Who we are and what we do

Early Years Scotland is committed to providing the very best start in life for each and every child in Scotland. We are Scotland's principal national organisation that is dedicated to, and has a strong specialism in, the early years of children's lives, from pre-birth to five.

We have high expectations of, and aspirations for, each and every child, believing them to be naturally curious and creative, as well as extremely competent, capable thinkers and learners. Our services aim to strengthen and improve confidence, attachment, interactions, shared learning, the home learning environment, and attainment.

All of our early years staff, from the practitioners working directly with families, to the service managers who plan and manage our services, and our senior leaders overseeing the strategic direction of the organisation, are fully qualified early years professionals with a strong track record in Early Learning and Childcare policy and practice.

We listen to and take account of the views, preferences and needs of children and their families. We work closely with children, parents, carers and the workforce, to support them to remove the barriers of inequality, so that children are loved, nurtured, ambitious, and have a fair start, growing to realise both their potential and their aspirations.

Our Aspiration

We aspire to see a Scotland where every baby and young child's life chances are enriched by high quality Early Learning and Childcare which is affordable, accessible and in accordance with individual preference and need.

Membership

We offer membership to:

- Voluntary Sector Early Learning and Childcare Settings
- Local Authority Early Learning and Childcare Settings
- Private Early Learning and Childcare Settings
- Combined Early and Learning and Childcare and Parent and Toddler Groups
- Parent and Toddler Groups
- College Departments
- University Departments
- Students
- Practitioners
- Local Authorities
- Voluntary Sector Organisations
- National Organisations (other than Voluntary)
- Companies and Businesses
- Friends of Early Years Scotland
- Early Years Scotland Board Members and Staff

Early Years Scotland offers many membership benefits, such as a helpline, curriculum and business support, policy templates, specialist insurance and legal advice, a members' area on our website, regular e-bulletins, and magazines for practitioners and parents.

Working Directly with Children and their Families

Our qualified, professional staff also work directly with babies and children and their parents and carers in various settings including local communities, nurseries, primary schools, family homes and in prisons.

Our work focuses on improving early learning and development through shared interactions and play between children and their parents.

Early Years Scotland's philosophy centres on the following:

- Prevention and Early Intervention
- Two-generation philosophy
- Practitioners as role models for children and parents
- Evidence and assets-based approaches
- Supporting children's early learning and development
- Emphasis on enriching the Home Learning Environment
- Inclusivity and the building of capacity, capability and confidence.

Underpinning all of this, Early Years Scotland engages with policymakers to inform and influence local and national policy. We increasingly deliver professional learning opportunities for the sector. As the number of hours of Early Learning and Childcare increases, we are here to support the workforce, children and families.
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Over the last year, the Board of Directors and staff team at Early Years Scotland have been focused on strengthening, developing and extending our work to support young children and their families across Scotland.

As an organisation we have gone from strength to strength and we are now recognised across the sector for our early years specialism, commitment, expertise and excellent service provision with regard to:

- working directly with children and families through our Stay Play and Learn and prison programmes
- delivering membership and other services for the Early Learning and Childcare community
- developing and delivering bespoke high quality, relevant professional learning for the workforce
- providing advocacy and advisory services on behalf of children and our members, with regard to legislation, policy and practice

As a result of an ever-growing demand for our services, our organisation has continued to progress and expand, and we are delighted that our staff team has grown, not just in size, but also in respect of our organisational professional identity, expertise and partnership working.

Scotland, how do we eliminate educational inequality and promote access to quality provision for all children and families in Scotland?

As an organisation we will continue to work tirelessly with the sector to support the early years community, and the people who work with our children and families, in all the services we offer.

I would like to thank our Chief Executive and Depute Chief Executive and all of the Early Years Scotland staff, who dedicate their working lives to the organisation.

I would also like to thank the Early Years Scotland Board of Directors for committing their time to the vital work of the Board, and for being an invaluable support to me personally and to the organisation.

Barbara Dale
Insurance

Early Years Scotland’s insurance package for members is managed by RSA Insurance. At the end of 2016 it was decided that due to the fact that our Membership team had changed, and there was no longer a staff member who dealt solely with insurance, that queries would be passed directly to our brokers, Mackay Corporate Insurance Brokers. This has ensured that our members have continued to receive the very best service, in a timely and effective manner.

Membership Feedback

Our members have told us:
‘I find the support, insurance, policy template provision and excellent publications all very useful.’
‘We value the face to face contact with an Early Years Scotland team member for advice and support - a person to talk to who knows the local situation.’
‘As a rural setting we really appreciate the support that we receive from Early Years Scotland especially being able to chat through any concerns with our local officer’
‘The conference is a major highlight of my year.’
Communications and Resources

Our communications with members and other stakeholders have continued to develop with our electronic news bulletins and use of social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. We have consulted our members through our annual membership survey. Over the last year there have been over 29,000 unique visitors to our website.

Social Media

Early Years Scotland’s Facebook and Twitter popularity has continued to increase. The main Facebook page recorded 4478 ‘Likes’, an increase of 1427. Our seven local Facebook pages, used to promote our Stay Play and Learn, Baby Massage, Baby Play and Messy Play sessions in a number of areas, have a total of 3,792 ‘Likes’ between them. The number of followers on Twitter has risen from 2,965 to 5,100, an average increase of 180 per month. We have uploaded 33 films onto our YouTube channel and these have been viewed over 11,000 times.

Annual Membership Questionnaire

Our two Annual Membership Surveys were distributed in June to Early Learning and Childcare settings and Parent and Toddler Groups respectively. Reports highlighting the key findings for both have been published and shared with our members, partners and across the wider sector. The survey results indicated that our services are highly rated by our members. For example, 98% of respondents from Early Learning and Childcare settings indicated that their knowledge and awareness of Early Years policy matters has increased as a result of using our services; 85% rated our Development and Support Officers as good or excellent and 90% rated helpline support as good or excellent.

Magazines

The Early Years Scotland Magazine for Practitioners and its sister magazine for parents, Parent Chat, have continued to be well received and to be a valuable source of news, professional development and best practice for readers. They are both produced three times a year. The content is very much informed by the respective readerships, the views of groups we directly work in, and through the Critical Friends Group which meets to discuss each edition of the magazines and provide feedback to inform future issues.
National Annual Conference

Our annual national conference focusing on ‘Early Years Inspections: Challenge or Opportunity?’, took place in Glasgow on Saturday 1 October 2016 and was attended by 330 delegates. Our conference was chaired by BBC Presenter and Journalist, Clare English and our speakers included:

• Professor Ferre Laevers
• Mark McDonald MSP, Minister for Childcare and Early Years
• Lesley Brown, Strategic Director at Education Scotland
• Kevin Mitchell, Executive Director of Scrutiny and Assurance at the Care Inspectorate
• Angie Harris, Director of International Programs, The Dollywood Foundation

A film of the conference, and slides from the presentations, are on our website.

Question Time

The first Early Years Scotland ‘Question Time’ event was held on Tuesday 20 September 2016 in the University of Strathclyde when a panel of experts and an informed, enthusiastic audience debated the question: ‘What age should children start school?’

A summary report was published by Dr Christine Stephen from the University of Stirling and a film of the session is on our website and YouTube channel.

Early Years Scotland Staff Professional Learning

Staff have benefited from attending our staff conferences and from professional learning sessions covering: children’s hearings, strategic planning, Pre-Birth to 3 Positive Outcomes for Scotland’s Children and Families, Building the Ambition, GIRFEC, observations, baby massage instructor training, first aid, breastfeeding, moving and assisting, creating an empowering learning environment, Bookbug and Excel training.

Delivering Professional Learning for the Sector

We have delivered 12 professional learning sessions for local authorities, colleges and many others. These have included, for example, Children Affected by Imprisonment, Effective Environments and Schemas, Effective Environments for Under 3s, Personal Care Plans, Leadership and How good is our early learning and childcare? We have delivered 10 keynote addresses and presentations at national and local conferences and events.

As the size of the workforce is set to almost double by 2020, due to huge demand, we are now in the process of creating an expert, dedicated Professional Learning Team. It will design and deliver high quality, affordable, accessible and relevant professional learning opportunities across the country. This will ensure that we can meet the needs of our members and the sector.
IN 2016 – 2017 EARLY YEARS SCOTLAND..

Supported 2,095 parents and carers in Stay Play and Learn sessions

Delivered 1,358 Stay Play and Learn sessions

Increased membership to 1,177
Delivered 379 baby massage sessions

Supported 2,487 children in Stay Play and Learn sessions

Delivered 487 1-1 sessions for families

Worked in prisons with 96 families and 141 children

Delivered 12 professional learning sessions

Delivered 10 keynote addresses and presentations

Responded to 961 helpline queries
Here are some examples of case studies which demonstrate the kind of work we are doing across Scotland.

**Support Service: Dumfries & Galloway**

St Columba’s, a very well established Playgroup, which had been highly commended by parents and carers in the area, required extended support following a Care Inspectorate inspection. They had been issued with an improvement notice. As they were contracted by Dumfries and Galloway Council to provide Early Learning and Childcare they were expected to meet specific grades. A grade 2 in any area meant that the setting had to improve within six months, otherwise the contract could be withdrawn.

Our Development and Support Officer worked with them, looking at the whole Care Inspectorate report and completing the online action plan, which provided the basis of the support that they required. Assistance was given regarding: staff personnel files; SSSC registration requirements; SSSC professional development; contracts of employment and job descriptions; appraisals and review and planning; risk benefit assessment work and policies and procedures. The group’s joint inspection in April 2017 by Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate was a positive one and their grades had improved.

**1 to 1 Support Service**

Although not living together, John’s* parents were bringing him up together. John had demonstrated challenging behaviour both at home and at nursery. His parents did not know what they could do to improve the situation.

Before our Early Years Practitioner had started the home sessions, John would shout, swear and would not play with toys or join in activities.
She focused on John’s lack of routine, his social behaviour and on parental/child interaction. John participated well in the sessions. He did not show challenging behaviour or bad language. He was respectful of the toys and materials that had been brought for him; however, at times he showed a level of vulnerability. If he was not sure what to do next, or if it did not go well, things would very quickly go wrong for him. Support was given, plus reassurance. This helped him to continue with his play. He gradually participated in all activities, talked freely about these and enjoyed them. Once when a visiting child, who was unable to share, came to a session, John asked his mother for help to sort it out and did not get angry or upset. This showed just how far he had come, as he coped very well with this challenging situation. His father also reported an improvement in John’s behaviour.

Play sessions were also held with his father, where they learned to play together. John loved the sessions so much, that sometimes he would slow an activity down so that the session would last longer! His father reported that he was behaving better with him too.

John not only behaved better at home but also at the nursery. The teacher explained that prior to the sessions, he had not engaged with other children or activities. He would play with the sand, but would not visit any of the other areas. He didn’t talk to anyone and would throw himself backwards if approached or someone spoke to him. During outside play he had looked lost in the playground. He had now made friends, visited more areas and talked in circle time about different subjects. The teacher remarked that it was ‘as if a switch had been turned on.’

Stay Play and Learn: Glasgow South

Angela* was a year old when she started coming to Stay Play and Learn and had attended on a regular basis with her mother and sometimes with her father. Following maternity leave Angela’s mother wanted her to be able to socialise with other children, as she would be going back to work and her daughter would be in a nursery. She was hoping that coming to the sessions would make the transition to nursery easier.

Our Early Years Practitioners noticed that Angela participated in various aspects of schematic play, in particular transporting. She spent much of her time collecting a variety of toys and moving them around the room with her. At first her mother stopped her from doing this, asking her to put things back ‘where they belonged’ and to tidy them up. It was explained that the toys were there for the children to do what they wanted with them, and they could be tidied up afterwards. Her mother then encouraged her to play with the resources the way she wished.

Observing her behaviour, the Practitioners supported Angela by providing a variety of bags, boxes, baskets etc. for her to fill. They supplied a treasure basket which contained a variety of everyday items. Angela loved to empty it and put the items into different bags to carry around with her. Her mother supported her by asking questions about the things she had collected and moved round with her, rather than asking her to return things. She spent time interacting with her and encouraged her to explore the various toys.

The Practitioners explained what schematic play was. Her mother realised that Angela had been involved in various types of schematic play at home. Consequently, she now encourages her daughter. She said: ‘She likes to line up her toys, sometimes her books or building blocks. She has a bag she collects things in from around the house all the time.’ Angela now fully enjoys and benefits from the freedom to explore through play.

*Names have been changed.
Member Setting Support

Rosetta Playgroup, a popular, very busy setting, which was in partnership with the local authority, experienced changes of staff. This included the resignation of their long-standing manager and practitioners. The setting needed to recruit an entire new staff team whilst managing the expectations of the local authority and the Care Inspectorate.

The committee had been run mainly by two people. As one of them had applied for a job in the setting in the middle of the academic year, this meant that there had to be a full change of committee in order to achieve best practice and effective employment.

The new manager worked hard to develop her team and to support them in developing the setting. She identified that she would require ongoing support from a new committee. Although the outgoing committee had left the setting in a strong situation, the new staff team required support and back up from the committee.

Our Development and Support Officer worked with the staff and parents to build the committee’s capacity. She delivered committee training for new committee members, supported them in the recruitment of a new practitioner and the arrangement of the Extraordinary General Meeting. She supported and advised the new committee on the implementation of quality management practice and procedures which covered effective recruitment, including advertising, shortlisting, person and job specification, interview questions and interview support; and effective employment techniques that were in line with SSSC advice and Care Inspectorate guidance. She provided information and support for the manager, in order that she could develop appraisal and supervision systems for her staff team. She also worked with the staff and parents to enhance community involvement.

Supporting Parent and Toddler Groups

Hillington Parent and Toddler Group was keen to improve the children’s and families’ experiences. The parents took part in workshops, delivered by our staff, on health and wellbeing. These included healthy eating, oral health, physical play, singing, Bookbug, painting and making playdough. Jackie Ferrier, the group’s leader, and the parents applied these experiences to the running of the group. This enhanced the children’s play experiences and increased the parents’ knowledge and confidence to adapt these, not only within the group, but at home too.

Our staff sourced courses for the parents and information was given about Individual Learning Accounts. They were able to use the funding to attend a first aid course at a college. Our staff also gave advice on training about oral health and one parent attended a food hygiene course. Jackie is now Bookbug trained and is studying for the NQ Playwork and Childcare - Level 5 qualification.

Aberdeen Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Trial

The Scottish Government chose our successful Stay Play and Learn service in November 2016 as one of the models for their Early Learning and Childcare expansion trials. The trial service, ‘2 Stay, Play and Learn’, began in January 2017 and is being delivered by Early Years Scotland in partnership with Aberdeen City Council.

2 Stay Play and Learn is a new, radical type of nursery provision where parents stay and support their children’s learning. The trial focuses on eligible two year olds. Instead of dropping their children off at the nursery, the parents stay, therefore allowing the children to remain with them whilst still enjoying the benefits of nursery at the same time. It also means that parents who do not want to be separated from their two year old children, which takes place in other nursery settings, are encouraged to stay and support their children’s learning, alongside qualified Early Years Scotland staff.

“It’s fun, educational and good for parents as well as kids.”
Parent, 2 Stay Play and Learn, Aberdeen
Early Years Scotland in Prisons: Learning Together Through Play

The Learning Together Through Play Programme has taken place in HMP and YOI Grampian, HMP Dumfries, HMP Low Moss, HMP Barlinnie, HMP Castle Huntly. It includes the Early Years Scotland Fathers’ Programme, Learning Together Through Play sessions and Baby Massage sessions. The programme covers topics such as brain development, attachment and bonding, child development, health and wellbeing, children’s rights, home safety, the importance of play and Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC). The play and learning sessions have provided opportunities for the families to interact, improve attachment and let them see how children learn through play, but most of all they have shown how much fun it is for all the family.

My Daughter and Me

‘I have been attending the family visits within HMP Barlinnie since September last year. I signed up to the Fathers’ Programme which is run by Clare. She taught me every development stage that my wee girl is going through whilst she is growing up. She is only two years old. I love these two hour visits every week as I look forward to being with my daughter.

I now realise how my daughter’s brain is developing and I understand that she needs a lot of play and stimulation. Being able to have fun with her in the soft play or sit with her and paint is brilliant. Clare is always on hand to help even when I changed my wee girl’s first nappy as I found it a bit scary.

I now know how important it is to tell her stories and have wee sing songs together as it helps her speech and confidence. I did not realise the need to have certain food as the visit room only has chocolate and juice for the kids. Clare would supply fruit and other healthy snacks and I would sit with my daughter and encourage her to eat.

The time spent together means so much to me as she always runs straight into my arms for cuddles when she sees me in the family visit room. I really look forward to that cuddle every week as it keeps me going in here. My girlfriend and I are getting on a lot better as our daughter is happier as we all have a routine which helps us.

I never realised how much my wee girl needs me and my girlfriend until I completed the Fathers’ Programme with Clare. I realise that I need to be there more for my daughter as it affects her so much when I am in prison, as she doesn’t understand why I am not there to play with her. I have already started to make changes as my wee girl is my number one priority. I am out of prison in a month’s time and I will make sure that I spend more time with her. I would like to thank everybody within the family visit room for helping me to be a better Da.’

Prisoner, HMP Barlinnie

‘Children see only their daddy, they don’t see the crime or where he actually is.’
Clare Hendry, Early Years Practitioner
Financial Overview 2016-17

Total income for the year was £1,197,870
Net outgoing funds for the year was £180,084

Summarised Accounts

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NET EXPENDITURE IN YEAR       | (180,084) |    |
Board of Directors

- Barbara Dale (Chair)
- Dr Graeme Alexander OBE (Vice Chair)
- Davina Coupar
- Mariessa Devlin
- Dr Marion Flett
- Sara Harkins
- Beverly Malcolm
- Anne McPherson
- Marion Samson
- Fraser Sanderson

Thank You to Our Funders

We would like to offer our sincere thanks to all of our funders. We are grateful for the support we have received from the Scottish Government, local authority funding from Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Dumfries & Galloway, Fife, Glasgow City, and Scottish Borders, funding from the Big Lottery ‘Medium Improving Lives Fund’ and ‘Investing in Communities 21st Century Life’ Fund, Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership, Aberdeenshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership, Aberdeen Integrated Children’s Services Nurtured Outcome Group, Wheatley Group, Dr Bal and Doreen Black.

Corporate Funders

We would also like to extend our appreciation to TTS Ltd. for their financial support towards products for readers of our Early Years Scotland Magazine for Practitioners. We would also like to thank Cool Milk and Mackay Corporate Insurance Brokers who have sponsored publications.

Pro-Bono Support

Ernst & Young and Education Scotland have provided Early Years Scotland with meeting rooms at no cost throughout the year, which has been extremely helpful and greatly appreciated. Early Years Scotland wishes to thank Certum for the provision of Annual Conference T shirts for our staff and Royal and Sun Alliance for their help with marketing.

Conference Sponsorship

We are grateful for the generous sponsorship of our Conference by both TTS and Glasgow City Council.