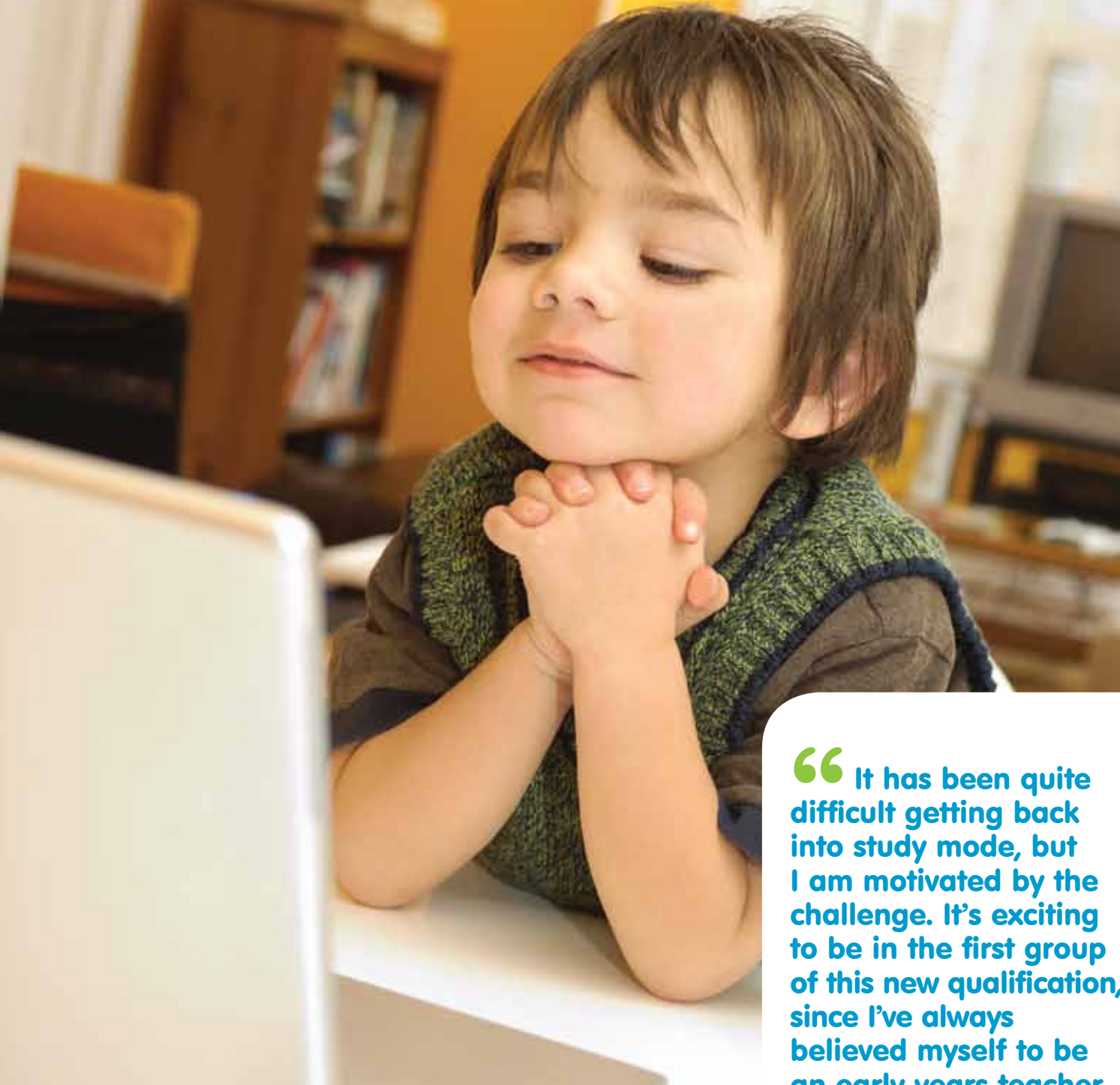
- **Early Years Teacher Professionalism**
- **Questioning Pedagogues**
- **Contemporary Childhood – A Collaborating Workforce**
- **Independent Action Study Module**

As I write this article a group of teachers from all over Scotland are logged on to their e-learning course. Jackie, Malcolm and Joan, three of the early years teaching team, are also online, leading this week's tutor chat. The staff group have chosen to work in one room at the University, and at 6 pm prompt students log on from home. Many of the students are taking advantage of Strathclyde's scholarship scheme whereby there is no cost for the first module. This module, '**Early Years Teacher Professionalism**', involves teachers in reflecting on their professional development, knowledge and what underpins their values, philosophy and day-to-day practices with young children.

Tonight's discussion topic draws from the week's study on *Historical Perspectives*. It was prepared by Malcolm, whose video-presentation provided an historical overview of influences on early childhood provision in the UK with particular emphasis on developments within Scotland. Malcolm encouraged the

students to think about the relationship between playing, learning and teaching, and the reform of the early years workforce and the provision of children's services in Scotland.

As I write I'm tapping into the three tutor chats. Jackie's group is discussing reflection in children – one of their prompts was Froebel's famous comment: '*All I know I have learned from children.*' The teachers on the course are saying, 'Today I have observed children outside catching minibeasts and looking at them and talking about what they have learned.' Another student comments, 'yes, we have done a lot of work with the children on learning from each other and getting them to see that changing their ideas isn't "copying" other people'. Joan's group are discussing the teacher's role and listening to children. One teacher has just said, 'I think we need to appreciate where children are coming from and their backgrounds and culture – so we're not just hearing what we expect to



hear,' whilst another says, 'I think probably the constraint with this is getting the time to sit and listen to the children and hear their voices.' Someone reflects on this, 'Care and a pupil's health and wellbeing have to be attended to first before you can make progress with them as learners.' This student then develops her theme by writing about collaborations with Social Work.

This wealth of discussion is going on every week; at the same time teachers are busy in their day jobs and fitting in their study time. We are all learning as this is a new environment for tutors too, but six weeks in and contributions are thoughtful, learning

is visible and the groups are finding time to meet up online to support each other and undertake shared tasks. When the discussion is over, students can access the lecture, reading and tasks for their next topic.

The purpose of this new programme is to provide opportunities for teachers of young children to really focus on the children's learning, development, wellbeing and engagement. Such opportunities were available to GTCS registered teachers in the past, but most recently investment has been targeted on the wider children's workforce.

A final student comment reflects on this:

“ It has been quite difficult getting back into study mode, but I am motivated by the challenge. It's exciting to be in the first group of this new qualification, since I've always believed myself to be an early years teacher. This specialism feels like 'permission' to do so and validation of the importance of my role as I consider the early years workforce as a whole. ”

MORE INFORMATION

To receive further information and to apply for the course contact:
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Jackie Henry, Course Director
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SCOTLAND'S COLLEGES

ENTERPRISE IN EARLY YEARS PROGRAMMES

Scotland's Colleges have a key role to play in providing opportunities which support the training and development of a qualified and competent early years workforce.

Enterprising approaches embedded in college-based activity complemented by work experience in early years settings help develop the **knowledge** and **skills** required. Curriculum teams in FE colleges continually reflect on both aspects of practice and use this to inform quality improvement.

In order to support staff in colleges who deliver early years training programmes, Scotland's Colleges has helped produce two resources which have enterprise as their focus.

The first, an online self-evaluation tool provided in CD-ROM format, is based on a previous version of *How Good is Our School?* The college resource comprises three sections:

- **generic**
- **enterprise**
- **enterprise in early years**

This third section has six key quality indicators from HMIE.

External Quality Arrangements for Scotland's Colleges were agreed and a number of evaluative

statements produced for each, for example:

8.1 Partnership working with communities, other learning providers, employers and other agencies

The evaluative statements in the resource are presented as a stack of cards in the resource, and these are placed on a six-point scale indicating how each relates to practice. When all indicators have been reviewed a summary report is produced. The resource can be used on an individual or team basis by students and partners.

The second resource takes the form of video case studies showing examples of effective partnership between college and early years settings. Staff from Adam Smith College and staff in Torbain Primary School, Kirkcaldy, and Ladybird Nursery, Glenrothes, identified activities which demonstrated use of enterprising approaches. Students were filmed in college and in early years settings and then they reflected on how this contributed to the development of their knowledge and skills.

MORE INFORMATION

The self-evaluation tool and video case studies can be found in the Enterprise in Education section of Scotland's Colleges website: www.scotlandscolleges.ac.uk/curriculum/enterprise/enterprise.html

The following are some examples of one of the evaluative statements which considers the effectiveness of partnership arrangements:

There are effective partnership arrangements for training and work experience in early years settings.

There is joint planning with partner agencies to ensure an appropriate level of learner engagement with children during work experience.

All partners have a clear understanding of their roles and provide an effective learning experience for learners in the senior stage.

Placement staff have clear remit on needs of college learners and work alongside them to contribute to their development and learning.



A NEW TRAINING PARTNERSHIP AT SHETLAND COLLEGE

October 2009 saw the start of a joint project led by Shetland College and funded by Shetland Islands Council. At the centre of the project was the training programme entitled:

SVQ 2: Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools.

A cohort of 17 staff was selected for the course and two assessors were appointed by the council. Some of the candidates had already gained their Professional Development Award, which was taken into consideration and awarded credit towards the present course, which is recognised in the new framework and approved by the the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).

This revised SVQ is aimed at individuals supporting teaching and

learning in any type of educational setting. The award relates directly to the role of *classroom assistant* but is broad enough in scope to include new roles and responsibilities such as bilingual support, additional support needs and pastoral support such as Nurture Groups. There are five mandatory units covering areas such as the support role, child development, health and safety, positive relationships and teamwork.

Candidates are also invited to select two optional units. The most popular were the units covering literacy and numeracy and additional support needs. These gave candidates a knowledge base for *Curriculum for Excellence* and for the 2004 Code of Practice for Additional Support Needs respectively.

Candidates attended six college tutorial sessions and used in-service training days to find out more about e-portfolios, which were introduced by the college in 2007. E-portfolios have been used successfully by the college. This means that candidates living in the outer islands are not disadvantaged by having to travel miles to drop off or pick up paper portfolios. Feedback can be given quickly online to keep the momentum of the learning experience lively and current.

Now, in June 2010, completion is on the horizon for the group, who have worked extremely hard to master modern technology and match standards to their existing excellent practice in the various local authority establishments. ●



“ I know lots about healthy eating. Remember we got the good healthy food to eat that we picked when we went to the shops. ”

EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT APPROACHES

In Inverkip Primary School the Primary 1 and nursery staff worked together on a collaborative project focusing on an aspect of health and wellbeing through a social studies context. We explored ‘Local Shops and Services’ and the chosen health aspect was diet and its impact.

A wide variety of differentiated learning activities were planned across both settings. The children visited local shops, met with health professionals, tasted a range of healthy foods and learned how to categorise these. Children found out about the impact of each food group on their health. The culmination was a healthy picnic comprising lentil soup, homemade bread, fruit salad and smoothies, which the children planned, shopped for, made, served and thoroughly enjoyed.

The impact of the learning in this area was apparent in the enthusiasm shown for making healthy choices at

school and in the children’s ability to justify these. Feedback from parents confirmed that the healthy eating message had also had a significant impact at home.

Children were fully involved in planning their learning and, on a regular basis, they individually looked through their personal profiles with a member of staff and demonstrated their learning through discussion, which was recorded by the staff member, for example, ‘I know lots about healthy eating. Remember we got the good healthy food to eat that we picked when we went to the shops.’

Assessment of learning included observations of play experiences, talking with children, peer and self-evaluation by children and for children and parental evaluation.

We have shared learning and assessment in a variety of ways with parents:

- Outside the nursery a ‘Learning Wall’ display for parents outlines the details of planning, experiences and outcomes and success criteria we are currently working on. This is supported by photographs and children’s work which links to the learning.
- Children’s profiles are freely accessible to parents and include photographs and observations of their child’s learning. Children’s comments are included and next steps are identified. Parents are invited to add comments too and the profiles are regularly sent home to encourage this dialogue.
- At the parents’ evening, parents commented favourably on their child’s experiences in relation to the healthy eating topic and the fact that working with P1 on a joint topic helped to clarify the concept of the *Curriculum for Excellence* ‘early level’ for them.
- In P1 the parents receive a weekly bulletin sheet which details the learning intentions that are the main focus in class that week, the homework tasks that the children have to fulfil plus a feedback section on the class events.
- Our pupil reports contain a section on health and wellbeing and this was used to give individual feedback.

**Jacqui Milliner and
Elaine Montgomery**

Assessment is integral to learning and teaching and helps children, staff and parents to understand how much and how well children are learning, where their strengths and development needs lie and how to plan the next steps in their learning.

A coherent approach to planning the curriculum, learning and teaching and assessment should be considered. It should encompass breadth, depth, challenge and application in learning and focus on knowledge and understanding, skills, attributes and capabilities.

For assessment to be purposeful and effective, opportunities for dialogue and discussion through local moderation should take place. There should be a shared understanding and dialogue with and amongst, all those involved in the process.

Assessment should be planned so that:

- it is an integral part of the learning and an evolving process, not an end result
- it reflects planned learning
- it is flexible to reflect responsive planning and learning
- it ensures staff, children and parents gather evidence relevant to learning
- it supports effective transitions.

Assessment evidence can be represented by, for example, a conversation with a child, a photograph from home or within the early years setting, a drawing, video footage, a model made by a child, a child's comments on their own learning or on another child's learning – the possibilities are endless. Evidence should be based on the child's significant achievements and should be relevant, appropriate and succinct.

Assessment as part of learning relies on staff making sound judgements

without bias or preconceived ideas and which are valuable and accurate. In order to make sound judgements, staff should gather a range of evidence of progress and achievement; share observations and standards through dialogue and discussion; and reflect on the implications for learning, teaching and reporting.

Assessment can be challenging for all those involved in supporting children's learning. When the assessment process is not clearly planned and expectations are not discussed and shared, there can

of learning and the standards and expectations across the curriculum.

Staff will have access to a new national online resource the National Assessment Resource (NAR) – which is being developed by Scottish Government, Learning and Teaching Scotland and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) in collaboration with other national partners, education authorities and practitioners.

The purpose of the National Assessment Resource is to provide support for a single coherent assessment

ALL SYSTEMS GO!



be 'a thousand observation post-its' evident. At times staff may try to record and observe too much in the fear of missing significant aspects of learning. The assessment process should be focussed, manageable, purposeful and not too time consuming.

Children have a key role to play in assessment and they should be encouraged to contribute to all stages as and when appropriate. Their thoughts, ideas, interests, self-evaluation and peer evaluations are all essential. This ensures that assessment is inclusive and gives a wider view of the learning and teaching process.

Parents also have a central role to play in assessment. Their knowledge of their own child is crucial. This brings another dimension to assessment and embraces prior learning, progress and achievement in a wider context.

Where appropriate, a range of partnerships and agencies can contribute meaningfully to assessment. Careful collaborative planning is required on the part of all those involved in supporting children's learning.

Learners do best where staff concerned develop in partnership, a shared understanding of the aims

system through which understanding and professional practice in assessment and standards and expectations for *Curriculum for Excellence* will be developed and shared.

Fundamental to the success of the National Assessment Resource will be the availability of a wide range of high-quality assessment guidance, resources and illustrations of learners' performance to exemplify expected standards across the range of learning in the experiences and outcomes and in qualifications. The initial focus will be on the priority areas of literacy and numeracy and health and wellbeing. In the longer term, the plan is to ensure that resources are available across all levels and areas of the curriculum.

LTS and SQA have worked together to produce a support resource which will be available online by the end of September 2010. It is the intention that the National Assessment Resource will be launched at the Scottish Learning Festival in September 2010.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information, please visit the Learning and Teaching Scotland website.



SCOTTISH BOOK TRUST LAUNCHES NEW PROGRAMME

Scottish Book Trust is pleased to announce the launch of its new Early Years Programme (formerly known as Bookstart in Scotland), together with a brand new mascot.



FOLLOWING consultation with stakeholders and with the support of the Scottish Government, Scottish Book Trust has developed a new book gifting programme which firmly links into Scottish educational and parenting policies.

The core format of the programme – including 240,000 free packs of books for babies, toddlers, 3-year-olds and Primary 1s, and free Bookbug sessions (which in 2009–10 had audiences of over 170,000) – will stay the same, although some new benefits have been introduced including bespoke packs, improved parental guidance and an overall greener programme under a brand new Scottish identity.

The new identity has been created by acclaimed Scottish author and illustrator, Debi Gliori, and Bookbug will now replace the Bookstart Bear as the new face of the Scottish book gifting programme.

The packs will be especially tailored to the Scottish early years environment, feature more Scottish authors and illustrators, and strongly support the Scottish publishing industry.

Marc Lambert, CEO of Scottish Book Trust, said: *'It is a privilege for Scottish Book Trust to be able to devise and deliver a scheme of such social and educational importance, with the support of local authority library and educational services, as well as the NHS. Working together under the fantastic new identity of Bookbug, we will send the message out far and wide that reading with your child in early years is one of the greatest gifts a parent or carer can bestow.'*

Caroline McLeod, Early Years Programme Manager at Scottish Book Trust, is confident that the improvements to the programme will strengthen its impact on children and parents, with the continued aim that more parents will be reading more often with their children:

'It has been proven that babies and toddlers who are exposed to books on a regular basis are further ahead in reading, writing, numeracy and listening skills when they reach school.'

This is why Scottish Book Trust's Early Years programme is so essential – as a universal scheme, based on scientific evidence, it is part of the solution to increasing literacy levels in all communities.'

“ Partnership working, involving the public, private and voluntary sectors, is key if poor literacy across society is to be challenged. ”

“ There should be a focus on early years to address the negative effects of socio-economic disadvantage on learning. ”

A VISION FOR SCOTLAND – THE REPORT AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LITERACY COMMISSION, DECEMBER 2009

TRUST EARLY YEARS



Scottish Book Trust Early Years Programme: Some Important Facts

WHAT WILL STAY THE SAME?

- 240,000 free packs of books – now called Bookbug packs – will still be gifted to all children in Scotland at six weeks, 18 months, three years and in Primary 1
- Free singing and rhyming sessions – now called Bookbug Sessions – will still take place in libraries and other community venues across Scotland
- The Book Crawl library joining scheme – now called Bookbug's Library Challenge – will still be widely available

WHAT WILL CHANGE?

- The child-friendly mascot, Bookbug, created by Scottish illustrator Debi Gliori, will replace the Bookstart Bear
- The new packs will be greener and have a reduced environmental impact
- An exciting new parents' guide to sharing books with children will be included in each pack
- The packs will contain more inclusive content – information on dyslexia, bilingualism and more
- The improved pack contents will link into the Scottish education system
- A new website will be launched, full of tips, advice and information about free Bookbug events – www.scottishbooktrust.com/bookbug
- Communication with parents will be improved through the all-new Bookbug email alerts service – www.scottishbooktrust.com/bookbugalert

Reasons why Scotland needs a bespoke book gifting programme

- Core funding spent in Scotland, for Scotland, benefiting the Scottish economy.
- Greater efficiency, integrating staff and operations into existing Scottish Book Trust set-up and systems.
- Stronger and more direct management support for the Early Years team in Scotland.
- Ability to gain greater strategic fit with Scottish Government and Local Authority Early Years and Literacy initiatives, *Curriculum for Excellence* and other Scottish Book Trust national programmes.
- Ability to develop and improve on early years provision in ways truly relevant to Scottish life, languages and culture.
- Ability to source additional funding from private and public sources towards development of the schemes and their social and educational impact.
- Ability to deepen and develop engagement with recipients of the book gifting packs, both children and parents, leading to other social and educational benefits.
- A stronger, more relevant identity for book gifting schemes in Scotland, leading to greater public image awareness.



WHAT'S IT LIKE WORKING AT LTS?

OUR EXPERIENCE



Annette Burns,
Development Officer

It's been a very enabling experience.

Although my remit within LTS was wide and varied I have had the privilege of working alongside early years colleagues and the National Under Threes Advisory Group to revise the *Birth to Three* guidance and produce a DVD resource. This exciting resource, aptly named *Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families*, will help bring the guidance to life for all practitioners working with Scotland's youngest children.

It's been a huge learning curve, one that has been both very challenging and inspiring. I've learned how many wonderful practitioners there are in local authorities and the Scottish Government who are dedicated to providing the best care and education for all children.

I'll take away with me wonderful new friends, lots of new skills and the ability to reference my practice and decisions against a more strategic and national backdrop.



Linda Lauchlan,
Development Officer

The innovative atmosphere is infectious.

Every day feels like an important opportunity to support colleagues in making a positive impact in the lives of children.

It's incredibly busy and varied. There are so many opportunities to present and facilitate at national conferences and I have even had the chance to chair the Pre-School into Primary Transition Advisory Group.

I've gained a wider perspective into what's happening nationally and an opportunity to work with colleagues from different sectors. I know this will impact positively on my future practice.

I have had the incredible opportunity to work alongside a network of highly knowledgeable professionals. I am now looking forward to using these skills in my future career.

Ever wondered what it's like to be on secondment at Learning and Teaching Scotland? Here, two members of the Early Years team share their experiences.

PRE-BIRTH TO THREE

NEW NATIONAL GUIDANCE

FOR A BETTER START IN LIFE

With just months to go until the much anticipated launch of revised national guidance, *Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families*, we offer a sneak preview of what practitioners can expect.

IT'S now well-documented that the care babies and children receive in their earliest years is vitally important, having a real bearing on how they develop not just in the here and now but for the rest of their lives. So it's essential that we get it right for every child in these most critical years.

Birth to Three: Supporting Our Youngest Children has, since 2005, set the context for high-quality care and education, identifying key features that support and promote sensitive and well-informed approaches when working with children under 3.

This national resource is now being revised by Learning and Teaching Scotland in collaboration with key partners to reflect the principles and philosophy that underpin the *Early Years Framework* and *Curriculum for Excellence*. The updated guidance, *Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families*, is due out later this year and will replace the current guidance.

Designed to be of value both to adults working directly with the under-3s and those involved indirectly through local authorities, health, colleges, universities and other agencies, the new guidance aims to:

- facilitate effective partnership working for the benefit of every child
- promote confidence, capability and capacity across the current workforce and for students engaged in pre-service training programmes
- provide CPD opportunities for individuals and staff teams
- enable practitioners to build in time for reflection

- inform the ways in which staff can best support children and families
- improve and enhance evidence-informed practice.

It will combine practical case studies with current research and will feature the latest findings on pre-birth and brain development.



Paintings by Lucy Henderson, aged 4



Three become four

One of the key differences between *Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families* and its predecessor is that there will be four key principles: Rights of the Child, Relationships, Responsive Care, and Respect.

The new guidance will help develop an understanding of each of these principles and how they impact on children's learning and development, before taking practitioners through key areas of effective practice, from Attachments, Environments, Health and Wellbeing, Skilful Observation, Planning and Assessment and Partnership Working, through to Literacy and Numeracy, Play, Role of the Adult and Transitions.

Bringing the guidance to life

Helping to bring the new guidance to life will be an accompanying continuing professional development DVD and CD resource. The DVD follows a similar format to that of the hugely well received *Curriculum for Excellence: Supporting the Early Level* DVD. Like the Early Level DVD, this new resource consists of a series of short films showing practitioners from a variety of settings – from childminders to nurseries – working

with babies and our youngest children and interacting with parents and others.

Interspersed throughout each film are inspiring insights and practical input from some of the most renowned professionals and academics such as Chief Superintendent John Carnochan, Professor Aline-Wendy Dunlop, Professor Vivette Glover, Dr Maria Robinson, Dr Rosemary Roberts, Mr Robin Balbernie, Professor Colwyn Trewarthen and Dr Suzanne Zeedyk.

The additional CD, meanwhile, will offer practitioners recommended reading lists, useful websites and the opportunity to watch extended interviews with early years experts.

Coming winter 2010

Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families is due to be distributed to all pre-school settings, local authorities, colleges, universities and other relevant agencies and services during winter 2010, with the full guidance and CPD resource available online from early 2011.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on early years visit www.LTScotland.org.uk/earlyyears/index.asp





Painting by Lucy Henderson, aged 4



A NURTURING ENVIRONMENT IN GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL

It may be assumed that when a child starts school their early learning experiences and development are secure and they have the resilience and confidence to engage successfully with both their teachers and peers, so that they can actively take part in all future learning opportunities.

The reality for some children is that nurturing care was impaired, or even absent, at some stage of their earliest development. This can be for a variety of reasons such as postnatal depression, bereavement, and drug or alcohol abuse. These children may need quite a lot of support to cope with the change from the nursery to school environment.

Teachers will recognise these children as those who cannot share or co-operate. They grab from others, play in isolation, can sometimes be aggressive or have inappropriate attachment, and there are others who may be introverted. Their parents may be difficult to reach, many living under extreme stress.

For many parents contact with schools may be a daunting experience. However, schools have the potential to make a huge difference to the lives of many children and their families, through early intervention, in the form of nurture classes.

Glasgow City Council has invested in 68 nurture classes within primary schools across the city. These classes are run by accredited Nurture Teachers and Assistants. The ratio is normally six to eight children to a teacher and assistant.

Wellshot Primary, situated in the East End of Glasgow, has had a nurture class called the Rainbow Room for almost eight years. It looks slightly different from the other classes

as it has a fitted kitchen, a breakfast table, a cosy corner, and many opportunities for playing together. The staff aim to recreate the process of earliest learning in an environment which is both home and school.

Each day is carefully planned where the routine is predictable and the experiences within this routine are appropriate for an early developmental level. Our children will often display baby and toddler behaviour within this safe and familiar environment. Staff carefully profile children's learning needs, allowing them to plan interventions and monitor progress for each child on an individual basis.

Working in collaboration with our parents is vital.

The nurture staff and our home support worker have successfully engaged a group of otherwise reluctant parents in a cooking group and are now working with them in collaboration with Culture and Sport to improve their numeracy and literacy skills.

Our nurture class is the nucleus of our nurturing school. Emotional literacy is taught across all stages, equipping the children with strategies to build resilience for the future. Programmes such as Bounce Back, Seasons for Growth and Circle of Friends all support this process. The children are encouraged to explore and express their feelings through the Class Feelings Trees and worry boxes.

This session we have developed a nurture approach for children in the upper primary through an outdoor skills programme called Forest School. Our 'Wellshot Woodland Workers' are a group of challenging children inspired by a trained member of staff and our home support worker.

Our second Marjorie Boxall Quality Mark Award for Nurture is a testament to the dedication and commitment of our nurturing staff and confirms the quality of our nurturing school.

The DVD 'The Nurture Room – Where Miracles Can Happen' provides more information on the nurture classes in Glasgow City Council.

In our experience, nurture classes can change the lives of children and their families. ●

DEVELOPING SERVICES:

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH IN PERTH AND KINROSS

Following a review of the early years in 2009, Perth and Kinross Education and Children's Services produced an Early Years Strategy that sets out a vision for the development of services to support our youngest children and their families for the foreseeable future.

The work has already begun. For many years Perth City has been home to three nurseries that provide full-time places to support vulnerable children and their families who live across Perth and Kinross. However, the review highlighted that more full-time provision was required to support children in their own communities.

In 2009 nursery classes in five primary schools across Perthshire were developed into 'Hubs', each providing eight full-time places for vulnerable children. A major aim of the 'Hub' approach was to develop an integrated approach with a range of services to support children and their families following the GIRFEC model. This has been developing steadily over this first year and will continue to be developed during the session 2010–11.

As any expansion of services was required to be met within existing resources, School Improvement Services redeployed early childhood practitioners from an existing supply of staff who worked in the early stages of primary to support the 1:8 ratio for full-time children. As all schools had previously run with morning and afternoon classes with staffing ratios of 1:10 it was initially a challenge to refocus the day to accommodate lunches and to provide a nurturing environment with different opportunities for full-time children

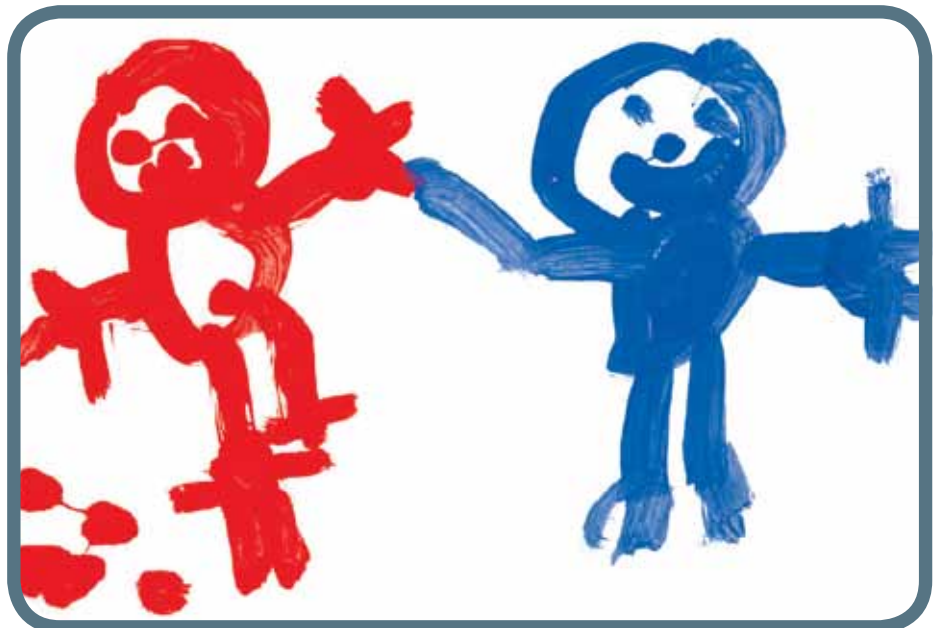
in the afternoons. Each school took a different approach with some preferring to have lunch in the nursery whilst others saw a benefit in taking the children to join older siblings in the school dining room.

Engagement with parents was a key aim and this has been developing with varying success. The Childcare Strategy team provided weekly support through their Parenting Co-ordinator. However, engaging parents proved to be a challenge. This has now been reviewed and plans are being formulated to ensure all parents are encouraged to access child/parent sessions from August 2010.

The Health Visitor is also very involved with the school and runs drop-in sessions for parents, ensuring easy access to support when they bring their children to nursery or toddler group.

Feedback on the success of the Hubs has been encouraging with all nurseries reporting positive impacts on the children particularly in social skills, relationship building with children and adults, increased levels of self-confidence and very good progress in talking and listening.

Most nurseries reported good working practices and engagement with other agencies who were



Painting by Lucy Henderson, aged 4

One nursery Hub has developed some innovative approaches to engaging with parents. These include a family learning approach, 'Book and Cook', where parents and children bake together in nursery. The school also facilitates mother and toddler sessions to support our youngest children and develop relationships with families long before their children enter nursery.

involved with children. Further work with Social Work and Health Services is planned for next session.

A formal evaluation of the first year is currently under way. However, in line with the Early Years Strategy there are plans to develop further full-time provision outwith Perth City to ensure better life chances for some of our youngest children in Perth and Kinross. ●



THE NEUROSCIENCE OF CONNECTION

By Dr M Suzanne Zeedyk
m.s.zeedyk@dundee.ac.uk



when someone is looking at them, and certainly detect when someone has turned away. In short, babies are born with brains already able to make meaning – especially emotional meaning – from the experiences they have with other people.

Moreover, neuroscience is teaching us that brain development is influenced by those experiences. Brains do not unfold in accordance with a predetermined genetic plan. Instead, they are organic. Pathways grow out of the specific interactions that babies have with their world. 'Do I live in a world where lots of people smile at me, or do I live in a world with only a few people, all of whom are more likely to be shouting than smiling?' Evolution has ensured that babies can survive in either setting.

Our emotional adaptability can

a cold emotional climate, where they receive a low rate of responsiveness and warmth from other people. It won't kill them. But it will make life harder, more effortful, less relaxed, more demanding. That's the point of the terrible stories about Eastern European orphanages: children were dying from a lack of human responsiveness. They couldn't survive in a landscape of emotional ice. When we ask babies to develop the skills – the biology and brains – to manage cold emotional climates, we are asking them to live harder, more stressful lives. Stress takes a heavy toll.

Society pays a price when a large proportion of our members are carrying brains that learned the world is a cold emotional place. Our rates of mental illness, physical illness and violent behaviour rise.

“ Brains do not unfold in accordance with a predetermined genetic plan. Instead, they are organic. Pathways grow out of the specific interactions that babies have with their world. ”

We come into the world already connected to other people.

BABIES notice when there is a similarity between their own actions and those of others. They participate in conversations, 'taking their turn' once their partner has finished making a funny face or crooning 'cootchy-coo'. They detect

be seen as similar to our geographic adaptability. Humans can survive in warm climates, like the Mediterranean, and cold climates, like the Arctic. But life looks very different in these two regions, and they require different sets of skills and knowledge to cope with them. Life is harder when you have to battle against the elements, as opposed to life where the climate is less exacting.

Emotional adaptability is the same. Babies can learn to survive in

Two questions we could ask ourselves, then, are: do we want to keep paying such societal prices, and do we want our children to develop brains suited to landscapes of emotional ice or emotional sunshine?

This is one reason that neuroscience is so exciting. It helps us to understand how a whole set of societal issues is related, once we understand one core insight: that babies come into the world already connected to other people. ●

HELPING PARENTS TO GET TO GRIPS WITH LEARNING

Lorraine Sanda, National Parental Involvement Co-ordinator, reflects on 'Transition' and how *Curriculum for Excellence* offers opportunities for parental involvement.

As we move into a new school year, getting parents on board with *Curriculum for Excellence* is going to be vital to its success. We know the role of parents, particularly in the early years, is the biggest influence on a child's development. Much work will have gone into planning transition to primary school before the holidays, but I believe that the needs and effects of transition for parents and children continue well into the next year.

Many of parents' concerns around transition will have been picked up and addressed. These can often be focused on the practical issues such as childcare, pick-up and drop-off arrangements, what to put in lunch boxes, making friends, going to the toilet, and many more. There are some great examples of transition programmes that recognise the role of parents in supporting children's learning – those where parents are able to come into classrooms, take part and see how children are learning work very well for children, parents and staff. Someone told me recently of a whole school staff somewhat reluctantly and nervously exposing themselves to parents, but being overwhelmed by the appreciative comments from parents about what a wonderful job they were doing. So much so, that they are offering more opportunities throughout the school year to encourage parents in through the doors, and further develop their

Curriculum for Excellence offers lots of opportunity for parents and staff to be working more closely to support children's learning

partnership with parents. I was also impressed with Burnfoot Community School, Hawick, which has a Flying Start to P1 programme. They not only work hard at parental involvement before children start P1 but importantly recognise the need to help parents beyond the child's first day in P1. There, the transition continues.

All parents' concerns are relevant and should be addressed, but moving the focus more obviously towards learning, and developing a shared understanding of *Curriculum for Excellence* is now on many minds. *Curriculum for Excellence* offers lots of opportunity for parents and staff to be working more closely to support children's learning.

Some top priorities for me:

- **Parents supporting literacy** – the early level literacy experiences and outcomes, quite rightly emphasise listening and talking, as well as exploring books, stories and other text. Many parents will have grown up in an environment where 'getting a reading book' is synonymous with starting school. An early opportunity to explain the literacy outcomes, can only help parents' understanding, rather than feeling that their child is missing out. You can then move on to thinking about what parents can do to support literacy.
- **Supporting parents** – we know that parents are the key educators of their children and how we work in partnership with them to help children develop the four capacities and skills for life, learning and work is going to be crucial. Schools in Orkney have been offering the Positive Parenting Programme (Triple P) to all nursery and P1 parents. There is an important link between parenting and *Curriculum for Excellence*, not just in early years. St Andrew's in Orkney is the first school to incorporate sessions for all parents throughout the school in their yearly calendar of events. 'I recognise the important and difficult role of parenting today, and am therefore pleased to be able to offer sessions for all parents throughout the school. Feedback from parents so far has been very good,' says Thelma Holt, Headteacher. (Triple P offers

MAKING FATHERS MATTER

As calls for the greater involvement of fathers in the lives of their infants and children gathers support, Fathers Network Scotland (FNS) is working hard to ensure that the voice of Scottish fathers is heard.

suggestions and ideas to help parents and children build positive relationships, as well as develop strategies and approaches to behaviour. The approach and benefits are very much in line with *Curriculum for Excellence*.)

- **Working with parents to understand active learning** – most parents will be familiar with active learning in nursery and pre-school, but may not realise that learning in this way is equally beneficial as their child moves into school. The leaflet explaining the early level gives some useful ideas of what parents can do and the video in the *Curriculum for Excellence* Parent Toolkit for the Early Stage is worth highlighting to parents to explain how learning and teaching approaches have developed over the years to benefit children.
- **Sharing progress** – quite rightly, parents want to know that their child is making progress, how this progress is being assessed and what their own role is in sharing information and contributing to next steps in learning. Establishing an effective three-way system of communication between parent, child and teacher is crucial, but also underpins good and effective parental involvement. Different tools will work for different establishments and parents. Home/school diaries can work well for ongoing regular contact. Glow is also welcomed by parents as an opportunity to see more of how and what their child is learning. Regular short meetings or email can work with others. One parent recently commented, 'I learned so much more from a 15-minute informal chat with my child's teacher than any formal report, parents' night or leaflet.' ●

Open to any individual with an interest in working with fathers and the issues associated with fatherhood, the membership-based FNS is active in a range of areas: developing and promoting good practice in all aspects of work with fathers, compiling and sharing information and research that will assist and support fathers and professionals, and working with health services, schools and social services to facilitate the increased involvement of fathers.

In addition to these practical measures, FNS is also involved in influencing law and policy-makers at Scottish and local government levels to ensure that children's care and welfare are not portrayed as the sole responsibility of mothers, and related to this, increasing public awareness of the importance of fathers in child development.

MORE INFORMATION

To find out more or to join FNS visit www.fathersnetworkscotland.org.uk



USING RESEARCH TO INFORM PRACTICE: GUS KIDS START SCHOOL

New findings for the first four years

Growing Up in Scotland (GUS) is the longitudinal research study tracking the lives of 8000 children and their families from birth through to the teenage years.

Information is collected on a range of issues including family circumstances, child health and development, childcare, activities undertaken by children and experiences of school and pre-school. The study has a strong focus on the early years and is used to help inform policy and practice development. GUS is used as a

teaching resource in the higher and further education sectors in the training and development of early years professionals.

New findings from GUS reinforce the importance of children's early experiences in shaping their development and behaviour. One new report, *Children's social, emotional and behavioural characteristics at entry to primary school*, considers the extent of difficulties among Scottish children as they start Primary 1. The research finds that most children starting primary school do not display any problematic behaviour as measured by the SDQ (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire). However, in line with other studies, a significant minority (between 10% and 27%) showed mild or severe problems across single or multiple types of difficulties. Conduct problems, reported by 27% of parents, were the most common type of difficulty; 17% of children displayed difficulties relating to hyperactivity. Emotional symptoms (10%) were the least prevalent.

Health, development and parenting factors were more closely related to behavioural development than socio-economic factors or family structure. Although children's behaviour generally improved between pre-school and entry to primary school, children who had experienced difficulties at pre-school age were likely to continue to have difficulties as they started primary school – particularly in relation to issues of conduct and hyperactivity.

The research finds that most children starting primary school do not display any problematic behaviour

Given that adequate social, emotional and behavioural development is central to a successful school experience, the new findings highlight the need for more support and improved transition processes for children with difficulties, and their parents.

Four further new reports from GUS consider the relationships between health, poverty and home learning environments on child outcomes. In particular, the new reports look at 'Health inequalities in the early years', 'The circumstances of persistently poor children', 'Maternal mental health and its impact on child development and behaviour' and 'Impact of the home learning environment on child cognitive development'.

MORE INFORMATION

To find out more about GUS or to download the research reports and summary briefings, please visit the study website: www.growingupinscotland.org.uk





22-23 September 2010
SECC ▶ GLASGOW

ARE YOU GOING TO THE SCOTTISH LEARNING FESTIVAL?

CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE: ENHANCING EXPERIENCES, RAISING STANDARDS

Now in its eleventh year, the Scottish Learning Festival, organised by LTS, brings together the global teaching and learning community for two days of inspirational seminars, speeches and resource launches that support *Curriculum for Excellence*.

Taking place on 22 and 23 September at Glasgow's SECC, the main theme of the 2010 festival is Curriculum for Excellence: Enhancing Experiences, Raising Standards.

Keynote speakers this year include Michael Russell MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Eric Booth, an award-winning actor, author, entrepreneur and arts education specialist, Richard Gerver, author of *Creating Tomorrow's Schools Today*, and Professor Sugata Mitra, Professor of Educational Technology at Newcastle University. Detective

Chief Superintendent John Carnochan QPM, Violence Reduction Unit, and Harry Burns, Chief Medical Officer for Scotland, are among the spotlight speakers.

There are many planned seminars across the two days that will specifically focus on the work of early years practitioners, including outdoor learning, assessment, pre-birth to three and the role of early years teachers.

There will be an education showcase session on Wednesday at 10.15 am hosted by staff and pupils from Paisley Pre-5 Centre, focusing on the topic of listening to and consulting with children.

Within the exhibition itself the Early Years Zone will give visitors a chance to see latest resources and ideas from across Scotland. The LTS Early Years team will also be on hand at the LTS stand.

Bernard McLeary, Chief Executive of LTS, says: 'Last year's festival drew over 7000 education professionals to Glasgow, cementing Scotland's reputation as a world-leader in the field.'

MORE INFORMATION

Registration is now available. Log on to www.scottishlearningfestival.org.uk for registration details and to keep up to date with the latest news about the Scottish Learning Festival 2010.

You can also follow news about both the festival and Learning and Teaching Scotland on Twitter and Facebook. Visit www.twitter.com/LTScotland or www.LTScotland.org.uk/facebook.



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Learning and Teaching Scotland
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Early Years Conference

Changing Childhoods:
Dynamic Approaches to Change in the Early Years



Saturday 13 November 2010

10am – 2.30pm

Glasgow Thistle Hotel

Come along and join in the debate. This is a unique opportunity, not to be missed, to engage with first-class speakers who are experts in their field.

Further information and to reserve a space:
www.LTScotland.org.uk/earlyyears/index.asp

Speakers:

- **Professor Susan Deacon:** Scotland's Early Years Champion
- **Derek Robertson:** National Adviser for Emerging Technologies and Learning, Learning and Teaching Scotland
- **Dr Carol Craig:** Chief Executive, Centre for Confidence and Wellbeing

