

Early Years' Matters

Autumn/Winter 2006

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www.LTScotland.org.uk/earlyyears

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Thanks to Abbie, Bishopbriggs Centre Childcare, for her splash painting.

Editorial



Norma Wright
Programme
Director

Welcome to the tenth edition of *Early Years' Matters*. It's a significant edition for me as it provides an opportunity for me to introduce myself to you as Programme Director at Learning and Teaching Scotland. I am delighted that my responsibilities will include early years. In this role, I look forward to supporting and promoting innovation and best practice in early years education. Here at Learning and Teaching Scotland we are strengthening the early years team to support continuous improvement in the sector. We will give you further information about this in a future edition of the newsletter.

As always, this autumn newsletter is full of information on recent developments and events relating to early years education. There is encouraging news on the vision for early years services in Scotland outlined in several articles. We are also pleased to bring you news about current developments from across Scotland. As always we would be very pleased to receive your views on the content and any ideas for future editions. Enjoy this newsletter.



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE



National Review of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce: Investing in Children's Futures

Penny Curtis, Early Education and Childcare
Division, Scottish Executive

Everyone recognises the importance of giving children the best possible start in life. That's why the Scottish Executive is committed to improving our already high quality childcare and early years provision.

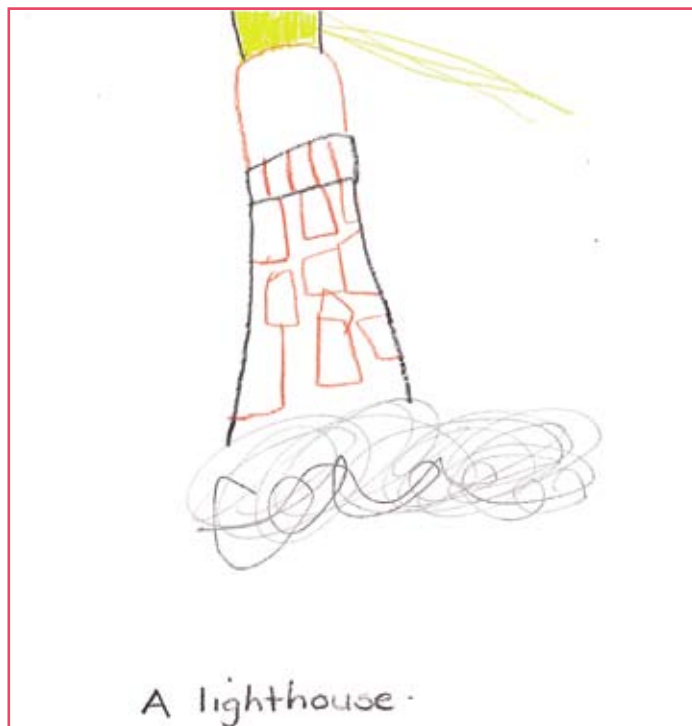
Investing in Children's Futures, the Executive's response to the National Review of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce, is designed to improve the status, recognition and professional development of early years and childcare staff, allowing them to develop their expertise and build satisfying and rewarding careers which deliver consistently higher quality services.

Well qualified, professional workforce

High quality, flexible early years and childcare services are essential to ensure all our children fulfil their potential, to help them develop the social skills and attitudes which will stand them in good stead in later life, to provide the safe and stimulating care parents want for their children, and to enable parents to take up employment and training opportunities. Evidence shows that the quality of provision determines how good these outcomes are. Only high quality services can deliver the benefits research has identified. Research also highlights that by far the most important factor in delivering the quality of services that will give children the best possible start in life is a well qualified professional workforce.

Ministers' key actions

The response sets out Ministers' long-term vision of services which combine quality and flexibility, and of a truly professional workforce, respected for the quality and flexibility of the services it provides for children and families. It is also a vision where the workforce is no longer perceived as low skilled or low paid. The response outlines the actions Ministers intend to take to start the process. The key actions are:



Alex Speirs, Morton Nursery School, Linwood

- Developing leadership by creating a workforce that is led by SCQF level 9 (degree or a work-based equivalent) qualified professionals. The first managers will be able to start continuing professional development routes to the new professional leadership level by September 2008. Ministers will ask the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) to amend their registration requirements from 2011 to require lead practitioner/managers to have attained this leadership level or to attain it within a specified period.
- Creating a genuine career structure for the workforce where career progression and development is supported by a qualifications and professional development framework. Professionals who make the most of these opportunities to gain new qualifications will be rewarded for their efforts with clearer career prospects. The SSSC will develop a framework by September 2009 to support career pathways for the workforce, so that workers can clearly see the promotion and progression prospects within their chosen careers and children can continue to benefit from their skills and experience.
- Supporting the private and voluntary sector providers of pre-school education to invest in their workforces by providing an additional £5 million each year to increase the 'advisory floor' established by the Scottish Executive to inform local authority decisions about the cost of providing pre-school places in the private and voluntary sectors.

Flexible services

Quality services also need to be flexible. Modern life means that parents need those services to help them juggle the often conflicting demands of career and family life. The response gives a clear lead to partners and stakeholders about what they need to do to deliver high quality flexible services:

- Councils need to develop and support career pathways for their staff, so that staff are clear about routes for progression and have access to development opportunities which will allow them to work towards securing promoted posts and leadership positions.
- Updated guidance will be provided to councils to require them to work more closely with their partner providers to ensure a high quality service is delivered to all children. Central to this will be greater equity in partnership arrangements and funding for pre-school education providers.
- Private and voluntary sector pre-school providers are advised to use the additional support to ensure that they can attract, train and retain staff, to ensure that they meet registration standards and support workers' professional development.
- The SSSC has been asked to deliver a three-year programme to develop a qualifications and professional development framework, in partnership with key stakeholders including representatives of employers, the workforce and training providers.

Ministers have set out the early action they intend to take to develop the professional workforce we need to deliver quality flexible services for children and families. It is a large and challenging programme of development work. It is not the end of the process, but the start of one to continue to develop a truly professional early years and childcare workforce in Scotland.

Consultation under way

Ministers are consulting on the implementation of the programme of work to increase the professionalism and raise the status of the sector. The review's report contains questions about the features of a qualifications and professional development framework, workforce planning and improving the status of working in early years and childcare. There is also a separate consultation document aimed specifically at individual workers and childminders. The report, Executive response and consultation are available at www.scotland.gov.uk. The consultation runs until 22 December.



Registration Information for Early Education and Childcare Workers



Early education and childcare workers should have received information packs over the last few weeks detailing how they can apply to become registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). Managers and lead practitioners in early education and childcare will be invited to apply to register in October 2006; practitioners will be able to apply to register from March 2007 and support workers from 2008.

The information packs have gone out across Scotland to early education and childcare services including nurseries and out-of-school care services. The pack contains informative leaflets, posters and details of registration information sessions for workers. The SSSC has also held information sessions for managers/lead practitioners and practitioners in early education and childcare services in August, September and October focusing on:

- the purpose of registration
- timescales for registering early education and childcare workers
- meeting the registration criteria, including qualifications
- the process of registration.

Further information can be found on www.sssc.uk.com/Homepage.htm



'My favourite dinner' by Lucie, aged 2, Bishopbriggs Childcare Centre



Scottish Executive Response to the Early Years Inquiry

Strengthening early years services

Susan Neilands, Early Education and Childcare Division, Scottish Executive

Scottish Ministers welcomed the debate on strengthening early years services, sparked by the Scottish Parliament early years inquiry earlier this year.

Ministers responded to the inquiry this summer to reaffirm the Scottish Executive's commitment to securing the best possible start in life for children in Scotland.

The Parliament's Education Committee explored a wide range of issues, including:

- improving the quality of the workforce
- the role of teachers
- training and education for the early years workforce
- curriculum issues
- funding and planning for children's services
- research.

The committee's report had 'three underlying themes: the need to focus and prioritise resources on the most disadvantaged children, to upskill the early years workforce and to integrate children's services and funding arrangements'. It also stated: 'The single most important factor in improving quality in the early years sector is raising skills.'

A highly skilled workforce

In their response to the National Review of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce, Ministers set out their vision for the workforce (you can read more about it on page 2). The Executive wants services which combine quality and flexibility, and it promotes a well qualified workforce and, in particular, well qualified leadership, as fundamental to delivering this.

Support for teachers and local planning

The National Review of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce dealt mainly with the non-teaching staff in the early years sector. The committee's report also discussed the role of teachers in early education and made a number of related recommendations. While the Executive believes teachers have a distinctive and important role to play in the provision of pre-school education it has no plans to require local authorities to place teachers in early years settings. This is because Ministers consider that local authorities are best placed to decide how best to use teachers in their pre-school services.

The committee also made recommendations about staff training and suggested that there might be scope for joint professional development involving teachers and other early years staff. The Executive agrees that this would have potential benefits, both in initial training and in CPD. Ministers have challenged universities and local authorities to explore this further as part of work on a separate initial teacher training review.

The need for the early years workforce to work with other professionals across various children's services is also detailed in the Executive's response. Both the *Review of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce* and *Getting it Right for Every Child* have emphasised the importance of developing the children's service workforce. The Executive is currently considering how this can be developed, including looking at a common core of skills, knowledge and competencies, and examining entry level qualifications, training and continuous professional training across professional groups.

Developing the curriculum

The committee has asked for detailed plans on how changes to the curriculum for 3–5-year-olds will be achieved and this work – part of A Curriculum for Excellence – is already under way. The Executive published the Curriculum Review Programme Board's advice and progress in a paper, *Progress and Proposals*, in March 2006. The advice of the Programme Board is that the new curriculum should build on the strengths of the current 3–5 guidance, and foster better continuity for children between pre-school education and P1, especially in approaches to learning and teaching. This is likely to mean extending elements of the child-centred, active learning approaches which are used in pre-school education and the early years of primary: these emphasise the importance of opportunities for children to learn through planned, purposeful play.

Other issues

The Executive has responded to other issues highlighted such as regulation by the Care Commission, integrated children's services planning and evaluation and research.

The Executive shares the committee's vision of a Scotland which has an early years sector that gives all children the best possible start in life, that values and develops them and is aspired to by the rest of the world. Ministers are clear that the development of excellent early years provision will continue for many years to come.

The report is available on the Scottish Parliament website (www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/committees/education/reports) and the Scottish Executive response can be accessed from the Executive's website (www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/08/17152459/0).



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE



A Curriculum for Excellence Update

In the Curriculum Review (*A Curriculum for Excellence: The Curriculum Review Group, 2004*), the strength of the ethos and methodology within the pre-school sector was fully acknowledged. The *Ministerial Response* stated that in order to improve continuity and progression, transition arrangements should be improved and the active learning approaches of pre-school education should be continued in P1. Schools and pre-school centres across Scotland have procedures in place to support the transition of children from the pre-school sector to P1. However, there is widespread recognition that this critical aspect of our work should ensure continuity and progression not only in *what* children learn but as importantly in how they *learn*.

Where are we now?

Some authorities are already committed to developing a more child-centred, active learning approach in P1. Examples of best practice include teachers making effective use of learning through play. In these classrooms children are fully engaged in their learning, choosing from a wide range of well planned, stimulating activities. Teachers interact purposefully to extend learning, and work with small groups using a more direct teaching approach. They will draw the class together from time to time to explore and discuss learning.

Some authorities are actively working towards evaluating the effectiveness of their current transition procedures with a view to improving continuity and progression in learning. There will be challenges for many schools and centres, particularly those that transfer children to, or



Kathleen Robertson, Early Years Professional Adviser to A Curriculum for Excellence

receive children from, a large number of establishments. However, as the curriculum develops, it will be crucial for all, including those in the private, voluntary and independent sectors, to liaise closely regarding children's progress.

Early level

The introduction of a new early level (see *Progress and Proposals, 2006, p 13*) for all children in the pre-school sector and P1 will be an important contributory factor in ensuring continuity and progression in learning. This will combine aspects of the 3–5 Curriculum Framework and 5–14 Level A, and will be described as broad experiences and outcomes. Staff in both sectors will require in-depth knowledge and understanding of the curriculum across pre-school education and the early years of primary. The emphasis will continue to be on the *how* of learning rather than the *what*. The experiences and outcomes at the early level will be grouped under eight curriculum areas (see *Progress and Proposals, p 14*). However, staff will continue to plan and deliver in a cross-curricular way, focusing on children's needs and interests. The four capacities should be at the front of our minds, with learning experiences being planned to support children to develop as confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens. Staff development in this area will be crucial. Effective models may include cross-sector working where early primary and pre-school staff work together and learn from each other.

Writers at Learning and Teaching Scotland have started developing experiences and outcomes for all curriculum

areas. There will be opportunities to trial some of the experiences and outcomes as part of the engagement process and the feedback from this will inform the revised guidance.

Engagement

During April/May three early years conferences took place in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen. These provided the early years community with opportunities to engage in discussion and debate around A Curriculum for Excellence. The teams at SEED and LTS have been visiting authorities and establishments to observe and discuss best practice. Further seminars are planned to work with early years officers to support the dissemination and implementation of A Curriculum for Excellence across the country.

Next steps

This is an exciting time in Scottish education. We are developing a curriculum that will meet the needs of children in our rapidly changing society. In the early

years we are starting from a sound base; however, we know from HMIE's *Improving Scottish Education* (2006) that we have work to do to improve aspects of practice, particularly in leadership and in our engagement with children to support and challenge them in their learning. We should now build on our strengths and continue to develop the quality of learning experiences for our young children as we move towards excellence.

Food for thought

What do you think A Curriculum for Excellence will mean to you?

What do you see as the main benefits to young children in introducing a new early level to take children from pre-school education to P1?

What challenges do you see ahead?

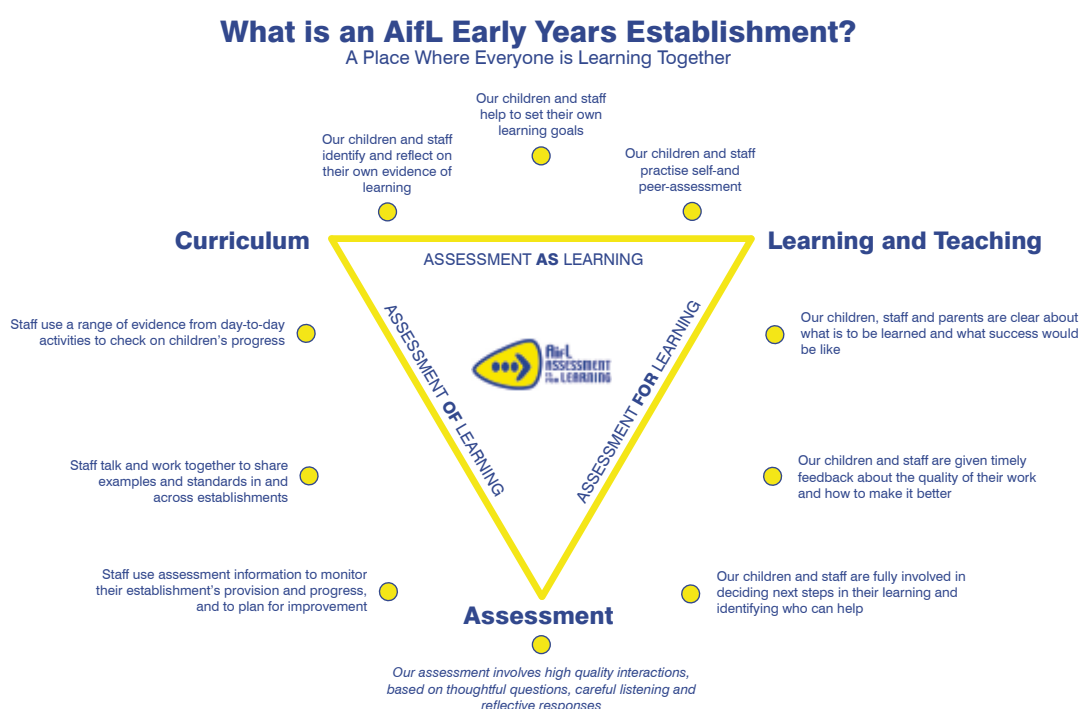
Have you used the *Pre-school Starter Kit* evaluation tool to engage with the values, purposes and principles of A Curriculum for Excellence?

www.acurriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk

Assessment is for Learning (Early Years)

Case studies of groups of early years practitioners, in pre-school settings and primary schools in Angus, Edinburgh and Midlothian, have been published on the Assessment is for Learning (AifL) website. With descriptions of the background to each case study, the case study itself and 'points to consider', there is much here that will prove valuable to staff across Scotland as they reflect on their practice.

www.LTScotland.org.uk/assess





Targeted Nursery Provision for 2-Year-Olds

From September 2006, Glasgow, Dundee and North Ayrshire Councils are taking part in a two-year pilot, to be externally evaluated, which is funded by the Scottish Executive.

The purpose of the pilot projects is to provide an extra year of pre-school provision in a targeted way to those that will benefit most. Research suggests that an earlier start and longer time spent at nursery can be beneficial to child development and has particular benefits for disadvantaged children. The pilot projects will test out the practicalities of developing such provision in Scotland. The pilots and the evidence gained from the evaluation will inform any wider rollout of creating nursery places for 2-year-olds.

The Scottish Executive has allocated £1 million in 2006–07 and 2007–08 to support the development of targeted places for 2-year-olds.

North Ayrshire

North Ayrshire plans to use the pilot period of two years to experiment with different models of nursery provision for 2-year-olds, taking account of local community needs and allowing for an expansion of established services. The Council has been allocated £250,000 for each of the two years to create 100 places.

In general terms a nursery session will last 2.5 hours and children will attend between three and five sessions a week over a school year (term-time) while some will attend 50 weeks a year. Qualified and experienced staff will provide high quality play experiences for children based around individual needs. The overall aim will be to improve children's personal, emotional and social skills as a sound basis for future learning experiences.

Support will also be available to parents through individual support, group work programmes and play sessions for parents and children based on the Fit Ayrshire Babies (FAB) Programme.

Four primary schools, two nursery centres and two partner groups have been identified as bases for the creation of new places or expansion of existing services.

Glasgow

Glasgow City Council will provide 400 dedicated places for 2-year-olds in nine nursery schools and two family learning centres, across the two-year funded period. This provision will be further expanded in year 3. Nursery schools will offer three hours per day for five days a week throughout the year, with some capacity to augment this care provision with additional hours to reflect the needs of children with additional learning support needs.

Parental engagement will be a vital component of the provision, and programmes and activities which support parents and proactively encourage their involvement in their children's learning will be a key feature of the pilot.

Nurture groups have been a successful innovation in early primary school and the pilot will seek to extend this through the development of nurture groups for younger children in the new provision. Family nurture groups will involve children from the same family attending primary school and nursery school/family learning centre.

Particular effort will be targeted at securing parental involvement both in the pilot centre settings and at home in the community through the development of a dedicated outreach service. Funding for this element has been awarded to Glasgow City Council Education Services by Cash for Kids.

In addition, the dual approach to targeting vulnerable children is designed to maximise joined-up working and to establish links between children's and adults' services to secure optimum outcomes for vulnerable children and their families.

Dundee City Council

In Dundee the new services for 2-year-olds will build on the City Council's experiences of delivering Sure Start by continuing to focus on young children in the context of their families and communities.

Planned play and learning programmes will be provided for children for up to 10 hours each week. Alongside these, a range of parent and child services will be available on an opt-in basis to support the engagement and involvement of parents. Services will be available to approximately 100 children in three nursery schools and one nursery class. All the nurseries are located within regeneration areas of the city and one of the nurseries is a specialist resource for children with complex additional support needs. The services will be targeted at vulnerable children and referrals will be encouraged from social work and health partners. However, the intention from the outset is to provide as accessible a service as possible since research from EPPE (Effective Provision of Pre-School Education) and others indicates that children learn a great deal from one another and do better in groups reflecting the diversity of local communities.

A new post of Birth to Three Co-ordinator will be established within each of these nurseries to co-ordinate the planning and delivery of the new services. The further development of an already well established partnership with a voluntary organisation, Childcare@Home, formerly Dundee Sitter Service, will provide additional staffing on a sessional basis. The sessional staff will be co-ordinated by the Birth to Three co-ordinators. Extensive training and staff development opportunities are being planned to support the new teams.

Don't miss Children in Scotland's Annual Conference!

A Gift for Life? Building better childhoods for Scotland's children

2-3 November 2006, Cumbernauld

Ahead of the next Scottish Parliamentary elections in 2007, Children in Scotland's annual conference will consider the progress made to date and future priorities in building better childhoods for Scotland's children and young people.

This two-day event, chaired by BBC Scotland's political editor Brian Taylor, will consider how we can improve children's experience of childhood and lay the basis for their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing throughout life. The conference will include plenary and breakout sessions, panel debate, study visits and workshops.

The conference is an essential briefing for all practitioners and policy makers in health, education, social work and care, play and leisure. Attendees will

have the opportunity to:

- benefit from the experience of a wide range of expert speakers involved in research, policy making and service delivery
- participate in stimulating and thought-provoking discussions
- gain an international perspective
- network with colleagues
- identify priorities for the next Scottish Parliament
- get up-to-date information on legislation and policy for children
- gain practical examples of good practice.

Book online at www.childreninscotland.org.uk/gfl

Improving Scottish Education

Kenneth Muir, HMCI, speaking to Her Majesty's Inspectorate colleagues at a recent early education conference, considered the challenges for the Inspectorate following recent early years services



publications. A fuller version of his speech is available at www.LTScotland.org.uk/earlyyearsmatters/index.asp.

The profile of the pre-school sector, certainly amongst those working in the sector and amongst Ministers, has never been higher. There has been a growing realisation amongst policy makers and decision makers that attendance at high quality pre-school provision enhances and improves children's later life chances in many ways.

National Review of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce

We know from the EPPE project that the single most important factor in determining the quality of a pre-school centre is the level of qualification of the centre manager and, to a lesser extent, the level of qualification of the centre workforce. I just wonder how we might best encourage staff to build on their existing skills and experience and help to raise the level of qualifications, as required in the National Review of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce.

There are also very real challenges to teacher education institutions in ensuring that the amount of time in early years settings that teachers in training are exposed to is sufficient to ensure that the early years sector is enhanced as a destination for teachers in training and that there continues to be an adequate availability of early years training placements.

A Curriculum for Excellence

We should look forward in pre-school settings with much confidence to A Curriculum for Excellence – because many of its principles and key features already figure prominently in the work we see in pre-school centres. But again, A Curriculum for Excellence presents us with challenges – particularly as we move to design our new inspection model, starting next April, which will reintegrate nursery class inspections into primary school inspections.

We need to look more seriously and report on that important transition from nursery class to early primary. Also we have the challenge of how best to consider the four main areas for improvement identified in *Improving Scottish Education*:

- weaknesses in leadership
- the need to address better the learning needs of individuals
- the need for staff to engage more directly and more effectively with children to extend their understanding and learning
- the need for information gathered on children's learning to be used better to promote their future progress.

We know the need to consider how best to inspect the ever more sophisticated nursery class provision in primaries – and that is a challenge to us in HMIE in making sure that our staff are sufficiently well trained to take on this role, and that sufficient personnel exist to allow it.

Quality assurance

We are looking again at *How Good is Our School? The Child at the Centre* to make sure it reflects closely the changes we have seen in the sector since its publication, and to make sure that it supports the introduction of new developments. In addition, *Journey to Excellence* provides practical support for all those establishments which are ready to take a step change from being good to being great, something many pre-school centres are clearly ready to do.

While the *Report on the Integrated Inspection of Early Education and Childcare Services in Scotland* gives us pointers for change, inspections were seen, by providers and authorities, as having helped to improve the quality of provision and to increase the status of the early years sector.

Looking ahead

The Scottish Parliament Education Committee's Early Years Inquiry report brings further challenges to us in that the Scottish Executive is being asked to reflect on its early years strategy, update it to set out its strategic objectives for the sector for the next 10 years, and explain how they are to be achieved.

In addition to Kenneth Muir's presentation there were presentations on A Curriculum for Excellence and on Leadership in the Pre-school Sector. There were also workshops on Arts, Culture and Creativity in the Nursery, ICT in Early Years, Children with Additional Support Needs, Assessment is for Learning and Extending the Purposeful Play Approach (see below).

Moving Purposeful Play into Primary 1

Speaking at a recent HMIE early education conference, Myra Reid gave the local authority perspective and Lisa Watson, Jennifer Weir and Brenda Meikle gave the practitioners' perspective of a pilot project in East Renfrewshire.

'Bring the 3–5 and 5–14 curriculum guidelines together to ensure a smooth transition in what children have learned and also in how they learn. This will mean extending the approaches which are used in pre-school into the early years of primary, emphasising the importance of opportunities for children to learn through purposeful, well planned play.'

A Curriculum for Excellence: Ministerial Response, 2004

In one school the primary and nursery teacher looked very carefully at each other's practice. They reflected on what characterised 'nursery methodology' and how this linked to learning.

Similarities and differences

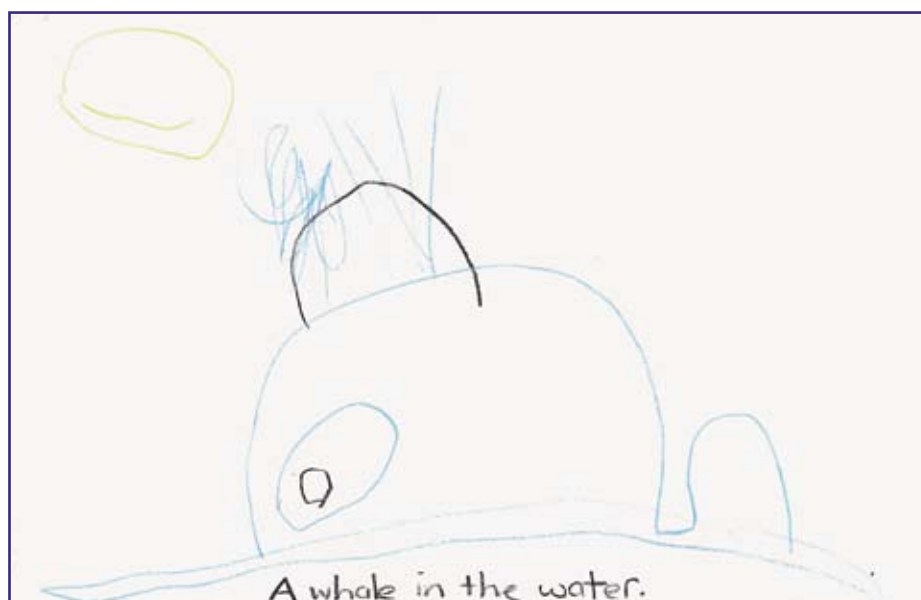
They agreed the similarities were the size of the classrooms/learning areas and the commitment of staff. However, the differences included the roles and numbers of adults, the learning experiences offered to children, children's involvement in planning their own learning and the amount of non-thinking (or non-active) time in the Primary 1 class, the ways in which the children used the environment and the range of resources and choice offered to them, approaches to planning and assessment and the amount of time available for the adult to engage in meaningful dialogue with children.

Practical changes

From this small piece of research came action to achieve greater parallels in experience between nursery and Primary 1 and the following practical changes were made:

- Primary 1 classrooms were changed to feel more like nursery class.
- Extra resources, to complement those in the nursery class, were added.
- The teacher acted more as a facilitator of learning.
- Planning was carried out more frequently than previously.
- Feedback was given to staff and children on a regular basis.
- Support staff were given training on play.
- Screening was carried out more frequently to ensure progress was being made.
- Parents were invited to observe classroom practice, participate in curriculum events and consult with the teacher more regularly.

Both teachers agree that the changes had an impact and also raised some questions about possible further benefits. Further information about the impact and possible benefits of these changes is available in the online version of this article at www.LTScotland.org.uk/earlyyearsmatters/index.asp



Jordan Anderson, Morton Nursery School, Linwood



John Connell, Learning Futures Strategist, Learning and Teaching Scotland, and former Director of SSDN

It is sometimes difficult for staff, in the hustle and bustle of their daily commitments, to lift their heads and see what is happening in the world beyond their own immediate concerns – but if they are willing to raise their eyes and look around, there is much to excite them in Scottish education at this time.

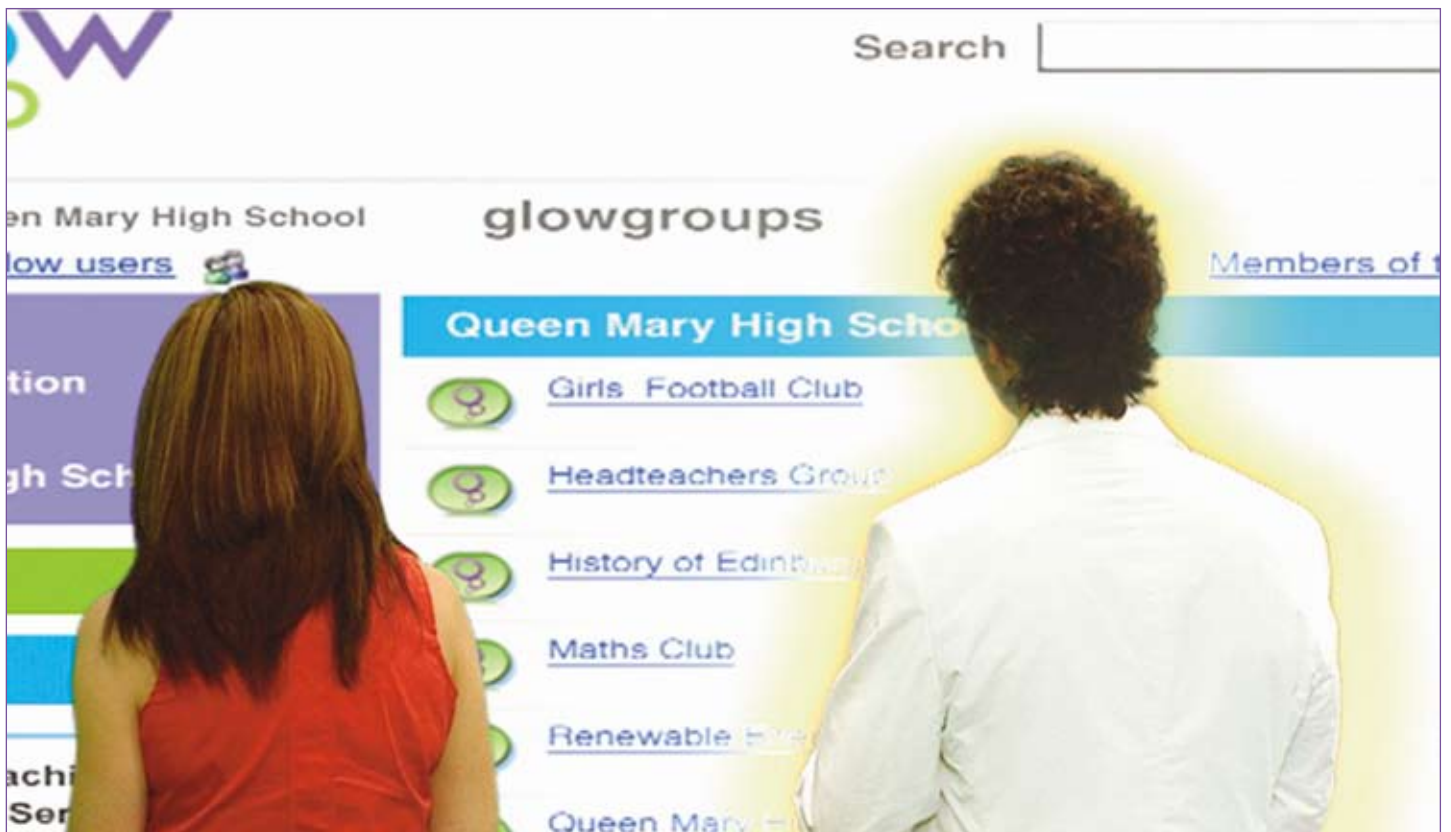
Alongside the exciting potential of A Curriculum for Excellence and Assessment is for Learning, the imminent arrival of Glow (previously known as the Scottish Schools Digital Network) in our schools and centres over the next 12 months or so offers the real possibility of a sea change in Scottish education over the next few years.

The unique combination of a secure national online community covering the whole of Scottish

education from 3 to 18, a virtual teaching and learning environment (VTLE) and a suite of collaborative applications, all delivered across the web, will offer the potential to create a truly 21st-century education system in Scotland. Glow will be customisable for every kind of user, with many different 'themes' available so that users will find the best one for them, whether they are a young child or an adult.

The VTLE will bring together a consistent range of tools for building lessons and courses, for assigning tasks and for assessment. It will also allow staff to search for and gather resources and materials useful to their work with children, resources made available both within Glow itself and from any other source willing to make their





'stuff' available. So, for instance, Learning and Teaching Scotland is already working to ensure that material from SCRAN, Pathe News, BBC jam, the National Library of Scotland, the National Museums of Scotland and many other rich sources will be obtainable through Glow. We are also encouraging every education authority across the country to make their own materials available to everyone else across Glow.

Glow will give every member of staff access to news and information that is specific and pertinent to them, whether from their own establishment, the local authority, LTS, HMIE, SQA and so on. It also offers personal 'space' for you to use as you see fit – you will be able to pull together the tools that you decide you need and put them where you can easily find them whenever you log in to Glow.

The collaborative environment will bring together a truly unique set of applications that will profoundly enhance teaching and learning in Scotland – email, videoconferencing and audio conferencing, chat rooms (set up by a member of staff for a specific purpose and then closed down when finished – and able to bring your children together with children from elsewhere in Scotland or from anywhere in the world), discussion forums, virtual whiteboards, application sharing and mailing lists. All these will sit within a single easy-to-use package, and will all be accessed through the world wide web (which means, of

course, that they will be accessible from anywhere you can get internet access – nursery, school, home, etc).

And at the core of Glow will be a national user directory that will enable anyone with the requisite permissions to set up interest groups to use as they see fit. Any subset of users from across the whole country can potentially be set up as an interest group – groups of 2, 20, 200 or 200,000! These might be groups of staff with a shared interest, groupings of children, groups involving children from your own establishment and elsewhere in the country, extra-curricular groups – the possibilities are infinite!

Of course, an absolutely necessary part of the implementation of Glow will be the planning and resources that will need to be put in place to ensure that everyone who needs it will be fully trained in the use of the applications and services it will offer. LTS, RM and the Scottish Executive are working closely with each and every local authority in the country to make sure that full training will be made available over the next couple of years for all staff.

So, a time of change in Scottish education – how many times have we heard that? – but the changes happening right now are, I believe, changes that should take exciting learning technologies and place them directly in the hands of staff and children throughout Scotland. Exciting times indeed.



EECERA 2006



The 16th annual European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA) conference was held recently in Iceland.

The theme of the conference, 'Democracy and Culture in Early Childhood Education', was addressed by the keynote speakers and in over 300 paper presentations, self-organised symposia, and poster sessions by almost 600 people from 43 countries in Europe, the Far East, Australasia and the Americas.

The conference aimed to raise important and urgent questions about democracy in early childhood settings. Is it important? What does it mean? How do we practise it? Where will it lead? Critical questions about culture in early childhood education were also raised. How can children contribute to creating wider cultures? How are society's cultures reflected in its early childhood education? How do early childhood programmes in each country adapt ideas from other countries? What is the influence of globalisation on early childhood education?

Keynote speakers

Professor Barbara Rogoff from the United States spoke about different approaches to learning in different cultures and communities. She focused on observation and collaboration in socio-cultural activities, an approach to learning that is especially common in indigenous-heritage communities of the Americas, and less prevalent in communities that emphasise specialised lessons out of the context of productive activity.

The second keynote session by Professor Hrafnhildur Ragnarsdottir at Iceland University of Education discussed the importance of language for children's cognitive development, literacy, and academic success, and presented a study of Icelandic children's language and literacy levels and the range of individual variations within the group.

The third keynote session explored some of the implications of treating democracy as a central value in early childhood education. Professor Peter Moss from the University of London raised critical issues concerning policy, theory and practice in early childhood.

The fourth keynote speaker, Professor Lars Dencik from Denmark, looked at the tension between individualisation and collectiveness. The functions of the family, of parent-child relationships, of self-trust and of social trust were analysed from this perspective.

In the final keynote session, Professor Joseph Tobin from the United States introduced an ongoing cross-cultural study called Children Crossing Borders. This is a five-country study that on the one hand compares the perspectives on early childhood education of immigrant parents and practitioners, and on the other hand compares the national approaches to serving children of recent immigrants in these countries.

Other presentations

In addition to the keynote speakers, over 300 presentations, including one from LTS, were made at 22 parallel sessions run throughout the conference.

A Curriculum for Excellence 3–6

Eileen Carmichael (LTS Development Officer, Early Years) spoke about the development of the early stage (3–6) of A Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland. She started by saying she was not presenting research but rather showing how research findings are being used to shape the developing early years curriculum in Scotland. She made reference to research findings from the EPPE study (<http://k1.ioe.ac.uk/schools/ecpe/eppe/index.htm>), from New Zealand (<http://edlinked.soe.waikato.ac.nz/staff/index.php?user=speters>) and from Northern

Ireland (www.psych.qub.ac.uk/research/projects/ey/index.aspx) at the time of curricular change there, to Scottish research into the early intervention programme (www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/education/ic71-00.asp) and to the recent review of international literature on research on the kind of educational experiences offered in early childhood and their impact, among other questions (see *Early Years' Matters* 9). Reference was also made to the A Curriculum for Excellence register of interest and plans for action research across Scotland in preparation for the introduction of the curriculum 3–18.

Challenges and opportunities

The presentation included the challenges of bringing together two separate and different sets of national

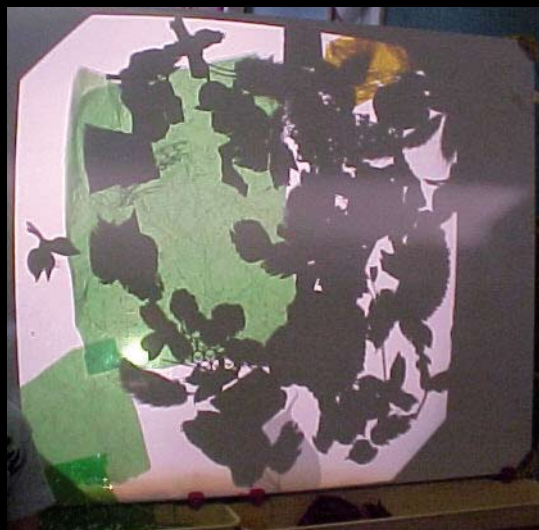
guidelines, 3–5 and 5–14; the diversity of experience and qualifications in terms of the workforce and the need to introduce a more play-based approach to learning in Primary 1.

The opportunities are described in terms of smoothing the transition from pre-school to primary education, a sound research and evidence base, renewed emphasis on the professional judgements of practitioners and the beginnings of a shared understanding of pedagogy in the early years. The PowerPoint presentation is available on the Early Years web pages.

The 17th conference will be held in Prague from 29 August to 1 September 2007, where the theme will be 'Exploring Vygotsky's Ideas: Crossing Borders'.

Light Experiments

The children in Morton Nursery School, Linwood, Renfrewshire, have been experimenting with using an overhead projector and arrangements of natural materials. Using a digital camera, the children photograph their own work and print off copies to keep.



Teacher: 'What did you like best?' – Julie: 'I liked the picture.'

Teacher: 'How did you make your pictures?'
– Julie: 'I put them on. I put the light on then I could see the picture.'

Teacher: 'Did you like making these pictures?'
– Here Julie chose a happy smile stamp.

Read Together! Home Reading Grants

Research into the Read Together! advertising campaign has shown that 85 per cent of those surveyed thought the campaign had made them think more about the value of reading with their children, while 56 per cent said it had encouraged them to read more with their children.

Since it was launched in 2002, the grants scheme has invested nearly £2 million in over 1700 home reading projects. Administered by Learning and Teaching Scotland, the scheme is part of the Executive's drive to improve child literacy.

In August 2006 over 370 schools, nursery establishments and community groups were awarded Read Together! Home Reading grants, for projects encouraging young people to read at home.

Read Together! encourages parents and carers to read with their child from a very early stage. As part of the initiative, the small grants scheme provides start-up costs for sustainable projects that encourage home reading. Staff costs, travel and subsistence are not funded.



High Carntyne Parent and Toddler Group has been running for over 15 years and meets three mornings a week. With 30 children registered, the average attendance is 20 at each session.

The grant will allow the group to buy a selection of board books, chosen because of durability and sturdiness, which parents and carers can borrow to take home and read. The plan is to have the books on display during the sessions and to use a simple sign-out/sign-in system, managed with parental help. There will also be the opportunity to discuss the books read with other parents and carers.

'We hope that this will help the children develop an interest and enjoyment in reading that will last a lifetime.'

Barbara McKenzie, group organiser

Westerhouse Nursery School and Family Learning Centre in Easterhouse, Glasgow, has been running a 'Bed-time Story Club' for children aged 3-5 for several years. Every week each child chooses a book to be taken home in a special bag, to be read together by parents and children. As the Centre has recently had an under-3s unit added, this grant will allow the Story Club to be extended to the 49 families with children under 3, sharing 27 FTE places. The Centre also plans to purchase a selection of audio books to overcome specific barriers faced by some families in the area.

'It is never too soon for parents and children to start enjoying bedtime stories together. We are very grateful to the Home Reading Initiative for their help in allowing even more families to join our club.'

Kay Hamilton, Headteacher

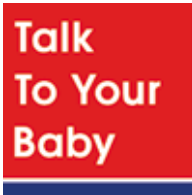


To find out more about the Read Together! campaign, visit www.readtogether.co.uk

www.LTScotland.org.uk/earlyyears



Talk To Your Baby Resources



Talk To Your Baby, the early language campaign of the National Literacy Trust, has a wide range of free downloadable resources on its website. The materials are designed to help professionals to encourage parents and carers to talk more to children from birth to 3, to help develop their language, communication and social skills.

The resources can be grouped under three broad headings:

- activity packs – flexible resources based on themes, such as music or first words, which can be used in part or whole by professionals working with families and carers to encourage interaction and communication
- discussion documents – providing a base from which to encourage further discussion on early years language issues, as well as facts and figures that may be useful to practitioners hoping to gain support for local projects
- information sheets – covering such topics as television, dummies and bilingualism.

Some are written for specific audiences, such as grandparents or young parents, and there is a Quick Tips series that covers eight topics and is available in 10 languages. The resources are free to photocopy and distribute.

Talk To Your Baby resources can be found at www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk and a longer version of this article can be found on Early Years' Matters web pages at www.LTScotland.org.uk/earlyyearsmatters/index.asp.

sppa

Learning Through Play!

The Scottish Pre-school Play Association Conference, AGM and Exhibition, 'Early Years – Learning Years', will be held in Glenrothes, Fife, on Friday 10 November.

Keynote speakers include Colwyn Trevarthan, Professor (Emeritus), University of Edinburgh, and Siobhan Fitzpatrick, Northern Ireland Pre-school Play Association.

The day will include a range of practical study sessions:

- Singing Games and Rhymes for Tiny Tots
- The Inspection Process
- Basic Life Support for Babies and Children
- Dealing with Challenging Behaviour
- Outdoor Play and Other Developments
- Can't Concentrate or Won't Concentrate
- Healthy Eating Habits
- Developing Literacy using ICT.

For further information visit www.sppa.org.uk



Early Years Physical Activity



Iain Stanger,
Development Officer,
Physical Education

As a teacher of physical education and within my current post, the importance of physical education and physical activity, for me, has never been in question.

Scotland, the sick man of Europe

In Scotland today the importance of leading an active and healthy lifestyle has never had a higher profile. As a nation we have been warned by the medical profession of the health time bomb that our poor diet, lifestyle and inactivity are creating. 'Scotland, the sick man of Europe' is an oft quoted phrase.

Two hours of quality physical education

In Scotland the government has recognised the importance of physical activity and physical education and a number of government initiatives and programmes incorporate children's physical activity as central features. Within the current climate physically active children should be a feature of all educational establishments.

Further to this the Minister for Education and Young People endorsed the recommendations of the Physical Education Review Group (2004) and by 2008 all children and young people aged 3–18 should be provided with two hours of quality physical education per week.

Physical activity and physical education in the early years can also promote the development of motor skills, cognitive processes, social interaction, emotional literacy and creative expression, as well as being important for maturation and growth.

Active Start programme

These are facts not lost on Clackmannanshire Council, which over the past several years has developed an extensive Primary Physical Education programme and the Early Years 'Active Start' physical activity programme. The Active Start programme encompasses a range of activities and equipment that can be accessed by all pre-

school establishments within Clackmannanshire. The programme has a lead development officer, Jackie Stevenson, and a team of specialist coaches who facilitate the development and delivery of the programme.

Orienteering

On a recent visit to Clackmannanshire I visited Sauchie Nursery and I was able to see the impact of the programme at first hand and observe the delivery of a very engaging orienteering lesson. Mary Baxter, Headteacher of the nursery, is very supportive of the programme.

'I think that this initiative is one of the best that has been developed in pre-5 education in recent years. The children are so enthusiastic about the activities and the parents are extremely supportive of the initiative. Colleagues in the primary school have also commented on the positive impact it has had on the children, who are more able.'

The Active Start programme has also impacted positively on the nursery's annual family day at Gartmore Dam, which this year incorporated a family orienteering event over a three-mile course.

Sports packs to borrow

In addition to supporting the Active Start programme, Mary has been keen to extend the opportunities for physical activity outwith the establishment. To facilitate this, a bank of activity packs was created. For this, activity



cards were developed and simple sports equipment and back packs were purchased. The children can borrow the pack for a week to allow them to engage in activities at home.

Expertise in both areas

The Active Start programme encompasses a range of basic movement activities adapted from football, golf, basketball, orienteering, movement and dance, athletics and Top Start. The activity I observed was orienteering, which was delivered by Elaine Simpson, a member of the Active Start team. Elaine is not just a sports coach; she is a formally trained nursery teacher. Mary Baxter firmly believes that Elaine's expertise in both areas is central to the success of the initiative at Sauchie, and in her opinion this would be the ideal model for the future delivery of the programme.

Active learning

The lesson was conducted outdoors in the nursery's sensory garden and encompassed individual, paired and small-team activities. The range of vigorous physical activities also incorporated shape and colour recognition, problem solving, matching tasks, communication and language skills, social interaction and introducing the children to items of orienteering equipment. My enjoyment of observing the lesson was only surpassed by the children participating in it. The children were active, they were learning, they were communicating, they were solving problems, they were outdoors, they were fully engaged and they enjoyed it.

The lesson was innovative; it embraced a number of cross-curricular themes; it brought learning outdoors; the children were engaged in active learning; and it was clearly evident that the four capacities of A Curriculum for Excellence were being addressed – all of this and the children were developing their health and fitness in an enjoyable context.

More than learning to move . . .

This for me highlights the distinct and unique learning opportunities that high quality physical activity offers. It should not just be about getting children active, which is an essential feature. The orienteering lesson I observed was more than activity: it was physical education. The children were not only 'learning to move' but were also 'moving to learn'.

You can hear more about Clackmannanshire's Physical Education programmes and see Sauchie Nursery's orienteering in action at the National PE conferences on 2 October and 26 October at Stirling University.

Sprights have Healthy Hearts



Working through research to improve heart health is a very exciting opportunity for charitable organisation Sprights Scotland, City of Edinburgh Council and the schools involved, Dalry Primary and Crewe Road Nursery.

Research outline

Funded by Heart Research UK, the research will take place in the schools over one year and will involve 30 children, 30 parents and eight members of staff. The goal of the project is to research and improve the activity levels and dietary habits of the children, parents and teachers.

Involving children and parents

The project includes:

- training for staff to deliver physical education lessons to 3–5-year-old children
- provision of equipment and lesson manuals
- parents invited to the lessons
- staff and Sprights help for children in keeping very simple 'food and action diaries'.

In addition, parents will be supplied with 'food fact files' and coached on the importance of diet and activity. This will include cookery workshops and demonstrating simply cooked food which is healthy and comes in 'on budget'.

Project goal

The project goal is that many involved in the research will dramatically improve their lifestyle and, therefore, their heart health now and in the future.

The findings of the research will demonstrate whether, with support, Scottish families can change their lifestyle radically, resulting in better heart health.

For further details, contact maggie.sprights@virgin.net

Early Years Conference – ‘A Common Goal’

Crucial Importance of Infant Mental Health

Early years workers and volunteers from nursery, playgroup and health came together on Saturday 13 May to focus on developing good practice and to help achieve ‘A Common Goal’ of integrated working in the early years services.

Organised by Midlothian Childcare and Early Years Partnership, the conference attracted people from a range of children’s services across Midlothian, who were welcomed to the event by Donald MacKay, Director of Education.

Opening the conference, Rhona Brankin MSP said that this event was taking forward the Scottish Ministers’ ‘vision for children to become confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens’. She was encouraged by the number of attendees and hoped there would be more events like this for early years workers.

In his keynote speech, Robin Balbernie, Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist from Gloucestershire, focused on the importance of the child’s very early relationships. He shared research showing how children’s development into adults depends on their emotional attachments in their early years. He stressed the crucial role that early years workers can have for children’s healthy brain development and future relationships.

Delegates had a choice of workshops based on the seven aspects of the vision for Children in Scotland: Safe;



Nurtured; Healthy; Achieving; Active; Respected and Responsible; Included. All workshops were well attended and provided theory and practice as well as some fun.

The interactive event gave attendees the opportunity to meet early years workers from different settings by using a ‘speed-dating’ model. The event was facilitated by Marie Kane, Organisational Consultant.

The attendees’ responses to the conference were extremely favourable. One attendee felt that ‘it was a good balance between workshops, speakers and the interactive event’. Another said, ‘It was really good to meet other professionals working with children in different roles.’

For further information contact Anne Rooney, Childcare and Early Years Strategy Officer, Midlothian Childcare and Early Years Partnership

anne.rooney@midlothian.gov.uk

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Saturday Seminar Leadership in the Early Years

in Conversation with Keir Bloomer,
Aline-Wendy Dunlop and Margy Whalley

Date: **Saturday 11 November 2006**

Time: **9.30 am – 2.45 pm**

Venue: **Strathclyde Suite, Royal Concert Hall, Glasgow**

Cost per delegate: **£65.00**

Lunch and refreshments will be provided.

Special Offer

Discount for Early Years Seminar, Spring 2007

Learning and Teaching Scotland will be hosting a further seminar for early years educators in spring 2007. Delegates attending the event in November will be eligible for a discounted rate to attend the spring seminar.

For further information about the forthcoming seminar visit Early Years Online at www.LTScotland.org.uk/earlyyears

www.LTScotland.org.uk/earlyyears