Scottish Pre-school Play Association
Annual Review and Impact Report 2012-13

The earlier the better
Improving children’s life chances
Who we are and what we do

The Scottish Pre-school Play Association (SPPA) is Scotland’s largest voluntary sector national umbrella organisation provider of direct support services to community led pre-school education and childcare services.

SPPA wants to see a Scotland where children have the very best start in life: a Scotland where families and communities want and expect the best outcomes for their children, a Scotland where all children experience respect for their rights, are supported in their needs and have opportunities from their earliest years on to learn, achieve and fulfil their potential.

Our mission

To help give Scotland’s children the very best start in life, by working in partnership with other organisations to support and provide early learning and childcare services for children and families in their own communities.
SPPA has enjoyed a very positive year of financial stability, developing new services, supporting over 1,000 members, and introducing a new vision for 2020, whilst continuing to engage in the busy early years sector policy landscape.

Of the many highlights recorded this year there are four areas of activity that demonstrate that, in the midst of the country’s worst economic downturn for half a century and severe cuts in public services, SPPA is riding the storm with tenacity and confidence.

We have exceeded all targets with over two thousand young children, who live in dis-advantaged circumstances, having experienced a positive early intervention play service from a small but growing and experienced team of SPPA Play Practitioners based in Aberdeen, Dumfries & Galloway and Glasgow, thanks to funding from Inspiring Scotland’s Early Years Early Action Fund, Dumfries & Galloway Council, Glasgow City Council, Greater Glasgow & Clyde Health Board and latterly the Cattanach Trust.

We have informed and influenced various early years national policy developments which have included the Early Years Task Force’s Working Group on creating a culture change for children in Scotland, the transformative Early Years Collaborative, the National Parenting Strategy: Making a Positive Difference to Children and Young People through Parenting, the Children & Young People Bill and Scotland’s first ever Play Strategy.

We have promoted a new and dynamic approach to partnership working to deliver a range of services to children and families across Scotland, including the initial development of a Quality Improvement Collaborative between SPPA and the Care and Learning Alliance (CALA) the early years charity, due to be launched later in 2013.

We have consolidated funding in direct support services which have helped to sustain and develop community based toddler and/or pre-school groups in Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Dumfries & Galloway, Fife, Falkirk, Glasgow City and Scottish Borders.

Thanks to the commitment of our dedicated Board of Directors, head office and local staff teams, SPPA is poised to build on this success with renewed confidence and purpose. A new core funding partnership with the BIG Fund (Scottish Government funding) has provided the organisation with financial security for a two-year period along with a one-year award for our early intervention project. We have increased funding from some of our local authority partners. The governance of the charity is robust with new Directors coming on board. Restructuring of our management team has created the foundation to grow new and exciting services working with our partners in local government, health and other charities. A new Chief Executive will take this well respected and forward looking organisation to the next chapter of its history in preparation of its 50th birthday celebrations in 2018.

As I pen this introduction to my final annual review after 12 most rewarding years leading Scotland’s largest early years intermediary agency, I do so with gratitude and pride for the many happy experiences (and a few challenges along the way!) that I take with me.

Thank you SPPA. Thank you to my much valued and respected management, development, practitioner and administration colleagues in SPPA, those in Scottish and Local Government, in numerous public sector agencies and other children’s charities for shaping my understanding of the importance of a holistic approach to child development in a child’s first few years of life. Thank you to the thousands of vulnerable parents of very young children who have valued SPPA’s interventions at a crucial point in their lives. Thank you to my colleagues in ACOSVO, the network for charity leaders in Scotland, and to Pilotlight, the business support charity, who have both helped me as a leader to leave SPPA in good heart following a year-long engagement of reviewing our vision and strategy for the future. And finally, thank you to our wonderful members, partners and stakeholders around the country who work tirelessly as volunteers and paid staff and continue to safeguard the contribution and heritage of community based early childhood care and learning for Scotland’s youngest citizens.

Best wishes SPPA for a happy and prosperous future.

Ian McLaughlan
Chief Executive
(January 2001 — July 2013)
Chairperson’s Report

As I look back on my first year as Chair of the Board of Directors I have been reflecting on the highs and lows of the role.

The high points include securing an increase of 9% on our core funding from the Scottish Government after a very challenging application process. We also received additional funding to develop and support projects which secure the best outcomes for children, families and communities involved with SPPA. This puts us in a strong position to respond to the many challenges that face the charity over the coming years.

SPPA has contributed to the many strategic policy initiatives, at national level and have been involved in consultations and responses to The Parenting Strategy, The Children and Young People’s Bill and Scotland’s first Play Strategy. We were represented at the Early Years’ Collaborative, a coalition of community planning partners and early years experts, brought together with the aim of making Scotland the best place in the world to grow up.

The low point came when Ian McLaughlan our Chief executive resigned after 12 years of leading the charity. I wish him well in his new role at Youth Scotland. As a result of Ian’s resignation, the Board has completed a rigorous recruitment process and are delighted to welcome Jean Carwood-Edwards to the post of Chief Executive. I look forward to working with Jean in the coming years to continue the important work of the organisation.

My thanks to all staff who have supported the work of SPPA over the last challenging year and to the Board for the help and encouragement they have given to me.

Barbara Dale
Chairperson
The year in numbers

1,049 early years groups throughout Scotland benefited from membership of SPPA through insurance, an information helpline, online publications and resources, and on the ground support.

We worked directly with over 2,000 children under three years of age in early intervention projects in Aberdeen, Glasgow and Dumfries & Galloway.

426 new families attended our early intervention projects.

In Dumfries & Galloway, 1,082 vulnerable children between birth and three years participated in our play development sessions.

446 parents or carers, and 497 young children engaged in our Off to a Good Start play and learning sessions in South Glasgow to improve physical activity, oral health, diet and nutrition.
Intervening early with children and families
Edward was diagnosed as having cerebral palsy. His hands were held inwards and his muscles were not so flexible. Edward and his mother Faye joined the baby massage group in his local area when he was four months old, and then after a few weeks they joined the baby massage group in the Mum to Mum group. This is a group that stays together for a six week block of baby massage. Edward and Faye enjoyed the baby massage and she feels that it has helped him. He relaxed more and opened his hands more as well. Faye gave us feedback that the massage helped his relaxation and improved his muscle tone.

When the six weeks were over, he started attending the Sunshine Group, for children who have additional support needs. As Edward grew older, the difference between him and others his age had become more noticeable, but now that he is attending the Sunshine Group on a weekly basis, Faye is more relaxed, which has an effect on Edward. There are lots of different toys there, all easy to handle or look at, and she can try out the toys that he can hold or likes. Edward has continued to enjoy baby massage and loves joining in with the singing. He has a lovely smile during singing.

Attending the Sunshine Group has helped Edward and Faye to socialise. Talking with the other parents is very encouraging for all the parents in the group. Faye is able to talk with them about the appointments he has with his medical team. It is sharing experiences with other parents that is so important. Edward and Faye can both be themselves in the group and have become valued group members. The group is supportive, and helps to give access to other agencies or places that can assist them.

Edward’s Mum Faye believes that the baby massage has been of great benefit to him.
Making a Difference

The Making a Difference project builds on our model of working directly with families. We work with children from birth to age three and their parents, or other family carers, taking on the parenting role. We support families who face challenges in their lives and aim to improve children’s outcomes and parents’ knowledge and understanding of their child’s needs, health and wellbeing.

Funded through Inspiring Scotland by the Scottish Government’s Early Years Early Action Fund, families attend play sessions (Stay and Play) held in Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dumfries, and in Dumfries Prison where we work with both parents, the prisoner and visiting parent, and their children.
Lynne* and her son Alex attend the Stay and Play PLUS group. She has two children under the age of five (and when she started, was expecting her third child). The family was sign posted to the group from a partner organisation, as it was felt that it would be helpful for Lynne and Alex to attend the Stay and Play PLUS as it is a smaller group, which allows the children more time to play and explore, and gives the parents time and space to chat with the Play Practitioner and each other.

Initially Alex was very quiet and shy and would stay very close to his mum throughout the session. He would prefer to watch the other children before taking part in activities, as long as he had her support and encouragement. For example when he first started, at song time Alex would sit close to his mum but not join in. Over the following few weeks Lynne noticed that he was becoming more confident. He now sings on his own to the rest of the group. She feels that he is able to explore the activities on his own and he is more comfortable attending a smaller group.

Lynne has said that attending the group is making a difference to his language development too. In the past he would not speak in group situations, but as he is becoming more confident, he is starting to chat more. His speech is getting clearer which is helping him with his social skills, learning to share and waiting for his turn.

We record what they have noticed their children learning and if their child has enjoyed the activity. Lynne said, ‘We are doing more activities at home. Alex loved building the towers with stacking cups. He repeated the colours as I was saying them.’

Lynne told us that due to her pregnancy she sometimes found it difficult to play with her children and that she often felt guilty that she was not spending enough time with them. Lynne has now recognised that she does play and spend time with her children and so she feels better about herself and feels that she is a ‘good mum’. Lynne and Alex have continued to attend Stay and Play PLUS with the new baby.

*Names have been changed
Intervening early with children and families

Mary Rzepecki, Family Contact Officer in the Scottish Prison Service, Dumfries, writes about the benefits the Making a Difference project has brought to the families she is working with.

Making a Difference

Dumfries Prison Partnership Project

As Family Contact Officer I encourage family involvement. This may involve re-acquainting themselves with family members or keeping an existing bond strong. My focus is to make it easier for prisoners and their families to strengthen existing bonds while they are in prison. When SPPA approached the prison I realised that for under 5s, this would be the ideal way to encourage this positive approach to parenting.

I promote SPPA within the prison through posters and the induction process; this is where each admission to prison is given information about what resources, programmes and schemes they can access. I then identify and approach individually those who have children under school age and explain what participating would mean to them.

When I am on duty, I always try to supervise with play sessions and I am on hand to answer any questions. I work closely with both the prison based social workers and the community children and families teams to promote the work SPPA is doing. This is a positive step forward as the community based children and families teams can then use this as a way of monitoring family interaction where there have been issues in the past.

With regard to the Fathers Awareness Programme I have asked the facilitator, SPPA Play Practitioner Lynne Johnstone, if she would like me to join in if appropriate. She agreed that this would be good for the group and we both feel that it has worked well so far. I have been involved in the delivery of offence related programmes so I feel I can draw from that experience to enhance the Fathers Awareness Programme.

I think there has been a huge impact for some families participating in the play sessions, especially where there have been child protection issues. External Social Workers, when made aware of the play sessions, have taken advantage of them to monitor how the family interacts with each other. It has helped several who were first time mums (dads too) especially where they were given time to practise on the ‘baby dolls’. The baby massage sessions were well received and most of the mums could not wait to tell us about how effective they found it; the ‘baby dolls’ were used to build both technique and confidence.
One young mum in particular benefited a great deal personally, her confidence and self-esteem rose, which resulted in her volunteering to help in the community sessions.

Twice I have been approached by fathers in the play sessions who admitted they would normally be ‘up to all sorts’ within the prison, but they will not put themselves in a position where they may be sent to another establishment and lose access to these sessions.

Working in partnership with SPPA has benefited me and helped in my job. I already had a good relationship with most of the fathers in the scheme but I feel this has strengthened to the point where they have asked me to attend Child Protection Meetings with the Social Work Department. This demonstrates a huge amount of trust and a willingness to engage and I feel that their partners are starting to trust me as they are coming to ask for advice on a variety of subjects.

A key challenge is breaking down the barriers that some prisoners put in place to survive in prison. Lynne Johnstone has successfully gained the trust of the prisoners and their families. I think this is due to the fact that she does not judge the prisoners and also shares real life experiences with them.
We work in toddler groups in South Glasgow to provide shared play based experiences, promoting learning through play, positive parent and child relationships and awareness of the importance of a healthy diet and exercise for families.
I joined the group to give my son some kids time - to meet other children and have interaction with them, and for me to meet other adults.

It’s been great. They are all nice people and the group leader is so friendly with everyone, both the kids and adults. It’s lovely for me and my son to meet new people and make lots of new friends with children.

Since we’ve taken part in the workshops, we eat a lot more healthily as we’ve discovered foods and drinks we wouldn’t normally think about. We’re also far more aware of bad foods and drinks, and read labels on all drinks and snacks and tins. We eat lots more fruit and eat hardly any biscuits now. It’s been great learning all the new songs at the workshop as my son loves singing and dancing and now I know the words to far more songs than I used to.

I think more about making sure my child has new play opportunities. He loves drawing, painting and making things now and I love helping him when I need to. We’re out and about a lot now and go to the park. Both of us have come so far. I’m more vocal, before I wouldn’t have opened my mouth, I was far too shy. Now I can chat and give my opinion. I came here as a first time mum who was very quiet and new to all this. I’m so much more confident. I’m a committee member now and help with everything the group needs to do.

I joined to get some adult conversation, to meet other mums and for my boys to meet and socialise with other children.

I’ve met lots of new pals. We’re all really close which is great for us. My confidence and my boys’ confidence have grown because they’ve met and played with everyone who comes here. My boys just really played alone all the time. Nowadays they mix with all the children and the adults, and they’ll even let other adults help them. They join in so much better than they did before and learn so much from coming here.

They really loved the parachute play workshop, so now I take them to Soft Play and to the park. It’s been great as they both sleep so much better as they get lots more exercise and are playing at the same time. They now eat a lot more fruit and I don’t give them fizzy drinks anymore, they drink milk, water or even sugar free diluting juice. I watch what they eat and try and be as healthy as possible. They used to not join in with the other kids at snack time, but they do now. The other mums have helped me and my boys to get to this stage and I’m really grateful.

I feel more confident as a parent. I was so quiet and really a bit scared when I first joined and thought about giving up. Thank goodness I didn’t as look where I am now and look at my boys now. The SPPA Development and Support Officer gave me lots of information about the local support group, about getting DLA and carer’s allowance, and a wee holiday for us all. She also gave in hand outs to the group about my sons’ condition and the website details. Because of her help I applied and got all the benefits.

I think more about making sure my child has new play opportunities.”

Two parents told us why they joined a toddler group, and what it has meant to them and their children.
Supporting our members
In 2012-13, we supported the work of 1,049 members like Merry-Go-Round Playgroup in Auchterarder.

Our 1,049 members comprised of:

- 491 parent & toddler groups
- 320 playgroups
- 83 combined groups
- 75 all day care groups
- 25 under 5’s
- 9 out of school care
- 8 family centres
- 2 crèches
- 1 play scheme
- and 35 associate/individual members.

Information and SPPA Helpline

Through our information service and helpline we have given support to our groups on a variety of matters. These include constitutional queries, employment issues, health and safety matters, PVG checking, committee issues, medical insurance and financial issues.

An example from the SPPA helpline

A playgroup was being run in one venue under the auspices of the local authority Education Department. The Council wished to set up another similar group in a different venue and required insurance cover. As this was a second venue being used by the same management team, the Council wanted to know if any further membership payment would be due and if there was anything else that they needed to do.

SPPA’s insurance package for members is managed by RSA (Royal & Sun Alliance PLC). Our information service has dealt with many group enquiries regarding insurance cover and has responded in a timely, professional manner, which is demonstrated by the following example:

Help was required by a group to ensure it had insurance cover which included running a fund raising event. The local authority had specified that the group must have its own cover. SPPA looked into this issue swiftly and steered the group through what they needed to do.

The group’s Secretary was delighted with the help received: “Thank you very much for your prompt response, it’s much appreciated. It is great news regarding the insurance and we’ll start preparing a risk assessment prior to the event.”

Thank you for the very friendly and efficient way you handled my enquiry. It made the process so easy for us.

Childcare Information Service Co-ordinator

It was clarified that no membership payment would be due. All the paperwork was explained to them and the extra insurance cost, tailored to their requirements, was estimated. The payment for this was made over the phone using a credit card and SPPA linked all the paperwork up with their payment once it was received at the office.
Supporting a new group

Doodle Bugs in Macduff, Aberdeenshire, comprises three groups under one committee; the Bumps & Baby Group, Toddler Group and Messy 2’s Group.

The local SPPA Development and Support Officer worked with the senior Community Development Worker to support the formation of the committee and to set up the group in line with good practice guidelines. They joined SPPA, adopted the SPPA constitution and accessed the specialist insurance. Support was given by the Officer over the year. She attended committee meetings to ensure guidance was available at this crucial stage.

When the committee decided to raise funds to employ a member of staff to run the Messy 2’s, the Officer supported them through the recruitment process. The Officer is now supporting the new committee and the staff member. All three groups run well.

A group member commented, ‘We have found the help and support the Officer has given us over the last year has been invaluable. The committee did not know where to start and it has given us great confidence to know that we have someone to guide us in the correct direction.’

Communications and resources

We have continued to develop our communications with members and other stakeholders, sending out electronic news bulletins and posting information on Facebook. We have launched our new website with its dedicated Members’ Zone.

Publications such as the newly revised Effective Employment: A Guide to Good Employment Practice for Childcare Providers, Social Media Guidance, policies and Frequently Asked Questions are included in the Zone.

Effective Employment includes guidance on being an employer, recruiting and selecting staff, new employees, statutory rights, family friendly guidance and associated legislation. Although recruitment decisions are a management committee’s responsibility, having an SPPA Development and Support Officer to assist in the process in addition to using this resource, has been greatly welcomed by groups.

Over 21,000 visitors accessed our website over the past year, with almost 17,000 logging on for the first time.

A good employment guide is one of a number of free online resources for members

Facing a tax demand

A management committee was very alarmed to receive a demand for £600 from Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs. In a voluntary run group this amount of money is critical. The SPPA Development and Support Officer was contacted and after careful research, the Officer assisted the committee in making a successful appeal to HM Courts and Tribunal Services. The penalty was withdrawn.

Social media issues

There have been many requests for support and advice due to employees’ use of social media websites.

Management committees have sought advice on what is and what is not acceptable staff behaviour. One such case was when a staff member had brought their employer into serious disrepute as a result of postings placed on a website. Although SPPA’s new Social Networking Guidance has assisted groups, there have been incidents such as this in which crucial in-depth support has been needed and was given by their SPPA Development and Support Officer.

Local perspective: support on the ground

A good employment guide is one of a number of free online resources for members

Our quarterly magazine, First Five, continues to be a valuable source of news and features on policy, issues and practice in early years services. Where local authorities fund SPPA staff on the ground, they produce local newsletters which complement the face to face support.
As part of our ongoing commitment to quality assurance, our staff have benefited from continuing professional development; our in house electronic newsletter Communication Update and the intranet have provided all our team with essential information and guidance.

Working in partnership

SPPA has been represented on Scottish Government national multidisciplinary working groups and initiatives: the Early Years Task Force: Sub-Group on Changing Culture, Play & Risk Debate, Play Strategy; Early Years Collaborative, Play Talk Read Campaign, and on the SSSC’s Childhood Practice Development Group and the Coalition of Childhood Umbrella Organisations Mentoring Project.

We have worked in partnership with local authorities’ social work and education departments, community learning and development departments, third sector agencies and health boards. Partnership with funding bodies has sustained our support for our member groups through SPPA Centre services and direct support services in seven local authority areas. We have represented the organisation, our members and the early years voluntary sector interests, on childcare and community planning groups and with the NHS.

Influencing policy

We have informed and influenced the early years policy development agenda by meeting with Government Ministers and Officials and networking with other agencies.

Success on volunteers’ checks

SPPA successfully campaigned with the Scottish Government to secure free PVG membership scheme for volunteers working in early years. An unintended consequence of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme legislation that came into operation in 2010, replacing the former Protection of Children Scotland Act, was that thousands of parents and volunteers leading or working in pre-school groups, unlike their counterparts in other community settings such as youth work services, were excluded in the new legislation from Scottish Government Ministers’ offer to pay for all unpaid staff working in the voluntary sector.

Thanks to meetings and correspondence with Aileen Campbell MSP, Minister for Children and Young People, and Scottish Government officials, who supported the plight of the sector, this anomaly was finally removed with a complex legal change to the legislation. Free checks for volunteers will be reinstated this year.

Annual conference

One hundred and forty four delegates attended SPPA’s conference The Earlier the Better: Improving children’s life chances through early intervention and AGM which took place in Glasgow last October. With an opening address from Aileen Campbell MSP, Minister for Children and Young People, high profile speakers covered this subject from a national and local perspective.

The SPPA Volunteer and Group of the Year Awards were presented by Dr Hilary Jones, Breakfast TV Health Editor and Cool Milk Medical Advisor.
Financial overview

Summarised Accounts

Income and Expenditure for the year 1 April 2012 - 31 March 2013. The figures are the results for the Scottish Pre-school Play Association only. The subsidiary company, SPPA Direct Childcare Services Limited, did not trade during the year.

### Income

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### Expenditure

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Surplus for Year: 119,614

[Pie charts showing income and expenditure]
We are grateful for the support we have received from the Scottish Government Children and Families Directorate: Early Years Division and the Scottish Government Early Years Early Action Funding from Inspiring Scotland; local authority funding from Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Dumfries & Galloway, Fife, Falkirk, Glasgow City and Scottish Borders; funding from NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, NHS Tayside and the Cattanach Trust.

We are grateful to Jobs and Business Glasgow (formerly Glasgow’s Regeneration Agency) for help with our website redevelopment.

Corporate funders

We are grateful for donations from ASCO UK Ltd, Westerton UK Ltd, PK Hydraulics re Aberdeen support, Nexen Petroleum Ltd (Aberdeen), J Lewis Partnership (Aberdeen), Land Securities, Yorkshire and Clydesdale Bank Foundation, AMEC Group.

Our thanks go to Step by Step Educational Suppliers for their financial support of our national conference and donations of products for readers of First Five magazine, and Cool Milk and Mackay Corporate Insurance Brokers who have sponsored publications.

Sponsors of the Ignis Asset Management Women’s 10k

In-kind support

Ernst and Young
Scottish Power
SPPA wishes to thank Cool Milk and Mackay Corporate Insurance Brokers for their support in the production of this year’s annual review. Mackay Corporate Insurance Brokers is a trading name of Alan R MacKay & Co Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority.