Early Years Scotland
Strategic Plan
April 2017 – March 2020

The very best start in life for each and every child in Scotland

Early Years Scotland
Investing in our youngest children
What Early Years Scotland does

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.

Our key responsibility is to 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.
Early Years Scotland’s work can be explained as four strands:

1. **Delivery of services working with children and families together**

   Our range of *Stay Play and Learn* services offer a two generational, play-based approach where qualified practitioners encourage and engage with young children and their parents/carers to reduce the disadvantage gap by strengthening and improving confidence, attachments, interactions, shared learning and attainment.

   Our qualified early years professional staff offer these very popular services across a variety of local community settings including schools, community and church halls, nurseries, family homes and in prisons.

2. **Delivery of services for providers of Early Learning and Childcare**

   We offer a number of support services and membership benefits to assist a range of staff across the country who provide high quality Early Learning and Childcare in different settings. We also support parents to establish, run and improve Parent and Toddler Groups in local communities. Early Years Scotland membership benefits include a helpline, curriculum, inspection and business support, professional learning opportunities, regular magazines and bulletins, a members’ area on our website, specialist insurance and legal advice, policy templates and much more. We also offer membership to students, practitioners, colleges and universities.

3. **Delivery of high quality, relevant professional learning services for the workforce**

   In order to respond to requests from the workforce for high quality Early Learning and Childcare professional learning, Early Years Scotland delivers a range of learning opportunities for providers of Early Learning and Childcare, colleges, universities, local authorities and many more partners. As the size of the workforce is set to almost double by 2020, Early Years Scotland has invested in establishing an expert dedicated professional learning team who design, develop and deliver affordable, accessible, relevant high quality professional learning opportunities across the country.

4. **Delivery of advocacy and advisory services relating to legislation, policy and practice**

   We are committed to ensuring that we remain connected and fully engaged with developments, initiatives and debates on matters relating to young children across the country. As Early Years Scotland is a membership and service-delivery organisation, we have a responsibility to ensure that our children and members’ voices are represented at local and national level. A significant strand of our work therefore lies in informing, influencing, supporting and challenging early years legislation, policy and practice, to ensure Scotland’s children have the best start in life.
Context

Scotland enjoys a policy context for children that focuses on prevention and early intervention, an understanding of the importance of the early years and an acknowledgement of the key role that the third sector has in providing high quality innovative services for children and their families.

The Scottish Government has made a commitment to increase funded Early Learning and Childcare provision from 600 hours to 1140 hours by 2020. Early Years Scotland welcomes this expansion and unprecedented investment in Scotland’s youngest children. Experiencing high quality Early Learning and Childcare is a strong predictor of positive outcomes and improved life chances for children.

We know from a plethora of research evidence, that excellent early years provision, coupled with a rich home learning environment, can act as a strong foundation for improved educational attainment and employment, as well as better health outcomes, and lower levels of dependency on welfare benefits or criminal behaviours. In addition, high quality Early Learning and Childcare can help parents to engage with learning, training or employment opportunities, and assist them in developing a supportive home environment and effective parenting approaches.

Early Years Scotland believes it is well placed to support the Scottish Government’s expansion of the Early Learning and Childcare programme over the next three years, ensuring in particular that quality is not compromised, and that barriers for children experiencing disadvantage are removed.
Aspiration and Vision

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.

Vision
We will be the clear choice as the ‘one-stop shop’ offering help and advice for organisations and professionals providing, promoting or supporting high quality Early Learning and Childcare.

We will provide high quality services predominantly for children and families experiencing disadvantage through our distinctive Early Years Scotland brand of family-focused Early Learning and Childcare.

We will be, and will be recognised as, a leading advocate for children in Early Learning and Childcare across Scotland. We will have established a significantly improved position with regard to increased membership, number of local authority funding partnerships and other funding streams, to ensure that we can provide support to children, their families and to the sector.

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 five, we will deliver and support high quality Early Learning and Childcare for children and families across Scotland.

Values

We believe that it is our organisational responsibility to support everyone who is engaged, directly or indirectly, in the provision of Early Learning and Childcare for Scotland’s youngest children. We believe our specialist expertise places us in a strong position to ensure that all children can have the very best start in life leading to a better future. We consider everything that we do must be of the highest quality and in collaboration with our partners. In so doing, we endeavor 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 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.

We focus our collective organisational efforts solely on benefiting Scotland’s youngest children. As we develop and flourish together, we will become increasingly an organisation that staff feel ownership of, are proud to be part of, and where people want to work, participate and contribute to the early years landscape.
Strategic Objectives

**Strategic Objective 1: Working with Children and their Parents**

*We will tackle the attainment gap by providing direct support for 4000 children through an Early Years Scotland brand of family-focused Early Learning and Childcare.*

**Year 1:** We will provide direct support for 1350 children through delivery of services for parents and children together.

**Year 2:** We will provide direct support for an additional 1350 children through delivery of services for parents and children together.

**Year 3:** We will provide direct support for an additional 1350 children through delivery of services for parents and children together.

**Strategic Objective 2: Membership and Support for the Early Learning and Childcare Sector**

*We will build capacity across the expanding Early Learning and Childcare sector by increasing our Development and Support Service by 150 Early Learning and Childcare settings, and by increasing our total membership by 600 members to ensure Scotland’s children benefit from high quality Early Learning and Childcare experiences.*

**Year 1:** We will increase our Development and Support service by supporting 50 additional Early Learning and Childcare settings and increase our total membership by 200 members.

**Year 2:** We will increase our Development and Support service by supporting 50 additional Early Learning and Childcare settings and increase our total membership by 200 members.

**Year 3:** We will increase our Development and Support service by supporting 50 additional Early Learning and Childcare settings and increase our total membership by 200 members.

**Strategic Objective 3: Professional Learning for the Workforce**

*We will develop, design and deliver a new professional learning framework by securing an additional 15 new contracts to ensure Scotland’s youngest children benefit from high quality Early Learning and Childcare experiences provided by a highly skilled workforce.*

**Year 1:** We will design, develop and deliver the Early Years Scotland professional learning framework by securing an additional five new contracts, and we will review and assess next steps.

**Year 2:** We will expand and deliver the Early Years Scotland professional learning framework by securing an additional five new contracts, and we will review and assess next steps.

**Year 3:** We will deliver the Early Years Scotland professional learning framework and review and assess next steps by securing an additional five new contracts, and we will review and assess next steps.
**Strategic Objective 4: Advocacy and Advisory services relating to legislation, policy and practice**

*We will be recognised as the ‘go-to’ early years organisation through delivery of both our advisory and advocacy role for children and their families, and our members with regard to all legislation, policy and practice concerning young children, to ensure that Scotland’s children have the best start in life.*

Year 1, Year 2, Year 3:

- We will represent children and their families and our members by contributing to a minimum of five national and five local strategic working groups annually.
- We will represent children and their families and our members by responding to a minimum of three policy and/or legislation consultations annually.
- We will listen to and take account of our children and their families’, and our members’ voices, through our evaluations and a minimum of five surveys annually.
- We will feature positively in the national media five times a year.
- We will increase the number of Twitter followers, retweet statistics, Facebook likes and YouTube followers by 10% annually.

**Strategic Objective 5: Quality Assurance and Improvement**

*We will have in place an established process for improving quality in all aspects of our organisation to ensure that our contributions to improving the life chances of young children and their families are of the highest standards.*

Year 1: We will create and pilot a process for improving quality in Early Years Scotland.

Year 2: We will implement our bespoke quality system.

Year 3: We will review and assess next steps to ensure continued quality improvement.

**Strategic Objective 6: Funding**

*We will improve and extend our support for Scotland’s youngest children by increasing our income by 25% through a variety of funding streams.*

Year 1: We will achieve an average increase of 8% in funding.

Year 2: We will achieve an average increase of 8% in funding.

Year 3: We will achieve an average increase of 8% in funding.