

Early Years Matters

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newsletter



www.LTScotland.org.uk





Early Years team: Lynda Bancroft, Jane Stirling, Annette Burns (back row), Linda Lauchlan, Jean Carwood-Edwards (seated)

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Dear Colleagues

Welcome to the 15th edition of *Early Years Matters*.

The early years community in Scotland is on the road to transformational change.

As we absorb the critical messages and principles presented in the Early Years Framework, and as *Curriculum for Excellence* picks up pace and gathers momentum, there can be no doubt that the need for continued and concerted collaborative action is the responsibility of all of us.

This publication celebrates and supports these two interconnected national developments and we are confident that you will find the content particularly informative, interesting and inspiring. *Early Years Matters* is a regular publication which is created by the early years community for the early years community.

In the planning stages of each publication, writers are invited to share their views, knowledge and experience, and we are forever grateful to all of the contributors, who are faced with tight copy deadlines and yet produce outstanding features. We also feel privileged to be able to showcase some of the stunning artwork which has been created by children from different parts of Scotland.

The Early Years team love it when you read *and* respond. Whether you are an experienced or first-time commenter, why not contribute an online comment to one of the articles?

We look forward to hearing from you!

Jean Carwood-Edwards

Early Years Team Leader

Some of our recent and current activity

- Working with practitioners and other partners on the path towards implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence*.
www.LTScotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence
- Planning for excellence at the Scottish Learning Festival 2009. We are extremely excited that Carlina Rinaldi has agreed to be a 'spotlight speaker' this year! For more information about the largest learning festival in Europe, please visit www.scottishlearningfestival.org.uk
- Identifying and planning the various ways in which we can support the implementation of the Early Years Framework.
www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications
- Creating a new 'Early Level DVD Resource Pack' for managers and practitioners in local authority and partner provider pre-school settings and primary schools.
- Working in partnership with the research team at University of Strathclyde to finalise the research publication (*CPD and Working with Under-Threes*).
- Working collaboratively with North Lanarkshire Council to develop innovative ways of delivering CPD with practitioners and managers.
- Organising the following conferences:

CPD and Working with Children Under 3 Years Research into Practice Conference
3 March

Curriculum for Excellence – A Creative Curriculum
This is a collaborative event in partnership with University of Strathclyde.
24 and 25 April

Curriculum for Excellence – The Early Years Framework: Putting the Vision into Action
This is a Good Practice Conference which is being jointly planned and delivered by LTS and HMIE.
9 June



My Mummy by Jessica aged 3 years and six months

- Taking forward the newly established National Early Years Local Authority Forum (NEYLAF).
- Developing, broadening and strengthening the Early Years Glow Group.
- Presenting updated news, information, research and examples of good practice on Early Years Online.
- Contributing to the work of national bodies and agencies relating to the early years sector including Scottish Government, HMIE, SQA, further education, Scotland's Colleges, universities, Care Commission, Scottish Social Services Council and others.
- Join with colleagues across authorities to form a new 'Under-Threes Advisory Group'.

For further information visit
www.LTScotland.org.uk/earlyyears

Implementing the Early Years



Adam Ingram

Minister for Children and Early Years

Our children's experiences during their earliest years say much about our society and are key to outcomes in adult life. A wealth of research evidence from education, health, justice and economic experts now supports this. The Early Years Framework, published jointly by COSLA and the Scottish Government on 10 December 2008, is about giving all our children the best start in life and sets out the steps the Scottish Government, local partners and practitioners in early years services need to take to start us on that journey.

National and local government have high ambitions for the early years. These cannot be achieved by a business as usual approach and transformational change is required.

The framework identifies 10 elements for this:

- Helping children, families and communities to secure outcomes for themselves
- Breaking cycles of poverty, inequality and poor outcomes in and through early years

- A focus on engagement and empowerment of children, families and communities
- Using the strength of universal services to deliver prevention and early intervention
- Putting quality at the heart of service delivery
- Services that meet the needs of children and families
- Improving outcomes and children's quality of life through play
- Simplifying and streamlining delivery
- More effective collaboration
- A coherent approach.

What happens now?

The publication of the framework is not the end of the story. We recognise that this agenda represents a challenge for all those who work with children but the framework was developed through partnership and that's how it must be delivered.

At national level

The framework contains a number of national actions in the areas of workforce, parenting, scrutiny and improvement, childcare and play which will be taken forward by the Scottish Government and COSLA.

Framework

At local level

The real change must take place in Scotland's communities, with local partners using flexibility to implement the framework based on circumstances and needs. This will vary from area to area but has to be determined by local planning, with everyone working to the same outcome – to give our children the best start in life.

Local partners will have a challenge in aligning resources towards prevention and early intervention

while continuing to help those who need support now. There is no easy solution and the framework acknowledges this but it is not simply a case of transferring resources – a change in thinking and the design of services is also needed.

This is where we can all begin to play our part, by refocusing on the needs of children and their families and by realising that delivering improved outcomes for children is the day job for all of us.

I would therefore urge all of you involved in the early years sector to acquire a copy of the Early Years Framework and begin to think what this will mean for you as an individual practitioner and also how the services you are involved in on a day-to-day basis can begin to effect the transformational change envisaged in the framework.



Curriculum for Excellence

Tim Wallace, Professional Adviser, Scottish Government

While out and about on visits to pre-school establishments, schools and authorities, I am often asked if there is a timeline towards the 'starting' of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

Well, what we do know is that establishments should be planning on the basis of aspects of the current guidance from August 2009, and that from **August 2010** all learners from 3 to 18 should be experiencing learning and teaching based on the guidance. Central to this is a description of the curriculum that encompasses the experiences and outcomes, interdisciplinary learning, opportunities for personal achievement and the ethos and life of the centre as a community. The journey taken by each school and pre-school establishment to reach this point is a local decision based around your own identified development needs; however, there are a number of documents and materials becoming available over the coming months which should support you on this journey.

Final set of experiences and outcomes

Following the engagement on the draft documents, the final set of experiences and outcomes should become available **online** around Easter 2009. Printed versions will be distributed to all schools and pre-

school establishments in late May 2009. It is vital that practitioners read both the principles and practice papers (formerly called the cover papers) and the experiences and outcomes together to fully understand the context for each curriculum area.

Over time, the *Curriculum for Excellence* website will also provide the opportunity to browse additional support materials such as further explanation and exemplification for some of the experiences and outcomes and also a range of CPD materials.

Building the Curriculum 4: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work

The Scottish Government is committed to publishing curriculum guidance on skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work. This guidance will build on the commitment made in *Building the Curriculum 3: A Framework for Learning and Teaching* that the curriculum will provide all children and young people with opportunities to build skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work, with a focus on literacy, numeracy and aspects of health and wellbeing. The new curriculum has been written in a way which will enable the development of these skills throughout learning. The early years of a child's life lay the foundations for the development

of these skills and the guidance will provide further advice for all those involved in the planning and facilitation of learning.

We currently plan to publish this guidance in late spring and in due course it will be supported by examples of practice.

Building the Curriculum 5: A Framework for Assessment

Good assessment practice will be vital in helping to provide an emerging picture of learning and achievement for all learners as they develop the skills, knowledge and attributes that underpin the four capacities (successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens).

Scottish Government will publish *A Framework for Assessment* later this year and will be engaging with pupils, practitioners, parents and local authorities to make sure that the framework meets the needs of all learners. In addition, Learning and Teaching Scotland has revised the *Assessment is for Learning Early Years Toolkit* to support the publication of the experiences and outcomes.

Early Level DVD Resource pack

Following an identified need for further engagement resources for the Early Level, the Scottish Government has commissioned Learning and Teaching Scotland to produce an

– Early Years Update



audio-visual training pack for each pre-school establishment and primary school. It is hoped to launch this resource during the course of 2009.

The resource will focus on a number of themes including the key messages of *Curriculum for Excellence*, Active Learning, Transition, implementing the new curriculum, Glow and the Early Years Framework. It will also include links to various *Curriculum for Excellence* documents and provide signposts to other areas of support.

Scottish Government and Learning and Teaching Scotland will also be working together to plan future

support events following the production of this resource – watch this space for further details!

So what does this all mean for me?

Over the coming months, practitioners and managers are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the experiences and outcomes, the *Building the Curriculum* documents and other features on the *Curriculum for Excellence* website. You may find the summary diagram on page 13 of *Building the Curriculum 3: A Framework for Learning and Teaching* of particular interest. Focusing, for example,

on the seven principles of curriculum design (challenge and enjoyment, breadth, progression, depth, personalisation and choice, coherence and relevance), you could use the diagram to consider how best to plan to meet the needs of all the children that you are working with.

The Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery



There's a huge wave of interest regarding the educational, personal, emotional and physical benefits of allowing children the freedom to play, explore and learn within the natural environment.

It would seem that the timing of the opening of our Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery (September 2008) couldn't have been better.

The Care Commission has fully supported our venture; the local authority, Fife Council, has taken us on as Partner Providers; there's a steady

flow of new children arriving in the woods. The other timely development for us has been the introduction of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

Here at The Secret Garden, we've taken time to engage fully with the four capacities of *Curriculum for Excellence* and 'translated' these aspirations to create a unique curriculum that supports the child and staff in nature. From the four capacities emerged two spirals of learning and being: the Confident Happy Child and the Inspired Creative Child. Each spiral has symbols from nature to represent our aspirations of learning for the children and ourselves.

We've entitled our curriculum 'Nature as Teacher': relinquishing the notion that we, the adults, are the teachers. Instead we allow the children to learn from the elements of earth, air, fire and water and the experience of being fully engaged within the seasons, weather, and nature. Staff support from a safe distance: offering a sense of security, being fully present to assist in the children's process and enquiry yet still allowing the adventure of exploration in wilderness.

As we pilot our curriculum with staff, children and parents we've discovered that each one of us, regardless



of age, has the unique opportunity to engage with the spirals and witness learning about ourselves, our interaction with others and how we engage with and learn from nature. There's an understanding that unless we ourselves can connect and work with nature as the teacher, we can't presume to be able to support the children fully.

Cathy Bache

Lead Practitioner, The Secret Garden, Fife

Pre-school into Primary Transitions



Curriculum for Excellence provides an important opportunity to enhance transitions between nursery and primary. The Early Level spans pre-school to the end of Primary 1 (for most children) and naturally promotes collaborative working between the sectors.

The Early Years Framework identifies some of the challenges to be met in relation to transitions. One such challenge is to create effective dialogue between nurseries and primaries, including private and voluntary sector centres, about respective contributions to the Early Level. Communicating across the sectors is crucial to tackling these challenges and enabling continuity of learning, a key principle of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

In response to these challenges, Learning and Teaching Scotland has convened a national Transitions Advisory Group (TAG) in order to focus on transition issues related to *Curriculum for Excellence* (Early Level). The Transitions Advisory Group includes representatives from the Scottish Government, HMIE, LTS, universities, private, voluntary and local authority early years settings, and primary schools.

The meetings to date have been successful in their aims of establishing a shared understanding of the current climate and the challenges and opportunities to be met. For example, the further promotion of active learning in the early years of primary was highlighted by the advisory group as a key aspect within the current climate. The members of TAG agreed that pre-school approaches, such as learning through play, being extended into the early years of primary will provide scope for continuity of learning through similar learning environments and learning styles.

The group has been particularly helpful in contributing to the development of the Early Level DVD Resource Pack, which will be launched later this year. The resource is intended to support practitioners across Scotland on *Curriculum for Excellence*. It will include information on areas such as the key messages, developing the four capacities, planning and assessment, working with the wider community and transitions.

Further information and suggested ways forward will be available through the Early Years National Glow Group, on Early Years Online and at the Scottish Learning Festival in September 2009.

Linda Lauchlan

Development Officer, LTS

National Early Years Local Authority Forum

Learning and Teaching Scotland has recently established an important new national forum for staff with a specific responsibility for quality improvement in early years: National Early Years Local Authority Forum (NEYLAF). This forum has arisen as a result of local authority staff across Scotland indicating that they would find such a forum supportive and informative. The Early Years team thought long and hard about the name and coincidentally NEYLAF became the acronym for our carefully chosen title! We have since been informed by the majority of the forum members that they would like to keep this name.

The first meeting of the forum took place on Tuesday 27 January and proved to be a very worthwhile and enjoyable day. The new members had the opportunity to receive updates from Scottish Government and HMIE, and they also participated in thought-provoking and challenging workshops, supported by LTS.

Feedback from the event was hugely positive with comments from participants such as:

‘A forum of this nature has been long awaited.’

‘The opportunity to share developments with colleagues across the authorities was wonderful!’

‘This forum will be highly valued by those with responsibility for improvement in the early years.’

‘Great opportunities to share good practice and avoid duplication.’

‘I welcomed the opportunity to hear the national perspective.’

The National Early Years Glow Group

Glow breaks geographical barriers and allows joined-up working the length and breadth of Scotland. Learning and Teaching Scotland has created a range of National Glow Groups and we would like to encourage practitioners and colleagues to join our National Early Years Glow Group.

There are lots of exciting things happening in the group and we are encouraging members to complete a survey that seeks feedback on plans to start a videoconference using webcams (through a tool called Glow Meet). We also have a new feature on the noticeboard of the group, listing current early years CPD opportunities and details of events.

As well as helping you to find useful websites, the National Early Years Glow Group gives you the chance to join in by asking a question on the discussion forum, posting your opinion on the Conferences in Pictures, and participating in many other ways.

We invite you to come and join the Early Years group by visiting the National Site on Glow and following the link to the Early Years Glow Group in the National Groups area.



Supporting CPD in

HMIE and LTS have been working closely to provide professional development and training opportunities for staff working in early years settings. These opportunities range from the more traditional seminars and conferences to resources that are available online. These resources are often used as a catalyst for individuals or teams to take responsibility for their own professional development.

For over a year now, the new, more concise HMIE reports have contained examples of good practice which have been identified during inspections and these are listed near the start of the report. More detailed information relating to these areas of good practice is available on the HMIE website at www.hmie.gov.uk. Feedback from staff shows that this is proving to be an excellent CPD resource.

Over the past year, some of the centres inspected which exhibit good practice have been visited by a Journey to Excellence film team to capture what they are doing in the form of video clips. These clips show playroom/classroom practices and interviews with key staff. Some centres have been chosen because their good practice may be particularly helpful in taking forward current areas of development, such as the implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence* or the Early Years Framework. Others have been chosen because they exemplify specific aspects of practice known to be in need of support in centres and schools.

The following list shows the range of pre-school centre video materials which can be accessed on the Journey to Excellence website:

www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk.

Andrew B Cameron Nursery, Blairmore Nursery, Brucehill Early Years Centre, Clydebank Early Years Centre, Coatbridge College Nursery, Condorrat Nursery, Crieff Road Pre-School Centre, Donaldson's College Nursery, Doune Nursery, Garshake Early Years Centre, Gowans Terrace Child and Family Centre, Hampden Nursery School, Inveralmond Early Years Centre, Jigsaw Nursery, Kirkliston Nursery, Ladywell Nursery, Lairhilloch Primary School Nursery, Springvale Nursery, Tower Nursery

Professional development packs have been created by HMIE and these are available on the Journey to Excellence website (click 'Professional Development'). The packs cover the following topics and incorporate digital resources, CPD activities and links to research and relevant publications.

Active Learning, Assessment, Wellbeing and Respect, Working with Parents, Vision, Meeting Learners' Needs, Leading Learning, Motivating Learners, Working with Partners, Self-evaluation

Additional packs are currently in development and these will be uploaded over the coming months. Although not specific to the early years sector, these packs are proving to be popular for facilitating staff to develop their thinking and to consider how good practice featured in the packs might be used within their own setting.

the Early Years



Both LTS and HMIE offer national conferences and seminars for the early years community on a regular basis. The following events, which represent first-class CPD opportunities, are planned over the coming months.

CPD and Working with Children Under 3 Years Research into Practice Conference

(Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, 3 March)

Curriculum for Excellence – A Creative Curriculum

This is a collaborative event in partnership with the University of Strathclyde.

(University of Strathclyde, 24–25 April)

Curriculum for Excellence – The Early Years Framework: Putting the Vision into Action

This is a Good Practice Conference which is being jointly planned and delivered by LTS and HMIE.

(Hilton Hotel, Glasgow, 9 June)

Materials arising from these events are posted on the relevant websites and they offer a good source of CPD for staff. HMIE and LTS are now working even more closely to ensure that those who are not able to attend events will nevertheless be offered the chance to access subsequent online CPD resources such as conference presentations, film clips of workshops and main messages from keynotes. (The HMIE/LTS Good Practice Conference on 9 June will provide such post-conference CPD opportunities.)

Work is being done behind the scenes to ensure that these materials will be available through Glow – the ‘one-stop shop’. (For more information about Glow, see page 11.)

Continuing professional development is changing. As noted in HMIE’s recently published report on *Improving Scottish Education*, staff are beginning to benefit from the increased focus in early years on relevant training and qualifications. The kinds of resources referred to in this article are destined to play an ever more significant role in continuing professional development over the coming years, ensuring that provision for children in their early years is the highest quality.

Ken Muir

Chief Inspector, HMIE

Jean Carwood-Edwards

Early Years Team Leader, LTS

Developing Bookstart Treasure Chests



A tool to support the fostering of a love of books and reading for life

Bookstart in Scotland is embarking on the creation of a comprehensive programme of CPD training for early years staff and other professionals involved in the gifting of Bookstart Treasure Chest packs.

The programme will offer a comprehensive one-day training course for early years staff which will enable participants to understand how to gift Treasure Chests effectively and why effective gifting is so important. There will be a focus on how to use the Treasure Chest as a tool to engage with parents and to increase parental involvement in children's learning. They will also explain how the Bookstart Treasure Chest fits into the wider literacy development work of early years settings.

Participants will also be provided with a high quality information manual and equipment to further support their work to encourage families to be reading families and to foster a love of books and reading within all young children.

This training will be most beneficial for early years staff and other staff who work with early years settings, such as home-link workers, family support workers, and any other professionals involved in gifting Bookstart Treasure Chests.

As a special introduction to the new CPD programme, the first training day will be *free of charge*, and will be strictly limited to 40 participants. It will be held on 23 April, from 10 am to 3 pm, at Scottish Book Trust's Offices

on Edinburgh's Royal Mile. We are keen that at least one person from each local authority in Scotland is provided with an opportunity to attend, after which places will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. A regular rolling programme of training will then be offered to local authorities after this initial training day.

To secure your place on the free training day, or to find out more about Bookstart's programme of CPD training for early years staff, please email stephina.clarke@booktrust.org.uk or call 0131 558 1111.

Caroline McLeod

Bookstart National Development Manager for Scotland



Helping Parents Give their Children a Healthy Start!

Play@home is a physical activity programme for children from birth to 5.

Originally developed in New Zealand, the programme has been adapted for use in Scotland. Play@home was first introduced to families in Fife and is now being used throughout the country.

Based on the philosophy that parents are their child's first educators, this programme seeks to support parents to give their child a healthy start in life. Play@home recognises that the first seven years of a child's life are the most influential in establishing good exercise habits. Everything children do is related to exercise and health. Establishing daily exercise routines early in childhood encourages children's enjoyment of physical activity and promotes the value of parents doing exercise as role models. The programme strengthens the relationship between parents and children to develop their self-esteem, giving them confidence to try new activities.

Parents have a crucial role to play in encouraging their children to develop friendships and interact with situations outside the family home. This programme is not only about what parents can do for their children but, just as importantly, what parents can do with their children.

The programme is presented as three books: *Baby* (age 0–1), *Toddler* (age 1–3) and *Pre-school* (age 3–5). In addition, there are DVDs to support the *Baby* and *Toddler* books and a *Pre-school* DVD is in production. Generally, health visitors issue the *Baby* book during their primary visit to a family. The *Toddler* book is issued directly to parents by post and the *Pre-school* book is issued on enrolment in nursery. In some areas the books are issued through family centres or clinics.

The Scottish Government is currently funding the rollout of play@home across Scotland as a pilot for three years. This provides free resources for parents as well as the opportunity for staff to access training on play@home. The programme relies on a multi-agency approach, involving all those working with families and supporting families.



Anyone working with children under 5 in health, a local authority or the voluntary sector with experience in childcare, early education, physical activity or health promotion will find play@home a valuable addition to current resources. The programme has obvious links with *Curriculum for Excellence*, Care Commission Care Standards and *Health for all Children 4* and is described in the National Physical Activity strategy as an example of good practice.

If play@home is not currently available in your area, please contact Irene Miller, National play@home Adviser, at irene.miller@nhs.net to discuss this further.

Irene Miller

National play@home Adviser

**A multi-agency approach,
involving all those
working with families and
supporting families.**

Early Years Glow

Dundee early years practitioners are blazing a trail with their innovative and pioneering use of Glow.

Many exciting projects are taking place in the authority, with Glow underpinning a thriving collaborative community which is supported by a team of enthusiastic Nursery/Primary ICT staff tutors based in the Education Development Service in Dundee.

An Active Learning Glow Group has brought together pre-school and primary practitioners to share examples of good practice which reflect the values, purposes and principles of *Curriculum for Excellence* in the early years. The group has provided staff with a central location to store and access key documents, resources and advice on the implementation of active learning strategies. The discussion forum is a vibrant and popular area within the group, giving staff the opportunity to share their successes, bid for active learning resources and celebrate their achievements with colleagues city-wide.

The Dundee Nursery School site



Dens Road P1 class

has brought together our free-standing nursery schools, giving staff access to targeted news, up-and-coming events and a wide range of relevant websites. This site gives staff an opportunity to engage in discussion forums, support early years colleagues and discuss newly published documents.



The Top Tips for Early Years Glow Group offers support, inspiration and practical ideas for all nursery educators to take Glow Groups forward in their establishment. It demonstrates how a range of interactive resources can be easily accessible to nursery children in a safe and secure environment within Glow. Judy Regan, nursery practitioner from Menziesshill Nursery, commented, 'I like that I can just log in and there, on the staff home page, is information relating to things that I am interested in. There is as much or as little as you like. I have joined relevant groups, and the news from these groups is posted on my home page, right there in front of me!'

Pioneers

It saves me trawling for information all over the place. Another feature of Glow I think worthy of mention is the ability to build your own pages and groups. It's great! It really personalises the whole event, and gives ownership of your own school pages. Sharing experiences and activities, particularly within a large setting, becomes easier.'

At the time of nursery-primary transition, Glow has proved to be a useful support during this period of change. Glow Meet has strengthened collaborative links between nursery and primaries where P6 pupils have built up a friendship with the new P1 intakes by giving them a virtual classroom tour and providing a friendly face when they start their first day of school.

A future project will provide an exciting link between early years children and our Writer in Residence, Nick Hesketh. Nurseries and P1 classes will be invited to join a Glow Meet session to listen to one of Nick's stories, performed by the author himself, with children having the opportunity to be involved in a question and answer session.

There are many inspiring projects currently under way in Dundee and many more on the horizon. Our early years practitioners have access to a wide variety of groups at authority level, allowing collaboration and sharing resources between all sectors such as international education, gaming in education, moving image education and The Dundee Picture Book Award. Nursery practitioners are currently looking to make connections with more rural nurseries in Scotland to extend the children's knowledge of Scottish culture and are using the national Collaborative Projects Group to facilitate this.

The future of 21st century nursery education in Dundee is Glowing brighter and brighter!

Louise Henderson

Education Support Officer, Dundee City Council



Improving Scottish

A report by HMIE on inspection and review 2005–2008



Improving Scottish Education was published by HMIE on 16 February 2008. Early education is shown to maintain high quality provision, which is very encouraging as the pre-school years are given even more focus nationally.

Improvements in pre-school education since the first report on *Improving Scottish Education* highlight areas of significance. These include early reading and writing, partnership working to support vulnerable children and their families, involving learners in decision making, and continuing professional development for staff.

The strengths found are very important for young children's quality of experience:

Education

- Consistently good curriculum, and good progress made by children across key aspects of their learning
- Confident, keen, motivated children who enjoy their pre-school experiences
- Supportive and caring relationships between children and staff, and parents and staff, which ensure children's wellbeing
- Welcoming and inclusive learning environments which help children to settle and take part enthusiastically in activities.

and sharing the implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Many pre-school staff still need to access further training and qualifications to develop their understanding of children's learning. The continuing gap in the level of qualifications of staff needs to be reduced to implement *Curriculum for Excellence* and to ensure the success of the Early Years Framework.

The development of preventative approaches in response to the Early Years Framework must ensure that all children have the best start in

life. All working with children in the early years must be able and skilled in identifying and intervening early to address those who are at risk. They need to be able to provide effective support to children and families in meeting needs.

It is good to celebrate the strengths and improvements in the early years sector and know there is a continuing strong base of provision to improve even further.

Kate Cherry

Assistant Chief Inspector, HMIE

How can we improve the early years even further?

Challenges remain to raise the quality and consistency of provision even further across and within sectors.

Higher-level qualifications are needed for all staff in order to improve leadership capacity in educational development and children's learning. Self-evaluation needs to link more to improve outcomes for children. High quality staff interactions with children are very important in guiding, extending and challenging their learning. Across pre-school settings and into primary, staff have an even more important role to ensure progression in learning, making good use of information on prior learning



Review of CPD for early



The University of Strathclyde has completed a review, commissioned by Learning and Teaching Scotland, of the CPD provision, experiences and needs of those working with children under 3 years of age in early years centres across Scotland.

The review consisted primarily of a survey of practitioners, their managers and local authority early years officers. In addition, examples of good practice in three authorities were investigated in greater depth. The findings have been set against a picture of pre-school provision drawn from other research reports, policy documents and a range of relevant literature. It is anticipated that the findings will contribute to shaping developments in the sector, with the aim of improving the skills of the workforce and enhancing the quality of experiences of our youngest children.

years practitioners

Together, the responses to the survey and the interviews carried out during the case studies provide a rich source of evidence on the relevance and effectiveness of:

- current CPD provision
- the ways in which CPD needs are identified and met
- the barriers to access and participation in the opportunities on offer
- the topics and issues that those working in the early years sector see as critical for future development.

The picture that emerges is a consistent one, across both categories of local authority and partner providers and early years staff, with implications for policy and practice at the early years centre, local authority and national levels. Practitioners and managers are, overall, fairly positive regarding their experiences of the early years CPD events in which they have participated, rating them highly on relevance and quality. They are also in agreement that the key barriers to participation are time (fitting attendance in around their duties), funding (for attendance and supply cover) and uncertainty over the relevance to the day-to-day operation of the centre of what is on offer. Looking to the future, they see topics such as 'babies as learners', 'learning environments' and 'communication and language' as priorities. CPD was seen as most effective when it was delivered by early years practitioners, local authority advisers and specialists, such as psychologists and speech therapists.

While responses were similar across the three categories of provision – local authority, private and voluntary – some significant differences in view were observed. For example, many managers in partner provider centres thought that a lack of information on CPD opportunities posed a barrier to participation, but the majority of managers in local authority centres did not. However, it was also noted that practitioners in partner provider centres were also of this view while those in local authority centres found it less of an issue. One inference

is that there is a need to consider how CPD events are communicated to all categories of centres as it would appear that information does not seem to be reaching those in partner provider centres.

Similarly, while practitioners and managers were in broad agreement on most of the issues, there were some significant differences. For example, while the majority of practitioners indicated a preference for college-based day release as a convenient form of CPD, only one third of managers agreed. They considered in-centre/in-house training as more convenient.

One of the key aims of CPD is to support staff in upgrading their qualifications. The survey has provided rich evidence on the wide range of qualifications and awards held by those working in the early years sector, from SVQs through to postgraduate awards, and on the numbers working towards additional awards. This evidence should assist policy makers in developing and implementing strategies for staff development to meet the expressed aim of strengthening the skills and understanding and upgrading the qualifications of those working with the youngest children in our society.

Full details of the findings and the implications for policy and practice will be published by Learning and Teaching Scotland later in the year.

Professor Rae Condie

University of Strathclyde

Trialling Curriculum for Excellence Experiences and Outcomes

Croftamie Nursery took part in trialling the Early Level draft experiences and outcomes across the curriculum. Educators were asked to determine how the experiences and outcomes would link with the documentation approach to learning and their current planning. The trialling process proved to be a successful experience for all.

We were eager to show how learning is not compartmentalised into the eight curriculum areas as detailed in the draft experiences and outcomes.

Once we became more familiar with the experiences and outcomes, we could clearly see how they linked to our Children's Starting Points Profile and the learning that we wanted to plan for within our agreed context.

As we grew in confidence we could begin to see how the experiences and outcomes provided for, enabled and encouraged progression. This made for good professional dialogue between educators and supported our documentation of children's learning.

Feedback from educators indicated that working with the experiences and outcomes has been a positive experience. They found that they have thought more deeply about children's learning and their own practice.

Annie Miller

Nursery Head, Croftamie Nursery, Stirling Council



A Day in the Life of a Childminder



Margaret Williams of Rothesay provides an insight into a day in the life of a childminder. Margaret has three assistants who come in at various times throughout the day to help.

Have you ever wondered what it would be like, as part of your job, to spend time at the park or being told 'I love you' every day?

My day starts at 8 am with Aiden (10 weeks old) arriving – a new baby for a new year – and then shortly afterwards Megan (1) and Liam (2).

We make our way to the library and talk about colours. We talk about the different colours we see in the environment every day. Megan wants to count the green things and Liam would like to count the red things they see. We all agree that it would be very boring if everything was the same colour!

We leave the library at 10.30 and take a leisurely walk back home. Alison (3) arrives with her Mum. It's been her first day at her pre-school centre and she is full of stories. She wants to draw a picture about her first day and give it to her mum when she comes to pick her up.

While tucking into our lunch the children chat about what they would like to do in the afternoon. They decide they would like to learn more about farm animals. We settle down after lunch and look through lots of books and magazines. We discuss all the things we know about farm animals and have fun making animal noises. We learn lots about what they eat and what their babies are called. Ronnie (2) arrives and joins in the fun!

Off to the park now, singing nursery rhymes on the way – the children love to sing the same ones again and again.

Back home to welcome the school children, Kairene (11), Marcela (9) and Elena (5), who claim to be 'starving'! It's now 5 o'clock and most of the children have been picked up, ready to tell their parents about their day.

If you are interested in finding out more about choosing a childminder or becoming a childminder, please contact the Scottish Childminding Association Helpline on **01786 449063**.

Margaret Williams
Childminder, Rothesay

Banner competition

A big thank you to everyone who took part in our Design a Banner Competition.

In our last edition of *Early Years Matters*, Learning and Teaching Scotland invited children from ages 0 to 8 to enter our exciting competition to have their artwork selected to be used for our promotional banners. We asked children to send in creative and inspiring artwork within three age categories and we had a wonderful response from all over Scotland. We invited some famous people to be on our panel of judges – Liz Lochhead, poet and playwright, Kirsty Wark, TV broadcaster, and Jonathan Robertson, artist, and they all had a fantastic time judging the entries.

They were very impressed with the high level of skill and creativity



Liz Lochhead (seated), Kirsty Wark, and Jonathan Robertson

displayed by the young artists and finally agreed that the winners should be:

- **0–3 age category**
'Creative Collage'
Shortlees Nursery and Family Centre
- **3–5 age category**
'Me Wearing a Kilt'
Kiera Boyle
King's Oak Nursery
- **5–8 age category**
'Me Under a Rainbow'
Frances Gurden
Westerton Primary.

Each of the winning entries has been transformed into a Learning and Teaching Scotland banner, which will be displayed at future conferences.

The judges were also very impressed with the following entries, which are displayed on one banner:

- **'The Sun in Space'**
Logan Turner (age 6)
Moffat Academy
- **'The School Bus'**
Eloise Mitchell (age 4)
Duddingston Primary
- **'Red Tartan'**
Daniel Love (age 4)
Wallace Primary.

Each winner has received a certificate, a framed print of their painting, a book token, and will have an opportunity to display the banner at their establishment.

Congratulations once again to all our talented winners!



winners

Many wondrous things happen when children have art materials. Creativity abounds in their work; however, their work is more than art.

It is evidence of their thinking, observing and understanding. Children's visual creations help adults to further understand children's ideas about the world and their developing cognitive powers.

Margaret Carmichael, Head, James Watt College Nursery



To view more children's artwork, please visit the National Early Years Glow group

Rethinking the chil

Professor Peter Moss, Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London

There's a lot of talk today about more integrated working with children and families. And it's more than just talk. The Government, for example, is in the midst of an ambitious policy programme for England, 'Every Child Matters', an agenda encompassing all services and all occupations, with a single responsible department, common outcomes for children, a common core of skills and knowledge for the workforce, a single system of inspection – and new forms of integrated provision: by 2010, 3500 children's centres and every school an extended school.

But talk of integrated or 'multi-professional' working can too easily avoid some critical thinking

and difficult questions in favour of rearranging, yet again, the deckchairs, fiddling about rather than making bold changes. The first question is very basic: why do we want professionals to work more closely together? Is it to foster communication and referral? Is it to improve decision making and implementation in work with individual children and families? Is it to form a team to deliver a specific, time-limited project? Or is it to reshape, fundamentally, everyday practice with children and families in a more holistic way?

It's not a case of either/or, but rather different horses for different courses. But each question calls for very different relationships and structures:

the first for parallel working, where different professionals are co-located, but not working together on any regular basis; the second for multi-agency case working, where professionals from different backgrounds come together to discuss and co-ordinate actions for particular children or families. The third calls for project teams, where professionals, whether or not co-located, share a project on which they spend some time together, while answering 'yes' to the final question may lead to what in Swedish schools are called work groups, where different professions form teams that work together with children on a daily basis, sharing values and goals.

Schools in Sweden are increasingly for children from 6 to 16 – in 2005, these age-integrated schools took a third of all pupils; they are all day schools, open from 7 am to 5 or 6 pm; and they are smaller, certainly than most English schools. One school I visited recently was not untypical of age-integrated schools, having 500 children aged 1–16 years. So no traumatic transitions, no huge secondary schools.

But even more striking is the way schools are organised, especially for 6 to 10- or 11-year-olds, into mixed age groups working with multi-professional teams, made up of pre-school teachers, school teachers



An Elephant by Sophie aged 4 years

children's workforce

and 'free-time pedagogues'. The last group traditionally staffed 'free-time services' (what we might call school-age childcare) when they were run outside school. But in the 1990s, both 'free-time' services and 6-year-olds were brought into school, and with them pre-school teachers and free-time pedagogues.

The school day and free time are now integrated into a whole day, with the different professions working together. No 'wraparound care', no separate 'childcare' workers, and also very few assistants (there is a strong view that children should have the best qualified staff): just a team of graduate professionals, each bringing a different set of skills and interests (pedagogues, typically, are very engaged with arts, nature and physical activities, and see themselves as good at relationships and communication with children and parents).

The literature identifies many factors that contribute to successful inter-professional activity including commitment, willingness to blur professional boundaries, good communication and information sharing, active involvement, leadership, clarity about roles and expectations, and shared aims and objectives. But the Swedish school developments suggest some other factors: integrated governance and



People Friends by Charlene aged 4 years

funding; limited competing priorities; and small local authorities and schools. Could it be that working together is easier on a smaller scale? Sweden, it should be noted, is not alone in having relatively small local authorities (average size 29,000) and schools. They are to be found in other Nordic countries, and beyond.

Two final, and perhaps more contentious thoughts: first, do we need fewer distinct professional groups? England and Scotland have a confused and confusing workforce, with a plethora of qualifications, employment conditions and identities. Why not have two core professions – teacher and pedagogue? And why not

have social pedagogy as a common approach to working with children, built into all professional training? Second, Michel Foucault reminds us that 'everything is dangerous', and this applies as much to integrated working as anything else. A well integrated children's workforce, all singing from the same hymn sheet, has a great potential for governing children and parents – albeit with the best of intentions. We need a better integrated children's workforce, but also one that values and practises diversity, democracy and critical thinking.

The Solihull Approach – Supporting Parents through Integrated Working

The Solihull Approach has been pursued within East Ayrshire with a focus on two nursery and family centres and associated professionals from Health and Social Work. The Solihull Approach is described as a highly practical way of working with parents using an integrated approach for staff working with children and families who are affected by behavioural and emotional difficulties.

Twenty-four cross-sectoral staff (early years staff, educational psychologists, social workers, health visitors and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services health visitors) attended a two-day foundation course. The materials used focused on working with parents of children aged 0–5 years.

Collaborative working between professionals using the principles of containment, reciprocity and behaviour management helps to support parents in a creative and consistent way. Development of this shared approach and language has been effective in a multitude of settings from individual practice through to group settings.

One of the strengths of developing this approach locally is that it is not viewed as an assessment process to decide upon an intervention. It is a way of working and thinking which helps families to process their own emotions and anxieties, which in turn restores their abilities to think and enables them to help their child to cope with his or her emotions or anxieties. This ultimately facilitates the relationship between parent and child and supports the parent to work with their child's behaviour.

The experience of staff using this approach has been very promising with different staff expressing positive views on the practicality and usefulness within their practice. In addition, the approach can be easily used alongside other parenting models.

An evaluation undertaken with staff has clearly demonstrated that all of the Solihull training objectives have been met. The evidence suggests that on the whole practitioners felt they had a very good understanding of how difficulties develop with families and that the Solihull



Approach is solution-based. In terms of its overall impact, the Solihull Approach has significantly improved practice both on an individual level and multi-agency level and, in particular, the assessment tool has enabled consistency through structured interventions and improvements in care planning.

Janie Allen

Principal Officer (Early Education and Childcare)
Department of Educational and Social Services, East Ayrshire Council

Social Work and Early Years

The earlier we can offer support to vulnerable children and the more we can do this in a joined-up, meaningful way, the better the outcomes we can expect for the families concerned. Social work has a positive and proactive role to play in supporting and sometimes leading this work for the youngest of children, through:

- a clear focus on the needs of the child
- leading and supporting shared assessments and plans for what is actually needed to make things better for individual children
- close working relationships with other statutory services such as midwifery, health visiting, GPs, nurseries, schools, etc
- a range of services for parents including addiction or mental health services
- an ability to access a range of resources
- advice and support for those who are doing the direct work with very vulnerable children.



There are many ways this is currently working effectively, for example through:

- home visiting services such as Home Start, or local equivalents, which are working closely with social workers
- family centres, where there are different types of workers and skills in the centres, but also where different organisations, including social work, bring their services to where the families are
- social work teams inviting local services into team meetings to discuss how they can work better together
- joint funding of posts such as addictions workers or mental health workers based in early years settings
- use of well evidenced parenting programmes jointly delivered by all those working with the youngest children.

For joint working to be effective, it must always be based on strong relationships between those working locally. This means:

- knowing what services are out there and who they work with
- challenging our assumptions about different organisations
- getting to know the individuals that are working locally
- talking formally and informally about what can be done and how each service can make its contribution
- being willing to change the way we practice, to work collaboratively, and improve outcomes for the youngest children.

Jo Harrison

Inspector, Social Work Inspection Agency

Parents are a Gift

Cowgate under 5s Centre

'Being a parent is the most complex and important activity on the planet.'

(Popov, 1997)

Cowgate under 5s Centre is an environment where children unfold happily and busily in a carefully arranged play environment, surrounded by peace and love. Our goal is to create a harmonious environment where children, their parents and staff are happy. Our primary concern is always the wellbeing, happiness and holistic development of each individual child in the centre. Through our shared responsibility with parents, we make decisions together that ensure each child is given the best possible start in life.



Every child is different, with his or her developing view of the world, interests and abilities. We encourage each child to have a positive self-image, to develop the ability to communicate confidently and to value and show respect for others. We respect the many different forms of family life, and social and cultural backgrounds that the children come from.

We concern ourselves with the child's life right from the start and warmly welcome families prior to the placement, meeting with parents in our family room to discuss anything at all: interests, philosophy, or indeed any issues or concerns. When a place is offered to the family we then arrange a home visit. This provides an opportunity to explain clearly what we do and why we do it; we stress that parents are encouraged to be active in the centre – and active can mean so many things to individual families – and we promise to respect and support involvement at all levels.

Parents as educators

To educate means 'to bring forth' what already exists. We value parents as the children's first educators – teachers and guides, not dictators. As educators we (parents and staff) regularly observe children, sensitively tuning in to what the child is capable of today that they might not have been capable of yesterday. We welcome parents' contributions to their child's Personal Learning Plan, sharing significant events and observations from their home life.

We keep parents up to date by offering informal chats with key workers and, more formally, termly consultations, parents' evenings and open days.

There are many other ways in which we appreciate parents being involved in the centre, such as outings, our Forest School experience, and various committees, for example our eco committee. We also welcome help with repairing resources, sewing, gardening, and cooking or woodworking jobs. If parents play a musical instrument or



have another skill to share we invite them to teach us or offer an experience to the children.

Such work with parents will be similar to that of many early years settings, but more unusually, perhaps due to the wonderful trusting relationships we have, we also share and discuss theories appropriate to the child's development. Our monthly newsletters share topics relevant to our learning and some parents express an interest in these topics which can lead to further journeys of exploring and learning. We share literature together, for example discussing the work of Tina Bruce to support emerging literacy. As a Froebelian setting we emphasise an appropriate pace of learning. We support parents to allow children to take on new responsibilities, without expecting perfection but encouraging them in all they

do, building their confidence and responsibility ... it takes wisdom to know how and when to tune into our children. At Cowgate by working together with our wonderful families we are all becoming wiser.

For more information, please visit
www.cowgateunder5s.co.uk

Lynn McNair

Head of Centre, Cowgate under 5s Centre

Raising the bar!

The BA Childhood Practice at the University of Glasgow is a brand new degree programme that has been validated by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) as one of the awards that will be accepted for managers/lead practitioners of day care of children's services' registration from 2011.

The programme has been designed to 'raise the bar' within the early years and childcare sector by developing practitioners' leadership and management abilities as well their academic capabilities. Already over 100 students have embarked on the programme, from the eight Scottish local authorities supporting practitioners to undertake the programme at the University of Glasgow.

The programme has been designed using a pedagogical approach known as Communities of Practice, where groups of people who share a common concern or passion for something they do, learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. This approach to learning appears to be facilitating practitioners' development well, as these reflections demonstrate:

'My university experience so far has been positive and has made an impact on me as a person and as a lead practitioner. I feel that achieving the Standard for Childhood Practice by completing the BA Childhood Practice will place me in a better position to move forward in my career.'

Patricia Madden, Head of Castlemilk Family Learning Centre

'I feel that the content of the course has challenged my thinking, values and aspirations. I feel more inspired, encouraged and more equipped to work in early years for the future.'

Lorna Cameron, Early Years and Family Worker



When designing the degree, academic staff at the University were aware that many of the students would have been in manager/lead practitioner roles for a significant period of time. It was therefore imperative that components of the course would be able to take them to a higher level in their practice.

The first part of the programme requires all participants to undertake a critical analysis of professionalism in early years and childcare. This has inspired some amazing debate and discussion, leading to a general feeling within the groups that, as we achieve the aspiration of becoming a graduate-led sector in Scotland and 'raise the bar', early years and childcare practitioners will start to be recognised as having a similar status to other professionals working with young children and their families.

Kevin M Kelman

Programme Leader for BA Childhood Practice, University of Glasgow



The Argyll and Bute Council, Glasgow Council and Inverclyde Council cohort

The Continuous Learning Framework

On 3 December 2008 the Minister for Children and Early Years launched the Continuous Learning Framework. Developed by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS), the framework aims to improve outcomes for people who use social services by supporting the workforce to be the best they can be. It is for all social service workers and their employers, including the early years and childcare workforce.

The framework sets out four key areas that people need, to be able to do their job well now and in the future:

- qualifications and training
- knowledge, skills, values and understanding
- personal capabilities which describe the way people manage themselves and their relationships with others
- organisational capabilities which describe the culture and conditions in the workplace that enable social service workers to be the best they can be.

A number of organisations are already using the framework in practice. Staff in a wraparound care service have used some of the personal capabilities to provide constructive feedback to each other to help them identify

areas of strength and areas to develop. An umbrella childcare organisation has used the framework to define job roles of support worker, practitioner and lead practitioner/manager in terms of the knowledge, skills, values and personal capabilities required. Their aim is to support the workforce to plan their career pathways and target their learning appropriately.

The Scottish Government is providing resources to the SSSC and IRISS to support social service employers and workers to use the framework in a way which best meets their needs in their own context. They will be working with the four Scottish Social Services Learning Networks to provide information, including an interactive website, set up support networks, develop tools to support the use of the framework and evaluate its impact.

For more information please contact Fiona Clark (SSSC) on 01382 207218 or email: fiona.clark@sssc.uk.com or Carol George (IRISS) on 01382 224422 or email: c.y.george@dundee.ac.uk. For a copy of the framework please contact LDAdmin@sssc.uk.com.

Frances Scott

Workforce Development Manager, SSSC



Making Connections between Curriculum for Excellence and Early Education and Childcare Courses

FE Conference

LTS, in collaboration with Scotland's Colleges and SQA, held its first conference for further education lecturers involved in the provision of Early Education and Childcare programmes. The theme was Making Connections between *Curriculum for Excellence* and Early Education and Childcare Courses.

'Opportunities were offered to explore teaching and learning strategies relevant to developing practice-based connections between Curriculum for Excellence and early years practitioner training.'

Malcolm Wilson, Langside College, Glasgow

The conference provided an opportunity for Early Years FE lecturers to discuss and share ideas about *Curriculum for Excellence* and how connections could be made with the variety of Early Years courses offered across Scottish colleges.

The conference programme opened with a presentation from Don McGillivray, Head of Early Education and Childcare, Scottish Government. He shared Scottish Government's vision of its commitment to reform, simplify and prioritise the curriculum for all children and young people.

'A great opportunity for all FE lecturers to share good practice and make links to the Curriculum for Excellence and Early Education Courses.'

Lesley Aitchison, Reid Kerr College, Paisley

Eleanor Mands from Angus College gave a presentation on how the college has embraced Curriculum for Excellence to better meet the educational outcomes for the young students on the Introduction to Early Education and Childcare Course.

The programme continued with morning workshops where participants considered *Curriculum for Excellence* in the context of facilitating students to work with young children. The afternoon workshops focused on making connections with NC Early Education and Childcare, HNC



Early Education and Childcare, PDA Early Education and Childcare and SVQ Children's Learning and Development.

These workshops were very successful, as shown by some of the comments from the workshop leaders.

'It was agreed that assessors and tutors had a major role to play in ensuring that candidates, in all settings, had a working knowledge of Curriculum for Excellence.'

Barbara Dale, SQA

The event was a great success, with over 100 delegates attending from all over Scotland. This conference will help FE staff to meet the challenges of children and young people in the ever changing world.

'Transitions and critical connections are an important element of the PDA.'

Julie Brechin, Jewel and Esk College, Edinburgh

Helen Gormley

Senior Lecturer, Reid Kerr College

Early Years: Developing a Research Agenda for the Future

A seminar series funded by the European Social Research Council

Early years provision in the UK looks like a success story. It is now taken for granted as part of children's educational experiences and has an important place in the policy agenda. But we wanted to take another look at what we already know about young children's pre-school experiences and what we still need to learn to ensure that early years provision makes a positive difference to their lives.

Our seminars were funded by the European Social Research Council (ESRC), the UK funding body for social science research. This was the first series looking at early education which ESRC had funded, a reflection of the importance now given to these services. We brought together researchers, university educators, practitioners, policy makers and providers from the public, private and voluntary sectors across the UK for four seminars. The events proved to be very popular and the buzz of conversation suggested that those who attended found them welcoming and stimulating events.

Our discussions were wide-ranging. For instance, we talked about the difference that the funding mechanism makes to provision, the challenges encountered in culturally and ethnically diverse areas and training in scattered and remote communities. But we returned often to three key issues:

- What is early years education for, how clear are the aims, have they changed and do policy makers, practitioners and the users of provision share the same objectives?
- How can we meet the needs and expectations of children and families from diverse social, economic and cultural backgrounds and support children's developing identities

as learners and members of families and communities?

- How can we learn from researchers who approach questions from different perspectives and how can we ensure that research is communicated effectively to providers and practitioners?

The seminars demonstrated that there is still much to enquire about if we are to make a difference for children and their families and we are now compiling an agenda for future research. Importantly, the seminars made clear the benefits of reflecting together and the need to be open to alternative ways of thinking about practice, the nature of services and approaches to research if we are to maximise the opportunities that arise from the established position of early years provision.

The seminar convenors were Christine Stephen, University of Stirling, Lynn Ang, University of East London, and Liz Brooker, Institute of Education, London.

You can find out more about the seminar discussions at www.LTScotland.org.uk/earlyyears/professionaldevelopment/events/esrc/index.asp

Dr Christine Stephen

Research Fellow, The Stirling Institute of Education, Stirling University



National Day Nurseries Association



The early years sector in Scotland is embarking on new developments such as Curriculum for Excellence and the Early Years Framework. Support for nurseries is more important than ever and National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) Scotland plays a key role in helping nurseries to deliver quality childcare for children and families.

NDNA Scotland offers nurseries information and advice on important topics and advice on issues such as sustainability. Recently, the organisation has been supporting the growth of localised nursery networks which offer real opportunities for practitioners to meet and, importantly, give providers a unified voice when talking to their local authority. Such networks offer a forum for discussing changes such as the implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

NDNA Scotland has opened an office in Glasgow employing a part-time development officer. The

organisation regularly consults with members at regional events on current issues and required support, for example the necessity for managers to achieve SCQF Level 9 in order to gain Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) registration. NDNA represents the views of nursery practitioners at meetings with the Scottish Government, Care Commission, SSSC and other key bodies.

A legal helpline offers NDNA members practical advice on topics ranging from employment law to parents' contracts, and a general helpline supports members with queries. In today's rapidly changing sector, it is vital that practitioners keep up to date with the latest developments and access support to help them resolve issues. The NDNA website contains information for all practitioners, as well as information about how to become a member. www.ndna.org.uk

Purnima Tanuku
Chief Executive of NDNA

On the Road to Curriculum for Excellence

Sacred Heart Primary

Our staff team in Sacred Heart Primary, Girvan, were keen to delve deeper into the Values, Purposes and Principles of Curriculum for Excellence. Familiar with the four capacities, we wanted to concentrate on the principles for curriculum design, particularly challenge and enjoyment and progression.

Initially, we created a mind map of identified strengths and formed a plan of action to continue the Journey to Excellence. The whole school has been involved but the changes to learning and teaching in P1/2 have been particularly exciting.

We support our children and parents in the transition to Sacred Heart through an extensive programme of visits, a buddy system and staff exchange days, working closely with our nursery colleagues. As we are now fully signed up to Glow, we intend to use this exciting resource to enhance our relationships further and to ensure progression across the Early Level.

A familiar learning style and environment is provided for the new children by ensuring choice and independence. A 'Soft Start' with self-registration provides time every morning for children to explore and discover, whilst

staff deal with administration, welcome every child and speak to individuals as necessary.

Active Learning is firmly embedded in our P1/2 curriculum, which enables children to consolidate and extend knowledge through fun and challenging experiences. As well as short whole class sessions, staff plan their time to focus on particular aspects of learning and teaching with small groups and individuals. During these more focused sessions, the rest of the children engage in opportunities which are offered to develop numeracy and literacy skills through play.

We have continuously reviewed and adapted planning to reflect the values and curriculum we feel are important to our pupils. Watching the confidence and happiness of our children this session makes us glad we put transition and prior learning at the heart of our practice. We now look forward with growing confidence as we watch the positive effects of our efforts for the children, parents and staff of Sacred Heart Primary.

Jane McCrindle

Depute Headteacher, Sacred Heart Primary



Positive Futures Start Early



The Early Years Framework suggests a renewed focus on 0–3 as the period of a child’s development that shapes future outcomes. One of the elements of transformational change that we are asked to address is ‘helping children, families and communities to secure outcomes for themselves’.

The role of fathers as well as mothers is promoted and supported in Falkirk through such initiatives as: Lads and Dads group and individual support to fathers and parenting groups.

Bo’ness Education and Family Support Service has a dedicated gender-specific worker with an overall aim to promote work with male carers, fathers and boys.

We support parents to provide a positive environment for children by providing opportunities to learn about such strategies as ‘Baby Massage’ and the ‘Mellow Babies’ programme.

Staff working with children aged 0–3 use our Early Years Experiences Profile, which is a system of planning and recording children’s progress. It is regularly shared with parents and carers.

Falkirk Council’s *Parenting Handbook* provides a guide for parents and carers that gives information about positive parenting, developing self-esteem, strategies for parents to cope with temper tantrums and so on.

Specific support for parents of children who have additional support needs is available from a team of educational support teachers.

Bespoke support for families with a child under 4 is also available in most areas across the authority from a multi-professional team known as CLASP. This team is employed by Aberlour Childcare Trust and jointly funded by it and Falkirk Council. Parents can be referred to the service or can self-refer for support.

Capacity for antenatal and postnatal support for parents can be developed by involving such support teams and family support workers attached to our integrated learning communities.

Developing a culture of family and community learning is promoted through the work of Community Learning teams and the signposting of parents involved in family centre groups to Community Access courses.

Addressing the framework, along with a move to amalgamate day nurseries and nursery schools in several areas across the authority, promises to offer a time of innovative movement and development within our early years sector.

Liz Rose

Curriculum Adviser, Falkirk Council

The Scottish Learning Festival

10th Anniversary

2009

23-24 September 2009
SECC ► GLASGOW

The Scottish Learning Festival is the most prestigious educational event in Scotland and this year we are celebrating its 10th anniversary. This is your opportunity to attend and participate in this key educational event in Scotland. The two main themes for this year's festival are *Curriculum for Excellence* and *Glow*.

Over the years, SLF has grown from an event attracting 1200 delegates, with four keynotes, 40 sessions and a small exhibition, to the conference we have today with over 7000 delegates, over 170 conference sessions and an exhibition of 200 suppliers.

Delegates will have the opportunity to attend keynote and spotlight sessions, a wide range of early years seminars, early educational showcases and new innovative events enabling discussion and debate.

We are delighted to announce that one of the speakers confirmed so far is Professor Carlina Rinaldi from the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia in Italy.

For further information and updates, please visit the Scottish Learning Festival website.

www.scottishlearningfestival.org.uk



Research into Practice Conference

CPD and Working with Children Under 3 Years

Learning and Teaching Scotland held a very successful conference at the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall on 3 March 2009 which was attended by over 150 delegates. The theme of the conference was 'Research into Practice – CPD and Working with Children Under 3 Years'.

Recently, Learning and Teaching Scotland commissioned the University of Strathclyde to undertake research to review CPD provision for early years practitioners and managers working with children under 3 years of age. The summary findings were disseminated at this important event.

A summarised report for practitioners, which highlights the main findings and key messages, will be distributed to all local authority and partner provider centres in Scotland in due course. The report showcases good practice examples and has specific CPD focus with reflective questions for use by staff teams and individuals.

Adam Ingram, Minister for Children and Early Years, gave an inspiring presentation on the Early Years Framework. Dr Maria Robertson, renowned for her work in early years, gave the keynote speech, which focused on shaping children's life chances.

Participants had the opportunity to take part in a variety of workshops, all relating to CPD opportunities for staff working with children under 3. Evaluations from the conference were very positive with many delegates requesting more under-3 events.

Watch this space!

Two Forthcoming National Conferences

Curriculum for Excellence – A Creative Curriculum

University of Strathclyde/LTS Early Years Conference

Friday 24 and Saturday 25 April 2009

Crawfurd Building, Jordanhill Campus, University of Strathclyde

This two-day event will be both a celebration of interesting early years practice and an opportunity to learn new skills. Each day will include a variety of presentations and practical workshops with artists, musicians, dancers, dramatists, storytellers and film-makers. There will also be contributions from early years practitioners, the University of Strathclyde Early Years Team and Learning and Teaching Scotland.



For more information or to reserve a place, please contact:

Jan Bissett, Professional Development Unit, University of Strathclyde

Tel: 0141 950 3208 Fax: 0141 950 3210 Email: jan.bissett@strath.ac.uk

The Early Years Framework – Putting the Vision into Action

Curriculum for Excellence HMIE/LTS Good Practice Conference

Tuesday 9 June 2009

The Glasgow Hilton Hotel

Delegate fee: £115

HMIE and Learning and Teaching Scotland have organised a joint Good Practice Conference that aims to share good practice in working together to implement the Scottish Government's Early Years Framework. The conference will feature centres which have been successful with early intervention in supporting children, families and communities.



For more information or to reserve a place, please contact:

Veronica McAleaney (ELT Consultants) Email: veronica@eltconsultants.co.uk

Learning and Teaching Scotland
The Optima, 58 Robertson Street,
Glasgow G2 8DU
Customer Services: 08700 100 297
enquiries@LTScotland.org.uk
www.LTScotland.org.uk

