



A Guide to Early Years Scotland's Services



FOREWORD

Jane Brumpton
Chief Executive
Early Years Scotland

We trust that you will find the information in this 'Guide to Early Years Scotland's Services' useful and informative.

Our organisation, established over 50 years ago, supports those who work for and on behalf of Scotland's youngest children from pre-birth to five years of age, and their families.

We provide membership and support for early learning and childcare (ELC) settings, parent and toddler groups, childminders, parents, carers, students, practitioners, colleges, primary schools, local authorities, voluntary sector organisations, companies, and businesses. Membership brings with it a variety of benefits.

As well as supporting our members and children and families through our advocacy and advisory support, we work directly with children and their families, delivering our unique Stay Play and Learn Services in areas where there is the greatest need. Services also include our Children Affected by Parental Imprisonment work and the Family Visitor Centre at HMP Low Moss.

Finally, our innovative Professional Learning Academy offers inspirational professional learning opportunities. We look forward to working with you.

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The Four Strands of Early Years Scotland's Work

Early Years Scotland is Scotland's leading national specialist organisation that supports our youngest children from pre-birth to five years of age.

Our fully qualified early years practitioners work directly with children and their families to deliver our unique Stay Play and Learn sessions in a variety of settings. We work in areas where children and families who have the greatest need, will benefit most from our services.

As a third sector organisation, we have been established for over 50 years. We are very proud of our long track record, supporting all of those who work for, and on behalf of, Scotland's youngest children.

There are four strands to our work:

1. Working Directly with Young Children and their Families

Our range of Stay Play and Learn services in communities across Scotland offer family-focused learning experiences to encourage and develop family relationships through a play-based approach. Our qualified early years practitioners engage with young children and their parents/carers to reduce the poverty-related attainment gap by strengthening and improving confidence, attachments, interactions, the home learning environment, transitions, shared learning and attainment.

We work in a range of prisons across Scotland facilitating programmes to support children affected by parental imprisonment. The Early Years Scotland Family Visitor Centre focuses on providing a welcome and safe environment for children and families, with a strong focus on providing vital family support.

2. Membership and Support for ELC Settings, Professionals, and Students

We offer a number of services and membership benefits for professionals who work for, and on behalf of, Scotland's youngest children. We also support parents to establish, run and improve unregulated groups in local communities.

Early Years Scotland advocates on behalf of the sector to ensure children and families have access to the services they need.

Our membership benefits include curriculum, inspection and business support, professional learning opportunities, regular magazines and members bulletins, a members' area on our website, specialist insurance, policy templates, access to our helpline and much more. We also offer membership to parents/carers, students, practitioners, childminders, local authorities, voluntary sector and national organisations, companies and businesses, ELC settings, parent and toddler groups, primary schools, colleges and universities.

Commitment to consultation with members is a priority and informs positive changes.

3. Professional Learning Academy

The pandemic has had a profound effect on all aspects of our lives and there is no doubt that it has changed our approach to offering and delivering career-long professional learning. Quality remains at the heart of provision for our youngest children and we maintain our commitment to offer diverse opportunities for all those dedicated to ELC, including professionals, local authorities, colleges, universities and partners, and parents.

Our offer of online professional learning was accelerated by the pandemic. The Online Learning Platform, made possible through funding from the William Grant Foundation, has proved to be a vital tool for those working with our youngest children. Geographical barriers will continue to be removed as we adapt to the changing learning needs of stakeholders. Increased engagement with virtual delivery has enabled the Professional Learning Team to develop multi-mode learning opportunities. As the sector adapts to this array of learning options, we are committed to the design, development, and delivery of affordable, accessible and relevant high-quality learning.

Facilitating the creation of collaborative learning communities across the country remains a priority and an adaptive approach embraced during the pandemic puts the Academy in an optimal position to achieve success and positive outcomes for all stakeholders.

The Early Years Scotland Professional Learning Academy is a creative and diverse 'Centre of Excellence'. It is a hub to support multiple partners and EYS activity.

**When we use the term 'parent' we include all main carers.*

4. Policy, Practice and Legislation: Advice and Advocacy

Early Years Scotland is 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.

Our Philosophy

Early Years Scotland's philosophy centres on the following:

- Prevention and early intervention
- Two-generation philosophy
- Emphasis on enriching and enhancing the home learning environment
- Supporting transitions
- Qualified practitioners as role models for children and parents
- Evidence and assets-based
- Support for children's early learning and development
- Inclusivity and capacity, capability, confidence building.

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

Developing the relationship between parent and child is a key focus of our services. 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/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 in collaboration with our partners. Therefore, we endeavour to be exceptional partners who are open, transparent and always deliver in accordance with all the 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.

Working Directly with Young Children and their Families

The following programmes are currently being delivered by Early Years Scotland. Our services are flexible, tailored and planned for individual children, 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.

Stay Play and Learn Services

- Community Stay Play and Learn
- P1 Stay Play and Learn
- Baby Stay Play and Learn
- 2 Stay Play and Learn
- Young Parent Stay Play and Learn
- Children Affected by Parental Imprisonment

What does a Stay Play and Learn session look like?

Throughout the session, children experience a plethora of play and learning experiences, and the parents are encouraged to be fully involved. Children and parents enjoy a healthy snack, engage in songs and stories, and the parents have the opportunity to give and receive support to one another about parenting matters. Our early years practitioners also offer informal and friendly support, and signpost parents where required.

An average session offers the following:

- Welcome and sign-in
- Free play and learning with a range of resources
- Supported art/craft, literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing or messy play activities with the parent and child together
- Healthy snack
- Shared play and learning activities
- Bookbug singing/rhyme or storytelling session.

What are the benefits of Stay Play and Learn?

The Stay Play and Learn model helps build parents' awareness and understanding of their children's learning and development, and increases their levels of confidence, knowledge, skills, motivation and communication. It boosts their capacity to appreciate the importance of engagement, attachment, relationships and their responsiveness to their children. It promotes effective, positive approaches to managing behaviour. It decreases social isolation and it provides opportunities for much needed peer support. Stay Play and Learn also aims to narrow the poverty-related attainment gap in Scotland; by the time a child is five, the gap between children from the most advantaged and most disadvantaged families is already 6-13 months in problem solving, and 11-18 months in expressive vocabulary. The effect of this on children's social, emotional, cognitive and physical development cannot be overstated. The benefits for parents and their children of playing and learning together in a friendly and stimulating setting, are transferred naturally into the family home and everyday life.

This kind of impact simply cannot be replicated in most traditional nursery arrangements, where at the moment, the majority of parents have no choice within the range of funded provision available, and have to drop their child and go. There is a level of 'officialdom' that can come with early learning and childcare provision that Stay Play and Learn sessions do not have, due to them being more informal and delivered by the third sector in local, familiar venues. For this reason, Stay Play and Learn sessions often act as a helpful stepping stone into full early learning and childcare provision.





Community Stay Play and Learn / Baby Stay Play and Learn

This service is planned, set up and delivered by Early Years Scotland, often in collaboration with partners. Essentially the central aim of Stay Play and Learn 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 two hour sessions are facilitated by our early years practitioners once or twice per week.

P1 Stay Play and Learn

P1 Stay Play and Learn is a unique service, which focuses on closing the attainment gap and aims to help improve the transition between nursery and primary school.

Early Years Scotland, in partnership with primary schools, offers parents the opportunity to attend shared play and learning sessions to support their child before, starting and during primary. These sessions are facilitated by our early years practitioners who deliver informal, play based sessions in primary schools with parents who are encouraged to participate fully in their children's

I am so glad my Health Visitor told me about this session, it is great to let my son have a little play with other babies and for me to speak to other Mums who are going through the same, making me realise I am not alone.

Parent, Baby Stay Play and Learn

learning from the start of school. This successful service supports a range of children and families across the central belt of Scotland.

2 Stay Play and Learn

Early Years Scotland 2 Stay Play and Learn (2SPL) provides early learning and childcare funded sessions for eligible two year old children to attend with their parent/carer. These sessions are available within venues across Glasgow.

The unique nature of our 2SPL service provides opportunities for intergenerational learning which enables parents to learn new ways of supporting their child's care and learning needs, leading to skills for learning and life.

My child is a real chatterbox since coming to 2SPL, I feel comfortable coming along knowing I'm not judged, it's a great place for me and my kid! **Parent, 2 Stay Play and Learn**

Early Years Scotland created and designed the 2SPL model based on the growing awareness of the importance of attachment and bonding for young children, and in recognition of the fact that separating parents/carers and children for longer periods of time may not be in the best interest of all families. Many parents of eligible two year old children state that they are not ready to leave their young child in nursery provision, and instead, wish to stay, play and learn together, in less 'official' venues such as our community settings.

Therefore we know, that for some children, simply providing a new pathway that separates them from their parents for more hours over a longer time than previously, may actually exacerbate the level of disadvantage being experienced, since the importance of attachment and bonding is not always to the fore.

By supporting an enhanced home learning environment, children's attainment and achievement can be improved. We support parents' understanding of the importance of play and help them to recognise and make the most of everyday learning opportunities.

Children Affected by Parental Imprisonment

We work in partnership with the Scottish Prison Service staff to support imprisoned parents, their children and partners. Families are provided with opportunities to improve attachments so that relationships can be maintained or improved, leading to outcomes that are more positive for their children.

The Early Years Scotland prison sessions can support children and families through the following support interventions:

- Pre-visit Session for children and families
- Family Play and Learning Session
- Baby Massage Programmes
- Mothers' Programme / Wellbeing Session
- Fathers' Programme and Fathers' Forum
- Awareness Raising Sessions with prison staff and other agencies
- Signposting to other support agencies.

The Fathers'/Mothers' Programme involves our early years practitioner working with imprisoned parents 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 both programmes, imprisoned parents also have the opportunity to engage in practical play and learning experiences, building knowledge and confidence when later interacting with their child at the family visit time.



During Baby Massage, fathers/mothers and babies enjoy and benefit from the valuable learning experiences as outlined on page 9.

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

- Improved relationships between imprisoned parents and their children
- Increased confidence and self-esteem, and imprisoned parents and children actively learning together
- Fun and laughter with loved ones despite challenging circumstances



I'm getting to see my wee girl. First time in 2 years and it will be her birthday the day she comes up. I've been telling my mum about the group and what we have been doing and making. I think it's helped.

Mothers' Programme participant

- 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.

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.

Family Visitor Centre at HMP Low Moss

The Scottish Government has a commitment to ensure all prisons in Scotland have a Family

Visitor Centre. The Early Years Scotland Family Visitor Centre is a place for families and friends to relax before their visit, and access independent and impartial advice and information to support prisoners' families. Early Years Scotland is working in partnership with HMP Low Moss and we are proud to provide this service for the benefit of children and families affected by imprisonment. Our staff within the Family Visitor Centre have experience working with children and families, and are available to assist with any questions no matter how big or small. There is free tea and coffee available, a play and learning area for the children, and a confidential family room for use if families need advice or just want a supportive chat.

I never knew about children's development and this has given me knowledge and understanding about my son's growing stage and helped me to interact more with him.

Fathers' Programme participant

Baby Massage Services: Community and Prison

Our early years practitioners offer six week courses in Baby Massage. As well as providing many of the benefits associated with Stay Play and Learn, Baby Massage also facilitates:

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

The wide-ranging benefits extend well beyond the course itself.

All Stay Play and Learn services aim to support and improve:

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



Supporting Young Mothers and their Babies

This service has been specifically designed to support teenage mothers experiencing a range of difficulties.

The young parents and babies, who are also receiving support from other service providers, attend a weekly session, which is led by our two early years practitioners. 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 practitioners model 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 further intervention at a later stage.

Membership and Support for ELC Settings, Professionals, and Students

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
- Individual Practitioners
- Childminders
- Colleges
- Universities
- Individual Students
- Local Authorities
- Voluntary Sector Organisations
- Companies and Businesses
- Primary Schools

If you have five settings or more, and take out Early Years Scotland membership for each setting, then you qualify for a 10% discount!



Membership Benefits

Our membership benefits include :

- Early Years Scotland: The Magazine for Early Years Professionals
- Parent Chat Magazine for Parents of Babies and Young Children
- Monthly e-bulletin
- Website and dedicated members' area keeping you up-to-date with early learning and childcare developments
- Range of sample policies for early learning and childcare settings
- Top Tips for Parents and Carers on early years topics
- Dedicated support helpline
- Insurance package
- Discounted publications and resources
- Discounted rates for the Early Years Scotland conference, events and professional learning
- Access to a wide range of free online publications
- Free job vacancy advertising
- Support to ensure that you are sustainable and manage your setting effectively
- Support for your setting on social media
- Access to Early Years Scotland conference videos.

Please visit our website earlyyearsscotland.org to view the full range of benefits that are applicable to each individual category.

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

- Curriculum and business support
- Leadership
- Improvement planning
- Self-evaluation
- Inspections
- National and local developments
- Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) registration processes
- Recruitment and employment
- Professional learning and skills development
- Policies and policy development
- Partnership and multi-agency working
- Financial management
- Effective committees and governance
- Insurance.

Supporting Early Learning and Childcare Settings

Where there are Early Years Scotland staff working in partnership with a local authority, direct support is available to member settings in relation to best practice and business sustainability. Our Development & Support Officers can provide valuable bespoke local support that can lead to successful and sustainable services.

Development & Support Officers

This Early Years Scotland Direct Support Service is designed to provide development and support for all voluntary sector managed early learning and childcare funded providers, private and funded partners, and has the following key objectives:

- Undertake business health checks with all committees and prioritise providers for targeted support.
- Advise providers on financial, business and management planning, to improve sustainability and assist in signposting external funding.
- Support providers with supervision and appraisals using robust policies and procedures.
- Support providers with safer recruitment of staff using robust policies and procedures, undertake Disclosure Scotland Checks, and support the Scottish Social Services (SSSC) registration and completion of Council workforce audit forms.
- Support committee members in understanding roles and responsibilities within their service.
- Support providers with self-evaluation of their service and the development of an annual improvement plan, using 'How good is our early learning and childcare?(HGIOELC)' and local documentation.
- Support committee members with the implementation of 1,140 hours early learning and childcare.
- Build relationships which provide mentoring and guidance to early learning and childcare settings to foster best practice.

Support for parent and toddler groups:

- Guidance on business and management issues to improve sustainability, and assist in applying for external funding.
- Support committee members in understanding their roles and responsibilities.

Supporting Parent and Toddler Groups within Communities

Early Years Scotland provides support and information for parent and toddler groups 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 early years 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
- Budgeting support
- 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 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 an enriched home learning environment and improved outcomes for children.



Professional Learning Academy

Early Years Scotland offers a range of professional learning opportunities to inspire, encourage and support your early years practice.



Early Years Scotland offers a diverse range of professional learning opportunities to inspire, encourage and support your practice, and includes both virtual and online professional learning opportunities as well as face to face opportunities.

As a specialist early years organisation we bring a wealth of early years experience to our professional learning events. Career-long professional learning allows you to stay informed in the ever-changing landscape of a sector which is experiencing rapid growth and development. Commitment to professional learning, reflection and personal development ensures that your knowledge of policy, practice and pedagogy is up-to-date and relevant. This means that your learning pathway will be underpinned by current legislation, the latest research and best practice shared by colleagues from across the sector, and will encourage you, your team or your

organisation to reflect upon and develop your early years provision.

All of our professional learning courses and events can be used as evidence towards meeting the standards for your professional body and will support Post-Registration Training and Learning (PRTL) for SSSC and the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) registration. In addition SSSC Open Badges, digital certificates recognising learning and achievement, are awarded for all our E-Learning courses, virtual and in person events.

Our professional learning opportunities can be delivered at a time and place to suit you; in-house, virtually, in your setting or at a centrally organised venue. Our E-Learning Hub provides a range of online courses to meet the needs of the sector and is regularly updated. Early Years Scotland members receive a discount on all Professional



Learning. The Early Years Scotland Professional Learning Academy provides opportunities for staff to engage in learning in a variety of ways.

E-learning Hub

Self study courses include Exploring Autism in the Early Years and Building Brains for Healthy Futures.

Collaborative courses include The Art of Open Ended Play, Involving and Engaging and Connecting with Parents.

Virtual Delivery Zone

Sessions from our own team as well as from specialists from across the sector and spotlight sessions from partners.

In Person Events

These are held either at our intimate Professional Learning Suite in our Granville Street offices or a central Glasgow location.

Our Professional Learning Guide, with more information about what we offer, can be found [here](#).

Conference and Events

Our own Early Years Scotland Annual National Conference is held in October in Glasgow for all those who work for, and on behalf of children across the country. We have introduced a streaming option for those who are unable to attend in person, to ensure equity of opportunity across the workforce and make sure we have a truly national reach. In consultation with our members, we address relevant and timely issues facing the sector and showcase national and international early years experts.

Early Years Scotland develops and supports a wide range of events and conferences nationally. We have recently, for example, supported the following key events:

- 30th ECEERA Conference Cultures of Play
- Children's Health Scotland My Health, My Rights

We are delighted to be a partner in the International Play Association Conference for 2023 Play: Rights & Possibilities.

We also support a wide range of conferences and events by providing keynote presentations, workshops and seminars on a variety of themes upon request.

Policy, Practice and Legislation: Advice and Advocacy

Early Years Scotland represents not only the voices of the ELC sector, but also the children and families we work with, in as robust a manner as possible. We ensure that policy and decision-makers are not only aware of priorities for our sector and children and families, but that these are listened to and acted upon. Early Years Scotland acts as a conduit between both our members and the children and families we work with, and policy and decision makers. Everything that the organisation undertakes in terms of policy development is fully reflective of the needs, ideas and concerns of those we work with on a daily basis – our work is predicated on the notion of ‘nothing about us without us’ – namely, that we will not claim to represent the sector or our families without first having spoken to them about their priorities.

Early Years Scotland is well placed to influence and support the Scottish Government, our range of partners, local authorities and our members, through positive, proactive relationships with a wide range of policy and decision-makers and stakeholders. The establishment and fostering of good relations with both those who make the decisions and those upon whom the decisions impact further supports our strategic aim of being the ‘go to’ organisation. This was particularly the case during the pandemic, where our reputation grew further due to the level of knowledge and expertise contained within our dedicated staff team. This reputation has continued, and we are involved in more and more policy work, both as an organisation and collaboratively.

Our organisation uses the voices of both our members and the children and families we work with to inform a range of policy areas pertinent to early years, through mediums such as written responses to Scottish Government consultations and Scottish Parliament Committee Calls for Evidence, as well as the provision of oral evidence at Committee. We have also participated in a range of specific research projects on issues such as gender stereotyping in the early years and young children’s mental health, wellbeing and happiness. We represent the early years in a variety of working groups at Scottish Government/local authority level, and participate in similar forums across

relevant organisations within the third sector. The team are kept up to date with developments around legislation, policy and practice and are supported to disseminate this both to members and to children and families.

We provide practical advice, assistance and signposting to parents across a range of key topics and areas. This focuses on areas such as income maximisation in the early years, ensuring that parents are aware of and supported to apply for any financial assistance, including the Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods and Scottish Child Payment, as well as any other social security benefits they may be entitled to. Assistance and guidance is also available around housing, education, employment, domestic abuse and health, although the areas in which support is requested is guided by the parents themselves. We also work with other agencies, where appropriate, in order to signpost parents to more specific, specialist advice.





Early Years Scotland
23 Granville Street, Glasgow G3 7EE
Tel: 0141 221 4148 Fax: 0141 221 6043
Email: info@earlyyearsscotland.org
Web: www.earlyyearsscotland.org

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