A Guide to Early Years Scotland’s Services
Foreword

This guide has been produced to inform parents, providers and partners about Early Years Scotland and its range of services. The information highlights examples of current activity being delivered by Early Years Scotland. However, we appreciate that people and contexts differ in important ways and therefore to be effective, services and support must be flexible, tailored, planned and delivered in accordance with specific needs and situations.

Early Years Scotland has established itself as a leading-edge organisation with a sound and positive track record within the early years sector in Scotland. I am delighted to present this publication, which highlights the diverse range of services we deliver. I hope you will find it useful and informative as well as helping you to find local solutions for local challenges as you plan ahead. I also hope that this publication will pave the way for us to work in partnership, finding new and innovative ways to ensure Scotland’s children have the very best start in life.

Jean Carwood-Edwards, Chief Executive
Early Years Scotland

Mission

Early Years Scotland is committed to providing the very best start in life for every child in Scotland. As the leading national organisation that invests in our youngest children pre-birth to 5, we will deliver and support high quality Early Learning and Childcare for children and families across Scotland.

Vision

We will be the clear choice as the ‘one-stop shop’ offering help and advice for organisations and professionals providing, promoting or supporting quality Early Learning and Childcare. We will be a significant provider of Early Learning and Childcare predominantly for children and families experiencing disadvantage.

We will be, and be recognised as, a leading advocate for children in Early Learning and Childcare across Scotland.

We will build on our programme of direct support with young children and families and be well established in the delivery of a distinctive Early Years Scotland brand of family-focused Early Learning and Childcare.

We will have established a significantly improved position with regard to increased membership, number of local authority funding partnerships and other funding streams.

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.
About Early Years Scotland

Early Years Scotland is the leading, national organisation for children aged pre-birth to five. We are committed to providing the very best start in life for every child in Scotland.

There are two main strands to our work:

- We offer membership for Early Learning and Childcare settings (local authority, private and voluntary), including nurseries, playgroups, Local Authorities, college and university staff, individual students, individual practitioners and Parent and Toddler groups. Membership benefits include a helpline, curriculum and business support, policy templates, specialist insurance and legal advice, a members’ area on our website, regular e-bulletins and practitioner and parent magazines.
- Our qualified, professional staff also work directly with babies and children and their parents / carers in various settings including local communities, family homes and in prisons. Our work focuses on improving early learning and development through shared interactions and play.

Early Years Scotland also engages with policymakers on a regular basis to inform and influence local and national policy. We are increasingly developing and delivering a range of training and learning opportunities for the sector. As the number of hours of Early Learning and Childcare continues to increase, Early Years Scotland aims to ensure quality is not compromised.
Our Philosophy

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
- Support for children’s early learning and development
- Emphasis on enriching the home learning environment
- Inclusivity and capacity, capability, confidence building

At Early Years Scotland we believe that all children deserve the best possible start in life to allow them to thrive and reach their potential. We are aware however, that too many children are born into difficult circumstances which can have a harmful impact on their life chances. Poor living conditions, unemployment, and physical and mental health problems are just some of the issues that can create a stressful home environment and prevent a child establishing a strong, loving bond with their parents.

Developing the relationship between parent and child is a key focus of our services. Our Early Years Practitioners promote positive communication and social skills in children and parents through modelling consistent, positive behaviours. In line with the Growing Up in Scotland study’s findings that the home learning environment is crucial for young children’s development and later educational achievement, our practitioners also demonstrate the benefits of simple, low cost, no cost activities, encouraging parents to prepare materials and replicate activities at home.

How We Work

Our key responsibility is to support everyone who is engaged, directly or indirectly, in providing Early Learning and Childcare for Scotland’s youngest children. We are well equipped to make a positive difference to ensure that all children have the very best start in life, leading to a better future.

Everything that we do must be of the highest quality and completely in collaboration with our partners. Therefore, we endeavour to be exceptional partners who are open, transparent and always deliver in accordance with all commitments we make. Our determination to achieve our objectives and to continue to improve, means that we always strive for the highest standards to ensure that our contributions impact positively on the life chances of young children and their families.
Membership for Early Learning and Childcare Settings

Early Years Scotland offers the following categories of membership:

- Voluntary Early Learning and Childcare settings
- Private Early Learning and Childcare settings
- Local Authority Early Learning and Childcare settings
- Parent and Toddler Groups
- Combined Early Learning and Childcare settings and Parent and Toddler Groups
- Local Authorities that pay for all of their Early Learning and Childcare settings to be members: These Local Authorities will get 10% discount on membership fees for their Early Learning and Childcare settings and a training session for Early Years staff is included as an incentive
- Local Authorities
- Colleges
- Universities
- Individual Practitioners
- Individuals Students
- Voluntary Sector Organisations
- Companies.
Membership Benefits

Our membership benefits include:

- Magazines for practitioners
- Magazines for parents
- Website and dedicated members’ area keeping you up-to-date
- Range of sample policies for Early Learning and Childcare settings
- Dedicated support and information helpline
- Competitive insurance packages and legal advice helpline
- Discounted publications and resources
- Discounted rates for conferences
- Regular e-bulletins
- Free job vacancy advertising
- Briefing sheets on early years topics
- Training and professional learning opportunities for members.

Early Years Scotland provides support and information to voluntary, private and local authority settings with regard to:

- Curriculum
- Leadership
- Improvement Planning
- Self-Evaluation
- Inspection
- National and local developments
- SSSC (Scottish Social Services Council) Registration Processes
- Professional Learning and Skills Development
- Policies and Policy Development
- Partnership and Multi-Agency Working
- Financial Management
- Effective Committees and Governance
- Insurance
- Recruitment and Employment.

Supporting Early Learning and Childcare Settings

Where there are Early Years Scotland staff working in partnership with a local authority, organisational health checks and audits are carried out with settings and effective financial management is surveyed. This service provides face-to-face, personal, local support. This enables settings to establish and run their settings effectively, maintaining and improving leadership and management. This planned approach leads to successful, sustainable services within communities. All member settings also receive the full range of membership benefits as described above, and on the Early Years Scotland website: earlyyearsscotland.org

Training Opportunities

Early Years Scotland provides training opportunities for staff on the following subjects:

- Working with children under three years of age
- Effective Environments for two year olds
- Pre-Birth to Three National Guidance: Positive Outcomes for Scotland’s Children and Families
Early Years Scotland provides support and information with regard to:

- High quality two-generation shared play and learning experiences
- Supporting parents to increase both their own and their children’s levels of confidence and skills
- ‘Together we Can’ workshops led by Early Years Scotland practitioners that can later be led by parents in subsequent Parent and Toddler Group sessions
- Early learning experiences which can be transferred to the home
- Financial management
- Insurance
- Policy development and adherence to policies
- Effective management committees
- Maximising benefits and successful outcomes for children and families.

Providing Scotland’s children with the very best start in life is essential if we are going to achieve excellence and equity for all. Many parents are keen to contribute to the successful running of their local Parent and Toddler Group, but often feel they lack the necessary knowledge and/or confidence. Early Years Scotland staff understand this and support parents in many ways including conducting organisational health checks and audits and also assisting them to identify and explore potential funding avenues.

This support service enables groups to establish and run effective committees resulting in successful, sustainable community provision for parents and their young children. Many of these approaches and activities are then continued into the home, resulting in enriched home learning environments and improved outcomes.

All member groups receive a full range of membership benefits as described on the Early Years Scotland website. In funded areas of Scotland, our Early Years staff are on hand to offer support and advice.
Early Years Scotland’s Range of Services

The following programmes are currently being delivered by Early Years Scotland. Our services are flexible, tailored and planned for individual partners and families in order that they are as effective as possible.

If you are interested in finding out more about Early Years Scotland’s services listed here, or if you would like to talk to us about an idea for a different type of service, please call us on 0141 221 4148 or email: info@earlyyearsscotland.org

Parent and Toddler Group Improvement Programme

Using a partnership agreement between a Local Authority and Early Years Scotland, a programme is drawn up whereby an Early Years Scotland Early Years Practitioner works with a range of Parent and Toddler Groups, usually on a weekly basis for an agreed period of time (for example, eight weekly sessions). The central aim of this service is to improve the overall quality of experience and outcomes for the children who are mainly, but not exclusively, under three years of age.

As well as supporting groups in the ways outlined on page 8, Early Years Scotland staff work hand-in-hand with children and families on a continual basis, with a focus on building parental skills and capacity to improve, strengthen and maximise:

- Positive attachments and relationships between parents and children
- Early literacy and communication
- Shared interactions and approaches to learning
- Cost-free enriched home learning environments
- Healthy living
- The sustainability and effectiveness of Parent and Toddler Groups.

Stay and Play / Stay and Play PLUS

This service is planned, set up and delivered by Early Years Scotland, often in collaboration with partners. The central aim of Stay and Play is to provide shared play and learning opportunities for a small group of families with young children from birth to five in local community settings. Once a suitable venue has been identified, the one-and-a-half-hour sessions run once or twice per week.

Stay and Play and Stay and Play PLUS sessions are very similar. Both are facilitated by an Early Years Scotland Early Years Practitioner and are often located in areas of disadvantage. Stay and Play offers open drop-in sessions, designed for families who may be experiencing difficulties and wish to have some guidance, support and opportunities for networking with other families. Stay and Play PLUS, on the other hand, serves families who have been referred by other agencies such as health visitors or social work.

‘The children describe the group as going to their own big school. They are now mixing better with others.’
Nursery head teacher
All Stay and Play services aim to support and improve:

- Children’s social, emotional, cognitive and physical development
- Parents’ capacity to support their children’s development and learning
- Parents’ levels of confidence, knowledge, skills, motivation and communication
- Promotion of effective, positive approaches to managing behaviour
- Social contact and peer support
- Attachments, relationships and parents’ responsiveness to their children
- Active learning, problem-solving and growing independence
- Concentration, curiosity and social interaction
- Healthy eating and living
- Opportunities for signposting to other support services
- Effective transitions.

**Baby Massage**

Qualified and experienced Early Years Scotland Early Years Practitioners offer six or eight week courses in Baby Massage. As well as providing many of the benefits associated with Stay and Play, Baby Massage also facilitates:

- Bonding, closeness, secure attachments and physical contact
- Increased feelings and levels of love, responsive care and respect
- The parents’ ability to soothe and comfort their baby
- Increased levels of relaxation and quality of sleep
- The parents’ understanding of how to treat wind, colic, teething and distress
- The parents’ understanding of their baby’s body language and behaviour
- Enjoyment of one-to-one quality time between parents and their baby
- Increased knowledge and confidence around how to nurture their baby
- Learning about the importance of parent / baby communications.

The wide-ranging benefits extend well beyond the course itself. Health visitors sometimes offer this valuable service too.

‘I feel doing the tummy massage is helping my baby and gives me the ability to help and relax him, while having some one-to-one time.’

**Baby’s mum**
One-to-One Service – Supporting Individual Families

This service has been designed to provide support for families experiencing disadvantage or difficulty who will benefit from individual intervention. Working together can take place at the family home or in an appropriate setting, such as a community venue or nursery – whatever is more suited to the needs of the parent and child. Parents are involved throughout, and from the onset, are encouraged to think about the outcomes they wish to achieve.

The Early Years Scotland Early Years Practitioner supports the parent, encouraging and strengthening relationships, bonding, learning and interactions. The frequency and duration of sessions are planned around individual needs, preferences and circumstances. There is always an emphasis on facilitating transitions into group and/or mainstream provision. Such transitions are promoted and supported as a matter of priority to ensure that independence rather than dependence is valued and encouraged.

‘Both me and the boys are happier, we listen and talk to each other. I feel I can manage the boys in public now and I am not worried what people think of me.’

Mum in the One-to-One service, Dumfries & Galloway

Supporting Young Mothers and their Babies

This service has been specifically designed to support teenage mothers experiencing a range of difficulties such as poverty, bonding and forming secure attachments, substance misuse, social isolation, lack of confidence and positive parenting knowledge.

The young parents and babies, who are also receiving support from other service providers, attend a weekly session, which is led by a qualified and experienced Early Years Scotland Early Years Practitioner. During this session, positive relationships are encouraged and the parents are supported in appropriate ways to improve their knowledge and understanding of their role and also of child development and the importance of play, bonding and healthy living. The Early Years Practitioner models a variety of approaches and behaviours. The central aim is to improve babies’ life chances and, by intervening early, prevent or reduce the likelihood of the need for crisis intervention at a later stage.

‘The service fits the parents, not the other way around.’

Service Manager
Young Children Affected by Imprisonment

Early Years Scotland is currently working in six prisons to support the young children and families of prisoners. We recognise that the breakdown of family relationships when a parent is in prison can lead to a higher risk of re-offending and children possibly growing up to become offenders themselves.

Early Years Scotland works in partnership with Scottish Prison Service staff to support prisoners, their children and partners. Families are provided with opportunities to improve attachments so that relationships are more likely to stay strong, leading to more positive outcomes for the children.

The Early Years Scotland prison service can support families through the following interventions:

- Family Play Session
- Baby Massage
- Healthy Eating Sessions
- Fathers’ Programme and Fathers’ Forum
- Follow on play session in the community for prisoners on release
- Awareness raising sessions with prison staff and other agencies
- Signposting to other support agencies.
The Fathers' Programme involves the Early Years Scotland Early Years Practitioner working with prisoners to increase their knowledge and understanding of, for example, the importance of play, healthy living, positive behaviour management, communications, early literacy, child development and brain development. Within the Fathers’ Programme, prisoners also have the opportunity to engage in practical play experiences, building their knowledge and confidence when later playing with their child at the family visit time.

During Baby Massage, fathers and babies enjoy and benefit from the valuable learning experiences as outlined on page 11.

Feedback received from families and prison staff who have participated in the Early Years Scotland programmes, highlights the following benefits:

- Improved relationships between prisoners and their children
- Increased confidence and self-esteem, increased confidence and self-esteem and actively learning together
- Fun and laughter with loved ones in challenging circumstances
- Parents’ support for each other and developing friendships
- Stronger family relationships and reduced stress
- Improved play and learning experiences at home
- Parents more confident to access other services
- Improvement in children’s behaviour and parents’ ability to manage this
- Improved prisoner behaviour.

Parents also state the following benefits around increased knowledge and understanding of:

- child development
- the importance of play
- brain development
- the value and quality of time spent with their child
- children’s rights
- the importance of attachment and bonding
- the effects of stress on a child’s brain
- children’s health and wellbeing.
If you are interested in finding out more about the Early Years Services listed here, or if you would like to talk to us about an idea for a different type of service, please do not hesitate to contact us on 0141 221 4148 or info@earlyyearsscotland.org