

Spring/Summer 2022

# Early Years Scotland

The Magazine for Early Years Professionals



# BECOME A MEMBER OF EARLY YEARS SCOTLAND



## WHO CAN BE A MEMBER?

- All Early Learning and Childcare Settings (Voluntary, Local Authority, Private) • Parent and Toddler Groups
- Combined Early and Learning and Childcare and Parent and Toddler Groups • Parents/Carers
- College Departments • University Departments • Primary Schools • Individual Practitioners • Individual Students
- Childminders • Local Authorities (Some local authorities purchase membership for all their Early Learning and Childcare settings)
- Voluntary Sector Organisations • National Organisations (other than voluntary) • Companies and Businesses

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP?.

### Helpline: 07498 843675

For information, support or advice about any aspect of Early Learning and Childcare, our members can call our helpline Monday to Friday 9.00am - 4.30pm.

### Website with exclusive members' area

Access free downloads, the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section, sample policies and much more.

### Magazines

Early Years Scotland publishes and sends two different magazines directly to members by post two times per year - one magazine for early years professionals and the other for parents and carers, called Parent Chat. At present, because of COVID restrictions the magazines are being distributed in digital form. All magazines are available to members on our website.

### E-Bulletins

Regular e-bulletins and surveys are sent to all members to ensure that they are kept up to date and to make certain we are aware of their views. We are the representative voice of the Early Years sector.

### Publications and Resources

Early Years Scotland publishes a number of publications on our website, some of which are free and others are for sale. Members log in at the members' only area (My EYS) to access free policies. We also offer Top Tips for Parents/Carers focused on a range of themes such as puppets and visiting the supermarket.

### EYS Professional Learning Academy

We offer bespoke professional learning sessions on request. We provide a regular calendar of Professional Learning opportunities in our Professional Learning Academy premises in Glasgow City Centre, as well as offering digital learning opportunities utilising our new online learning platforms.. We run conferences and seminars with discounted rates for members.

### Insurance

We can arrange excellent discounted insurance cover and legal advice for our members.

Early Years Scotland is determined that every child in Scotland should expect, and be given, the very best start in life. We know that high quality funded ELC provision for families is a major part of that pledge, and that what happens in children's early years is a strong predictor of their future.



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# Welcome From the Chief Executive

**A** warm welcome to our spring/summer edition. In this issue we believe that you will find that there is something of interest for everyone! We hear from three charities - Families Outside, Guide Dogs Scotland and the Child Brain Injury Trust. They provide information about support and training which I am sure you will find worthwhile.

We have continued our focus on the subject of wellbeing. Maintaining your wellbeing I'm sure you will agree is crucial and so this time we have turned our spotlight on the very important subject of the menopause.

On the food front we are pleased to tell you about the Wee Ones Weaning Well (WOW) programme which includes videos that give advice about introducing solid foods to a baby's diet, and our Top Tips for Parents/Carers gives information to help if you have any fussy eaters at home or in your setting. Following on from our updates from our sister organisations in England and

Wales on how they have been managing through the pandemic, we feature news from the organisations in Ireland and Northern Ireland. We also have a study which has looked at how COVID-19 has affected childminders and highlight the Scottish Government's plan - Our Commitment to Childminding in Scotland.

Our Professional Learning Academy is continuing to respond to the changing circumstances of the pandemic. A hybrid model of delivering our services has been developed which ensures that apart from attending in person, events on a variety of topics can be accessed online, for example, our Introduction to Child Protection.

You can read about how our Off to a Good Start project in Glasgow has been able to support children's oral health over the past three years, what extra support has been provided for families in our 2 Stay Play and Learn sessions and how we have been able to introduce sensory play for families. We are

pleased to feature our new free student Early Years Scotland membership category and share some students' feedback on the benefits.

We are delighted to bring you an update from Ms Clare Haughey MSP, Minister for Children and Young People and from our other regular contributors, Education Scotland and the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). We have our usual recommended books for early years professionals and for children, plus a special review of Dear ZOO by Leo, whose favourite book this is.

Looking ahead, it gives me great pleasure to let you know that our National Conference will be taking place on Saturday 3 September.

Please feel free to share the magazine far and wide with your colleagues, as we continue to work to help support early years staff throughout the country. Please, as always, keep safe and well.

**Jane Brumpton, Chief Executive**

# Policy matters

**Lorna Kettles, Policy Officer for Early Years Scotland, gives an update on the latest national policy developments and describes our response to them.**

The pandemic placed on hold proposed changes to legislation, policy and practice. The Scottish Government has now taken steps towards their development in the form of consultations - open for the public to respond to. We have produced responses, informed by the views of the early learning and childcare (ELC) sector and the children and families we work with.

## A National Care Service for Scotland

Following an independent review of Adult Social Care services, it was recommended that A National Care Service for Scotland should be created. The consultation proposed the establishment of such a body. Questions were posed around the incorporation of children's services into a new care service, given the complex landscape which currently exists between these and adult social care.

We made it clear that we support the creation of a system which allows for meaningful, positive transitions between children's and adult services. At present, the significant leap from children's social care into adult social care is disjointed, confusing and ultimately can result in poor outcomes. Our response also recognised the genuine concerns within our sector that the creation of the National Care Service will place early years solely in the area of care, which in our view, would be extremely detrimental to both the workforce and children and families. We believe that ELC needs to be viewed in a holistic way. It could also create divisions within the workforce, for example, childminders who are a vital part of our sector, may end up working under different frameworks and guidance from nurseries.

We expressed concern as to how ELC will 'fit' into the new care service is compounded, when considering the bodies currently involved in regulation and inspection for the ELC sector. This is further explained in our response to the Professor Ken Muir consultation outlined below.



## Professor Ken Muir Consultation on Education Reform

This consultation was an open invitation for anyone with an interest in Scottish education to engage in helping set the direction of travel for its future. As well as responding to this document, we were a member of Professor Muir's Practitioner and Stakeholder Advisory Group, which allowed for more in-depth discussion about the challenges and issues facing our sector and how the outcome of this process could provide support and improvement. Our full response can be accessed on our website. Our main areas of focus were as follows:

- CfE is not the only overarching document which informs the work undertaken within our sector. Our new national guidance 'Realising the Ambition: Being Me' underpins CfE and means that the dedicated and highly skilled early years workforce are guided by not only one but two extremely important documents.
- Both children transitioning to primary school and the teachers who take over their learning and education at this early stage in their lives would benefit greatly from a commitment to sharing good practice of pedagogy within ELC to the school environment.
- The OECD report, 'Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future', is weighted towards primary and secondary education. There is little

mention of ELC, and there is almost a presumption that anyone involved in a child's earliest involvement with CfE will be a teacher based in a school. The omission of any recognition of the importance of ELC can devalue the vital role played by Scotland's early years workforce, as well as the importance of supporting a clear learning continuum and skills progression from ages 3-18.

- There is a wide range of professional learning opportunities available to the early years sector, however, there is a need for clarity and equity of access.
- Currently, the ELC sector is subject to a series of standards and frameworks which have significantly increased bureaucracy, and this has become very challenging. We would therefore welcome the creation of a single inspection body which encompasses the skill set of education and care. It would be beneficial to have a single, professional, streamlined service, encompassing the skills and expertise of both the Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland, that would ensure quality and consistency, rather than two very different systems which run and inspect on care and education separately.

**Early Years Scotland will continue to monitor the development of both the National Care Service for Scotland and work on Education Reform. We will ensure that the voices of those we work with are reflected in any further input we may have.**

**Clare Haughey MSP, Minister for Children and Young People, gives an update on the latest developments for the early learning and childcare workforce**



# Professional learning modules



I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone working in childcare for your remarkable dedication and professionalism. Throughout the pandemic you have gone over and above to provide our children with high quality care and learning in the face of hugely challenging circumstances. In particular, the last few months have been more difficult than ever due to staff absences. The Scottish Government, and no doubt the children and families you work with, greatly appreciate all that you are doing.

To help us face the current challenges posed by the pandemic, it is as important as ever to take a LFD test twice weekly and to record your results when you do. It is vitally important to report your LFD test results whether the result is positive, negative, or void. It only takes a couple of minutes to report a result through [www.covidtest.scot](https://www.covidtest.scot). Reporting

positive results means that people will receive the advice and support they need. Reporting negative and void results helps public health experts to understand the full picture of COVID in an area, the spread of COVID-19 and the impact of the virus on the childcare workforce.

COVID-19 vaccination has played a vital role in minimising the impact of the virus and the likelihood of severe illness and hospitalisation resulting from it. I know that a very high proportion of ELC staff have already had both doses, and many more have already received their booster. I encourage everyone to get fully vaccinated as soon as possible and help keep you and your settings as safe as possible.

Our suite of free, online, continued professional learning modules are available for everyone. These cover a range of topics including

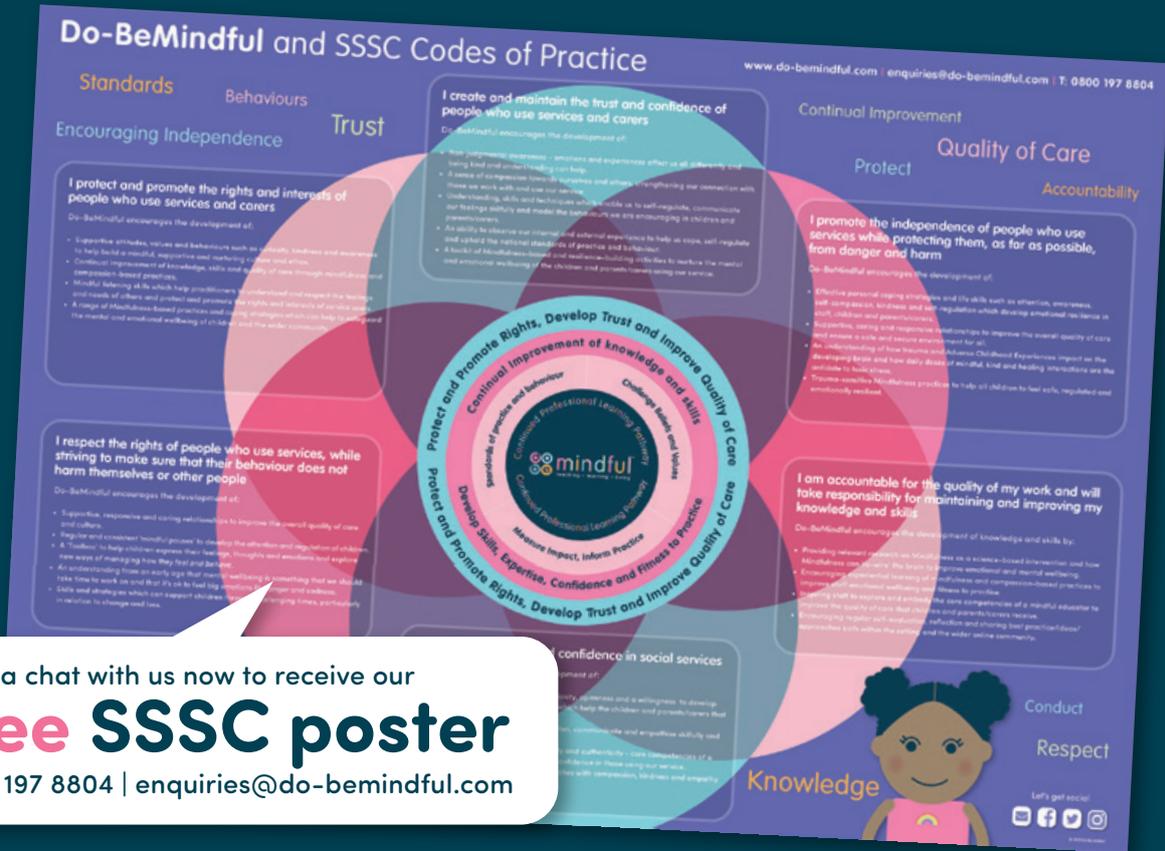
understanding social factors which may impact children, supporting parents to engage in child development, responding to ASN, and STEM. There is also a specific module entirely dedicated to 'Supporting the development and progression of children's early language and literacy', which may be of particular importance due to the impacts of the pandemic.

The courses each offer around 8-12 hours of learning, delivered by the University of the West of Scotland and the Open University. Full details about these learning modules and access to the courses is available from our website: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/training-modules-for-all-elc-practitioners/>

I remain ever grateful and inspired by the work everyone across the childcare sector is doing to provide a safe and caring learning environment for the children you serve.

# A Whole-Setting Approach to Wellbeing

Empowering staff, children and families through Mindfulness Education



Book a chat with us now to receive our **free SSSC poster**  
 0800 197 8804 | enquiries@do-bemindful.com

**10% off**  
 our whole-school  
 package if you  
 sign up before  
 31st March



“I've come to a frightening conclusion that I'm the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather...it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated”. Ginott



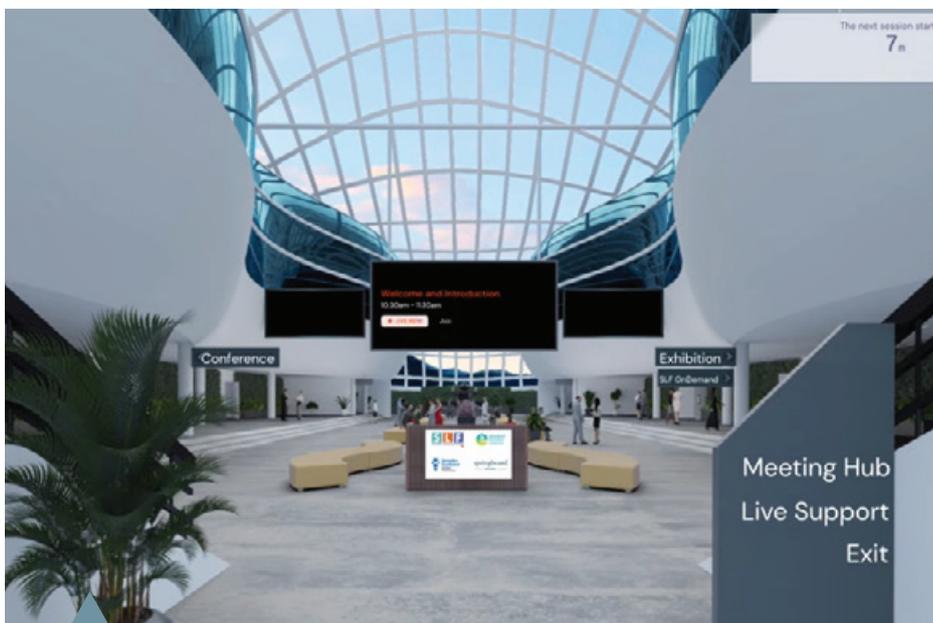
# Save the date for the Scottish Learning Festival 2022

Education Scotland is delighted to announce that this year's Scottish Learning Festival (SLF) will take place on Wednesday 21 and Thursday 22 September 2022. For the second year in a row the festival will be a virtual event, offering the education profession an amazing 3D experience over both days.

Each year Education Scotland carefully explores, reviews and adapts SLF to ensure it is an event that's current and inspiring. Last year's delegates enjoyed an entirely virtual conference and the first of its kind in the 19 years since SLF started. The event boasted 101 virtual sessions over three days, including inspiring key notes, carefully selected seminar sessions and critical conversations capturing over 10,700 engagements over two days. Many of these sessions had an early learning and childcare focus.

This year the early learning and childcare community will once again be able to enjoy the ever popular conference programme through a range of live and recorded sessions, delivered through a 3D experience — all from their own device. SLF is free to attend, and the conference programme is carefully developed to support career long professional learning, helping to keep professional practice fresh, up-to-date and relevant. You can also find opportunities to discover innovative practice, new resources and exchange knowledge and ideas with other professional colleagues and experts.

HM Chief Inspector of Education and Chief Executive of Education Scotland, Gayle Gorman said: 'I'm delighted to let you know that the Scottish Learning Festival will go ahead again this year. Last year's virtual event, although the first SLF of its kind, was a huge success and it was wonderful to see so many education professionals taking part in the sessions and providing positive feedback. This year's SLF will once again be the perfect opportunity for us all to reflect, discuss, network and be inspired.'



For the second year in a row, the virtual event will utilise 3D technology to provide a realistic conference experience



**“This year's SLF will once again be the perfect opportunity for us all to reflect, discuss, network and be inspired.”**

**Gayle Gorman, Chief Executive**

'SLF has always been a fantastic professional learning opportunity. Last year we saw practitioners and education professionals from all across Scotland take part in sessions from their devices as individuals and some establishments even took the opportunity to watch and discuss sessions as a group. Almost all of the sessions were recorded and available on the SLF online portal for several months before being moved onto the Education Scotland YouTube channel. Over 3,000 people accessed these on-demand videos. I would encourage you to sign up for this year's SLF as soon as registration is open, and I look forward to experiencing another exciting online event.'

Education Scotland is carefully developing the theme and programme for this year's event and further details about the theme and instruction of how to register will be announced soon. In the meantime, please save the date in your diary; Wednesday 21 and Thursday 22 September 2022.

You can also subscribe to the SLF Delegate e-bulletin for the latest news and information: <https://edscot.org.uk/p/LQE-ARW/newsletter>



# Visit Dug's Discovery Den



Dug's Discovery Den is an interactive collection of activities to engage the youngest learners with an interesting range of cross-curricular online and offline experiences. Mascot dog Dug is the star of the online resource, and he travels around the country each week visiting children in settings, homes and schools in different local authorities across Scotland. At the time of writing, Dug has visited almost all of the 32 local authorities and is hoping to complete his tour around the country this year. This real-life element has resulted in many stories of impact and connection of early years learners and educators across Scotland.

The resource is part of the National e-Learning Offer and was developed by Education Scotland in collaboration with e-Sgoil — Scotland's nation-wide provider of live and interactive online teaching and learning approaches. The National e-Learning Offer can be used by educators and learners

during any periods of remote learning or self-isolation. It brings together the best nationally available live events, webinars, recorded lessons and online resources from partners like West OS, e-Sgoil, Scholar and BBC Bitesize.

Ollie Bray - Strategic Director, Curriculum Innovation, Design and Pedagogy at Education Scotland said: 'The activities in Dug's Discovery Den encourage real-life play, movement, songs, stories, dance and outdoor interactions and experiences. It is underpinned by the principles of Realising the Ambition: Being Me - the national practice guidance for early years in Scotland, and has been well received since it was launched in November 2020.'

Dug's Discovery Den uses a platform called ThingLink on e-Sgoil's website and offers young children, across early years and primary one, an interactive collection of activities to inspire further learning

and exploration beyond the screen. Dug's Discovery Den is accessible for use within any learning setting, childcare or home environment and is available in both Gaelic and English. Dug's Discovery Den can be found at <https://e-sgoil.com/early-years>

Dug also has his own Twitter account to let his followers track his adventures. The spaces constantly adapt to reflect the young learner's world and interests. If you would like to register your interest in hosting Dug please contact him through Twitter @BeingMeWithDug

- Education Scotland also have a wide range of Realising the Ambition support materials available via <https://wakelet.com/@CaFTeam>
- Remember you can also visit the National e-Learning Offer search page to find out more about the range of resources available to support learning across the curriculum. Visit: <https://education.gov.scot/helo/>



# Pandemic perspectives from across the Irish Sea

## Ireland



**Greg Merrin, Information Officer of Early Childhood Ireland, describes how they have dealt with the pandemic.**

COVID-19 had an outsized impact on the Early Learning & Care and School Aged Childcare sector. Many practitioners will never forget the anxiety caused by rumours of sectoral closure orders and Leo Varadkar, the Irish Taoiseach, addressing the nation in March 2020, issuing an immediate closure of the sector. Practitioners were stoical and adaptable. Thought was immediately with children and families, and how learning could be facilitated at home. Some began to think ahead - what would ELC and SAC look like in the age of COVID-19?

The guidance and advice that was published through the Department of Children's First 5 website proved useful to practitioners. First 5, hosted resources for them. These included access to continuing professional development resources. There was a treasure trove of guidance, advice, tip sheets and frequently asked question documents. Guidance and suggestions were given for enhanced access to outdoor learning and play, public health and how to manage new and developing measures within settings.

Play pods were introduced. This was to manage outbreaks of COVID-19 amongst children and staff. These took some getting used to, with no absolute size or composition defined by the public health advice, meaning providers were to consider rosters, age groups, type of care and staff breaks whilst forming pods. Cover for breaks, illness and holidays was always an issue. Our sector was creative in solving these. Thought was given to how to keep pods separate, in some cases separations were

used but in other cases practitioners considered other methods — a simple explanation to the children often did the trick.

Practitioners considered mixed age pods, and their management. One member reported that the benefits included seeing young children engaging in opportunities which we may not have offered because of their complexity without the mixed-age grouping. Of note was a creative 11-month-old child mastering the art of threading. Some younger children seemed to be using language more with their older playmates than with their peers or adults in the setting.

Practitioners witnessed older children taking on a leadership role with a younger child, an opportunity they might not yet have had the confidence for within their own peer group. Older children had become teachers. Examples like these have driven the practitioners and provided motivation to other settings through dissemination in awards, blogs, social media and research articles.

One of the difficult changes, was restrictions around visitors to services. This had the potential to cause relationship difficulties between parents and practitioners, but also deprived children of parental support during the settling in period. COVID-19 reduced opportunities for settling in children to the setting. Practitioners inventively found new ways to go about this. Some settings asked parents to come out-of-hours, some were happy to facilitate settling in outdoors. In some cases, limited exceptions were made, but full contact tracing details were gathered, and PPE distributed to visiting parents. Practitioners become skilled in the use of video conferencing apps and

devices, using these to settle in children, show parents around services, ensuring parents could view Christmas or Easter shows in a GDPR compliant and COVID-friendly manner.

Practitioners in the sector can be proud of their work, keeping children and families safe. Challenges remain, and we can expect the situation to continue in flux. New scenarios and difficulties are emerging, particularly as regards to safety, funding, staffing and the winding down of financial supports for the sector. However, what can be certain is that practitioners will continue to find ways to educate, nurture and safeguard the nation's children throughout.

**The following are links to selected blog articles from our members sharing their experiences of how the pandemic impacted upon their work:**

- [www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/scealta-blog/beauty-partnership-challenging-time](http://www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/scealta-blog/beauty-partnership-challenging-time)
- [www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/scealta-blog/reopening-silver-linings-mixed-age-pods](http://www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/scealta-blog/reopening-silver-linings-mixed-age-pods)
- [www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/scealta-blog/dream-big-work-hard-stay-focused-surround-good-people](http://www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/scealta-blog/dream-big-work-hard-stay-focused-surround-good-people)
- [www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/scealta-blog/reopening-we-were-ready](http://www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/scealta-blog/reopening-we-were-ready)

## Northern Ireland



**Pauline Walmsley, Chief Executive Officer of Early Years - the organisation for young children, describes their work and how they have dealt with the pandemic.**

Early Years is the largest organisation in Northern Ireland working with and for young children. Since 1965 it has worked to promote and develop high quality, evidence-informed early childhood services for young children aged 0-18 and their families and communities. The membership encompasses providers across the community, voluntary, social economy and independent sectors.

Our local and international projects and activities relate to child focused community-based health and education; tackling social and educational inequalities; working with young Traveller children and their families; community development; working with children, practitioners, management boards, parents and carers to respect the various forms of difference in our society and addressing the impact of conflict on young children. We offer experiences and perspectives in our role as a representative, member focused organisation, funding administrator, and direct provider of frontline services through such facilities as Early Years Children and Family Centres of Excellence located in Newry and Fermanagh, and involvement at Lead, Accountable Body, Management Board,

Committee and employer levels in ten Sure Start projects, supporting children 0-4 and their families, across the region.

As CEO, I have been proud of the support of our Board of Directors and actions of volunteers, members, and staff who have worked collaboratively to provide safe, sustainable, and stable services for children and their families.

**Our only objective was to ensure that a safe, sustainable, and high-quality early education and care infrastructure in the sector remained at the end of the pandemic.**

Leading into 2020 we had planned to initiate a new strategic plan. We realised that our only objective was to ensure that a safe, sustainable, and high-quality early education and care infrastructure in the voluntary, community and independent sectors, remained at the end of the pandemic. I am proud that we have played a leading role in advocating for, and influencing, the implementation of COVID related temporary closure and sustainability support packages for services. We designed and built an automated grant management system that has facilitated the payment of over 12,590 individual applications totalling over £33.7m, and are working with NI Executive Departments to further explore a new sustainability scheme for Q1 2022.

The leadership provided by my Early Years and Sure Start management team has ensured the mental wellbeing, health and safety and productivity of our staff. Our Early Years Specialists,

Mentors and Advisors have adapted to the circumstances to ensure effective service, linking with members to understand their specific requirements. We have continued through a blended approach, encompassing virtual and on and off-site methods, as the latest advice, guidance, best practice and direction from government and other agencies has directed, to deliver several key supports to children, families, and communities - relating to Sure Start, a Pathway Fund, a 'Sharing from the Start' shared education partnership project, a 'Toybox' Traveller project, a bespoke mentoring service for Pre-School Education Programme (PSEP) groups, and the delivery of Level 5, 3 and 2 qualifications. Early Years is an innovative, agile, and resilient organisation.

Virtual technologies allowed us to establish provider online Forum meetings. These ran weekly, then fortnightly and monthly as the pandemic progressed. They enabled providers and key early years staff representatives to raise and discuss issues and information, to keep members updated, engaged, reassured and supported. Forums have brought the organisation and members closer as a partnership to address concerns.

We have maintained an active role in terms of advocacy, including input to an international Early Childhood Peace Consortium, contributing to relevant consultations from government departments and agencies, and providing leading inputs to the local COVID-19 response, as members of a Stakeholder Reference Group established by the NI Executive Departments of Health and Education.

I would like to thank our partners, sponsors, and funders for the support they have provided to ourselves and the sector.

# Making a Register for the future



The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) is consulting on proposals to make changes to their Register, processes and the qualifications

accepted for registration. Chief Executive Lorraine Gray invites early years workers and employers to have their say.

It's 20 years since the SSSC was established and during that time there have been lots of changes in the social work, social care and early years sector, so it's time to make sure we have a Register for the future.

Our proposals to improve and streamline the way people register aim to make registration easy to understand and make sure people know about the benefits and value of being registered and the standards, skills and qualifications needed to deliver high quality care.

The SSSC Register opened to day care of children services managers in 2006, who were followed by practitioners and support workers, with all day care of children workers required to register by 2014. There are currently more than 164,000 people working across social work, social care and early years on the Register.

## Key changes

There are some key changes for early years in the proposals.

➤ Reducing the number of Register parts to one new part for early education and childcare workers which would include anyone working in:

- day care or children's services
- residential school care accommodation services.



Photo: Freepik

The SSSC would like to hear the thoughts of ELC workers and employers on the proposals on changes to the Register

- Changing the time for workers to get registered when they start a new role from six months (currently 12 months under COVID-19 legislation), to applying for registration within three months of starting in the role.
- Bringing in a continuous registration period, which means workers wouldn't have to renew registration every three or five years. They would make an annual declaration instead.
- Reducing the timescale for registered workers to gain the required qualification from five to three years.
- Changing the information the SSSC makes available about registrants on the public Register on the SSSC website.
- Wider acceptance of SVQ units which are transferable across different sector areas, so qualifications are more flexible and may be accepted for different roles without the need to do another qualification that covers similar core skills.
- Consideration of introducing mandatory requirements for continuous professional learning (CPL), for example

things new workers need to gain during induction.

## Tell us what you think

The consultation is open until 14 March 2022 and the SSSC is also holding online events where you can learn more, ask questions and share your views. There are two events in March you can join.

1 March 2022, 1.00pm - 2.00pm  
2 March 2022, 10.00am - 11.00am

Get full details of the proposals, register for the events and respond on the Register for the future consultation page of the SSSC website [www.sssc.uk.com/future-register-consultation](http://www.sssc.uk.com/future-register-consultation)

## What happens after the consultation?

After analysing the responses, the SSSC aims to publish the results in May 2022.



# Protecting children and young people

In September 2021 the Scottish Government published the [National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland](#). The safety and wellbeing of children and young people, including unborn babies is paramount, and all children and young people have the right to be protected from all forms of harm and abuse. The Guidance, which informs the development of local multi-agency child protection procedures, processes and training, supports the care and protection of children across Scotland.

This document states that ELC providers are 'expected to have effective child protection procedures in place to ensure staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities, and to respond appropriately. So, what does this mean for you?

Everyone who works with children needs to understand how to recognise the signs and symptoms that could indicate a child is being abused, but also how to respond and make child protection referrals. All staff working with babies, children or young people are

Early Years Scotland runs a virtual event 'Safeguarding Children: An Introduction to Child Protection' four times a year. This session is for all staff or volunteers who have contact with children and/or families no matter how minimal, anyone who has not received child protection training previously or is in need of refreshed input, and anyone new to working with children and families in Scotland. More information on this session can be found [here](#).

Early Years Scotland can also provide in-house bespoke sessions, tailored to the needs of your staff and setting. Please contact our Professional Learning team at [professionallearning@earlyyearsscotland.org](mailto:professionallearning@earlyyearsscotland.org) to discuss further.

required to know and understand the Child Protection procedure for their own setting and know who their designated Child Protection Officer is.

All childcare providers need to consider the National Guidance and implement robust safeguarding policies and procedures for their setting, which outlines how to respond to and record concerns about children and young people.

If you are a manager of an organisation, you should make sure all staff and volunteers understand and can implement your policies and procedures. As a practitioner or volunteer, you need to be alert to the signs and symptoms of abuse, know how to report safeguarding concerns, and how to escalate your concerns if necessary.

It is your responsibility to ensure concerns are raised and responded to appropriately. Importantly, you should not be afraid to ask questions if you are concerned and endeavour to ask for clarification or query an explanation if it doesn't seem very credible.



# Early Years Scotland's free student membership

**H**aving Early Years Scotland (EYS) membership is a great support to all of our members no matter which category they fit into, but having membership can be particularly beneficial to early years students as this permits us to support them with their course and studies in various ways. We asked one of our College Department members if she felt our student membership met the needs of students. Here are the focus points of her feedback:

- It helps students with their Graded Unit Essays
- EYS material helps students with both their college work and placement work

- EYS information helps students with activity ideas
- EYS focuses only on Scottish content
- Some EYS materials have input from the Scottish Government and the Care Inspectorate

To assist students at the start of the journey into their new early years career, we believe it's important for them to receive as much support as they can from different areas and bodies of expertise, so offering free membership to all NC and HNC students in Scotland is the way in which we felt we could achieve this by allowing them access to our student benefits. We have always kept the cost

of student membership low to allow as many as possible to join, however, being mindful of the current staff shortage within the early years sector, we decided that this was the perfect time to introduce our free membership, which we were delighted to do last September.

To ensure the message about our free student membership was shared far and wide, we communicated with all Scottish colleges delivering early years courses and provided them with a link to pass out to their students allowing each to join as a member without cost. We are so pleased that hundreds of students have taken out our free membership. Our aim is for all eligible students in Scotland to sign up for this unique offer.



**We contacted some of our student members to make sure the benefits on offer are indeed helping them with their courses, and were delighted with the responses we received. Here we share some of their great feedback with you:**

*I feel very lucky to have free membership as a resource for course work. As I am under 18 I don't get any money so can't afford to buy resources as well as travel and lunch. The lecturer uses Early Years Scotland as a reference in classes which is really useful.*

*Free membership is really helpful. I have been reading about the upcoming professional learning courses which will be of much interest to me as extra courses will help with my course work. I attended a session with Early Years Scotland's Professional Learning Academy on Realising the Ambition, which was really useful to cement the learning we receive in college. I have also been looking at play sessions that Early Years Scotland offers within the community, and these look good not only from a student's point of view but as a parent these would also be beneficial.*

*I have seen the newsletters and the Professional Learning emails and they all look so interesting. I have attended a wellbeing webinar and I really enjoyed this as it gave me helpful ways to deal with things. I am looking forward to looking at the useful resources in MYEYS when my Graded Unit comes up as I am sure this will help me with my studies.*

*Having free membership is a good opportunity for students, as there*

*is so much information available on the website. It means we can look at other resources during down time that can give us extra interests in early years topics and not just the ones covered in the course work. Having the resources available will help us prepare for working in the childcare industry and placements.*

*As a mature student I very much appreciate the opportunity of free membership. I have found access to information and books invaluable and look forward to attending the seminars and courses on offer. This will help me greatly in my new chosen career. The information has helped me with the placement I have just started. My nursery is quite new and a bit low on resources especially books about the subject of outdoors, so I have been using the website for ideas and activities.*

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**Having free membership is great. The emails I receive are very informative and useful to my course. I recently used a quote from one email on play in an assessment.**

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*It's really good that we have free student membership. The site is very informative. It has been good for preparation for starting the childcare course and has given me information to prepare me for placement and the course.*

*The information I have learned is fantastic. We are doing children's rights and policies so having those links has really helped me with my assignments. I am a parent too and my boys love a bedtime story and my 7-year-old loves to read. At school he takes part in the First Minister reading challenge, so to get the chance to join Every Day's a Story Day is great.*

*Having free membership is great. The emails I receive are very informative and useful to my course. I recently used a quote from one email on play in an assessment.*

*I have already been reading through some of the articles to use as references, particularly for my play and development assessment. Along with this it has given me inspiration on a couple of topic ideas for my Graded Unit.*

*Not only does it help with our studies, but it also makes me feel part of a community of people that really care about early education and value the wants and needs of children, meaning that it has given me more of a drive and mental energy to do well on the course and become a good practitioner for the benefit of our young children.*

*I like that the EYS app has a section with all relevant documents in it. I also like that there are web links and virtual sessions on topics concerning children and young people, such as Supporting Young People with ADHD and Young People's Mental Health Throughout Lockdown.*

**These comments really capture the importance of the free student membership. We are thrilled that it has been so successfully received.**

**We will endeavour to have NC or HNC early years students from all our Scottish colleges take advantage of the free membership so if you are a college colleague or a student and would like to find out more, please email our membership team at: [info@earlyyearsscotland.org](mailto:info@earlyyearsscotland.org)**



# Inspection success for Treasure Tots Nursery

## History of the organisation

Treasure Tots Nursery was established in 2012. It is situated in The Hub Building in the Wellhouse community in the east end of Glasgow and is privately owned by us. We have both achieved Professional development awards in Childhood Practice Level 9 and have both been working in childcare for over 20 years. We have been in partnership with Glasgow City Council since January 2019. We have close links within the community working with the Wellhouse Allotments team, The Hub Café, and Connect at The Hub Sports Centre.

## Preparing for inspection

Our last inspection was in July 2018. Since then, we have developed a Strategic Plan and set targets for improvements. We have focused on staff training which has not only valued our workforce, but has provided opportunities for all to develop their personal skills. This has broadened their knowledge and expertise in caring for and educating the children. Three staff members have achieved their Level 9 in Social Services (Children and Young People). The staff team have completed a wide range of training voluntarily during lock down. The staff chose to complete online courses for their own personal development.

Since returning from lockdown staff have continued their personal development by attending child protection training, first aid and 'Let's go out to Play' training by Eco Drama, which is an outdoor training session on outdoor drama and storytelling.

We evaluate ourselves using How good is our early learning and childcare? Realising the Ambition, Children's Rights, and by meeting the principles of Getting it right for every child. All service users are involved in evaluating the service identifying areas of strengths and weakness.



**Treasure Tots  
Nursery Managing  
Directors, Carol  
Hassard (left) and  
Samantha Clarke  
(right), describe  
the Nursery's  
experience of their  
Care Inspectorate  
unannounced  
inspection visit**

## During inspection

The inspection was unannounced on 10th September 2021. The Care Inspectorate were testing the new Quality Framework for Daycare of Children, Childminding and School Aged Childcare. The inspection was part of a test. They evaluated the service based on key questions and quality indicators linked to the framework. Our inspector requested that the service sent an email to parents to gain their views.

### Our inspector looked at How good is our care and learning?

1.1 Nurturing care and support: She found children experienced care which was nurturing and personally responsive to their needs. Staff were knowledgeable about children's individual needs and effectively shared information with each other to promote consistency and continuity of care. Children's e-learning journals were meaningful, and children's progress easily tracked.

1.2 Safe and protected: The staff team were all knowledgeable of safeguarding procedures. All staff recently participated in child protection training.

1.3 Play and learning: The report stated that children were well supported to learn and develop through their play and learning. The children were offered exciting, stimulating, and interesting experiences which prompted curiosity, imagination, and collaborative play. The children were observed indoors and outdoors during the inspection. Children were leading their own play and learning.

During the inspection it was noted that we had appropriate infection control procedures in place to support a safe environment for children and staff, with



strict handwashing routines for both staff and children, and carers wearing face masks when collecting their children at the front door.

**Our inspector looked at How good is our staff team?**

**4.1 Staff skills knowledge and values:**

The inspector found the staff team to be highly motivated, worked well together and contributed to a welcoming environment for the children. They demonstrated a caring and nurturing support to families and each other. Staff proved to have a good understanding of development. Children experienced high quality care because staff were skilled, competent, and able to reflect on their practices and used higher order thinking skills when questioning children meaning that each child's experience was maximised to their own learning potential.

**OUR RESULTS**

**How good is our care and learning : 5 - very good**

**How good is our staff team: 5- very good**

**4.3 Staff deployment:**

Staffing levels supported delivery of very good care. A full complement of staff meant that children received one to one care when needed. This was particularly useful when new children were settling into the nursery.

Staff used technology to meet during lockdown and kept in touch with families through technology platforms. This ensured when we returned it enabled smooth transitions. The inspectorate noted that the senior management

team role modelled positive childcare practices that supported staff to provide sustained high-quality outcomes for children.

The inspection lasted from morning till mid-afternoon. The following day staff were individually asked to join a Microsoft Teams call with the inspector and management were given a list of information and evidence to email. We were then given a date for feedback over a Teams meeting.

**After inspection**

We were given very positive detailed feedback of the inspection from our inspector over a Teams meeting. This was followed by a written report which we offered to staff and service users to read by emailing a copy when requested. Details of the report were written in our monthly newsletter to parents and carers.



# Supporting children with a parent in prison

Overall, when someone is found guilty of a crime and sent to prison, society breathes a sigh of relief — the perpetrator is being punished, and the community is being protected. But the charity Families Outside understands that for the parents, partners, siblings, and children left behind, this presents huge challenges. Although innocent of any crime, they often feel they are serving a ‘hidden sentence’ of worry, financial pressure, stigma, and separation alongside the person in prison.

Around two-thirds of people in prison have children. It’s important that these children get the right timely support; relationships with a parent in prison often continue to be hugely important to them but these need to be supported in safe and appropriate ways. Families Outside provides families with information and support regarding any issues they might face due to a family member’s imprisonment. They help families:

- To understand what will happen at different stages of the justice process following a family member’s arrest.



- To stay in touch with a family member while they are in prison.
- To support children and young people at this challenging time, including arrangements for children to maintain positive contact with a parent in prison.
- To access the support available from the prison and other relevant organisations.

Families facing this situation for the first time rarely know where to turn for support. The website [www.familiesoutside.org.uk](http://www.familiesoutside.org.uk) provides information, tools, and resources for families and professionals working

with them to navigate their journey through the justice system. If you work with children and families in this situation, Families Outside can offer you CPDUK-accredited training designed to raise awareness of the impact of imprisonment, improve practice, and develop your knowledge and skills required when supporting families. Support is available from voluntary organisations like Families Outside, through prisons and Prison Visitors Centres such as the Family Centre run by Early Years Scotland at HMP Low Moss. Families Outside provides the national coordinating role for Prison Visitors’ Centres. It provides information about what is available to support families at the specific prison where their family member is in custody.

Professionals working with a family affected by this issue can contact the Helpline for information about how best to support them on 0800 254 0088 or email: [support@familiesoutside.org.uk](mailto:support@familiesoutside.org.uk) Monday - Friday 9am - 5pm training@[familiesoutside.org.uk](http://familiesoutside.org.uk) to enquire about forthcoming training dates.

# Life is full of surprises!

**Janet McLaughlin tells us about her journey from being a parent at Early Years Scotland play sessions, to becoming a volunteer, and how it helped her to return to work.**

I first came to Early Years Scotland's 2 Stay Play and Learn (2SPL) service in Barmulloch Community Development Company (BCDC) as a parent with my youngest child, Amber. The sessions were four hours and looked just like a nursery setting so I thought it would help Amber with the transition to nursery.

At first, I was apprehensive about coming along as I thought it would prevent me from getting a nursery place, but I was reassured that it wouldn't and as we were eligible for the sessions, we started coming a few days a week. The staff in the sessions were lovely and really helped us both settle in. We learned all about the importance of play and the team would bring lots of different experiences and resources to the session that I could copy at home. I really saw Amber thrive for the few months that she attended and although COVID restrictions were in place and meant the inside venue couldn't open we would come along to the outdoor sessions and take part there.

Michele Doull, Early Years Scotland's Head of Professional Learning, approached a group of us and invited us to do a course that she was running. She explained that although further study is really valuable and can be a stepping stone she understood how it was a daunting experience for us. Those of us that took part completed the SQA Unit - Personal Development: Self and Community. This is a Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 5 Unit which focused on personal reflection and development to then plan and implement a project. We chose to help in the planning and delivery of food parcels, which was invaluable as it was when COVID-19 restrictions were at their highest. It let us support so many families in our community and we were supported with the modules by Michele. It really allowed us to support the families but also let us experience some personal growth too.

When Amber got her nursery place, I had mentioned to the practitioners that I was worried about what I would



**“ I was able to help plan some of the sessions and suggest changes and bring new ideas and it really helped build my confidence. ”**

do with myself while she was there. I didn't want to be bored or sit about the house but didn't have the confidence to go back to work yet either. That's when Early Years Scotland approached me about becoming a volunteer with them. I knew the community and many of the families who attended so I felt so much more comfortable. I was able to help plan some of the sessions and suggest changes and bring new ideas and it really helped build my confidence.

Then last summer a job as a Community Centre Assistant came up in BCDC and I was encouraged to go for it by friends and families. Of course,

having been out of work for a while I was nervous about going for an interview and particularly as it was online, something I'd never had to do before. I didn't need to worry as they made me feel really at ease and I was so pleased when I was offered the job. I've been there since September 2021 and I'm really enjoying the challenges and love that I'm in the centre of a community I've always been in. It's great that I still can be involved and see the families from 2SPL and the team, and I've been able to use the skills and experience from my time as a volunteer and help out at the parent and toddler group that runs from the centre now too. I've also begun studying and I've begun doing an SCQF Level 4 course in Child Development, Relationships and Parenting at Glasgow Kelvin College and Rosemount Lifelong Learning.

It's been quite a journey and an exciting two years and I really think becoming a volunteer helped build up my confidence and helped me return to work.

**• If you are interested in becoming a volunteer with Early Years Scotland, please email [info@earlyyearsScotland.org](mailto:info@earlyyearsScotland.org) for more information.**

# How has COVID-19 impacted Scottish Childminders?



**Beth Davies is a third year PhD student from the University of Edinburgh, who is passionate about social justice, inclusion, equality, and diversity.**

This article presents the findings from a mixed-methods study which explored the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Scottish childminders and their services. Eighty-two childminders participated in the survey, eleven of those within semi-structured interviews. Data was gathered during the COVID-19 pandemic as a way to identify the true experiences and perceptions of Scottish childminders. Prior studies have noted the decline in the number of active childminders in Scotland, which emphasised the need for this research, especially after statistics by the Care Inspectorate acknowledged that there had been a 22% decline in the number of active childminders in the last five years.

Therefore, it is important to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and present any factors that could contribute to a further decline in the number of active childminders in Scotland. However, with a relatively small sample size, caution must be applied as these findings may not be a true representation of the entire childminding population.

This study reveals a number of alarming findings, most especially that 74% of participating Scottish childminders felt that their jobs had not been secure throughout the pandemic, and 53% agreed that their future plans to continue childminding have changed. Particular factors associated with these findings include the issues

they had experienced with general and financial support, and the expectations of childminders.

It was evident that the participants were more satisfied with the level of support provided by the Scottish Childminding Association than any other professional body, despite identifying that some childminders had joined Unite the Union due to feeling as though they were not being heard by professional bodies. Several factors were linked with these feelings, including the government announcements and updates which were raised repeatedly throughout the survey and interviews. In line with this,

## Childminders feel that they have not been treated considerably during the pandemic

45% of participants asserted that the government announcements were not made enough in advance to allow time for childminders to make changes and adapt their services.

Interviewees acknowledged their issues with the support provided by professional bodies including the Scottish Childminding Association, the Scottish Government, local authorities, and the Care Inspectorate. Participants highlighted that there were no coherent guidelines and that each professional body would report their own interpretation of the updates. A recommendation from the findings

is to have childminding specific legislation, policies, and procedures to make childminding requirements easily identifiable, but also written in a simplistic language to allow for greater accessibility.

In addition to this, participants had voiced their dissatisfaction with the Care Inspectorate more than any other stakeholder, noting that there was not enough coherency or regular communication, and their regulations lack consistency. The findings suggest an inconsistency; that some childminders are receiving feedback during inspections that does not match that which other childminders were given, and some had received regular contact with their inspector during the pandemic, but others had not. These findings suggest that perhaps some are receiving more support than others, which does not appear to be fair as assistance should not be selective and all childminders should be receiving the same level of support. A full audit of the inspection policies for childminders through the Care Inspectorate would be especially beneficial for the childminding profession, and to further investigate the findings from this study.

All interviewees felt that childminders have not been treated considerably, claiming that they have been forgotten, undervalued and that their efforts throughout the pandemic have not been recognised. Notably, their responses suggest that the stakeholders' expectation of childminders are too high, and do not give enough consideration to the fact that childminders have sole responsibilities unlike other childcare services who have a team of staff who manage the duties of the business. Furthermore, while the financial support schemes were appreciated,



62% of participating childminders agreed that Scottish childminders had not been provided with enough financial support and felt that being excluded from the transitional support grant was a reflection of how there was a failure to recognise childminders' key role during the pandemic.

Further findings have acknowledged that the childminding community have experienced hardship throughout the pandemic and as a result, there is serious concern for the viability of the childminding profession in Scotland. The data identify that their individual experiences have been impactful, and the many factors mentioned here and more, have contributed towards a decline in their own mental-health and wellbeing. Childminders deserve this recognition, just as any other profession who were considered keyworkers during the pandemic, and unless this action is taken, it remains uncertain what the childminding profession will become.

## Our Commitment to Childminding

The Scottish Government published Our Commitment to Childminding report in January 2021, setting out how Scottish Government, local authorities, partners and childminders would work together meaningfully and in genuine partnership to deliver improved outcomes for childminders, while continuing to ensure that a high quality experience for children is maintained. Our Commitment to Childminding covers four key focus areas:

- Investing in the development and growth of the childminding
- Supporting childminding as a choice - availability and access to childminders
- Promoting childminding as a choice - helping parents and carers to make informed choices
- Business sustainability and support for childminders

The Plan included a series of detailed actions which the Scottish Government and partners are taking forward. It has been supplemented by actions agreed during the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and will be updated further to reflect actions being taken in response to the 2021 SCMA Audit.

A Monitor Group has been formed to advise and support this work as appropriate, with membership from the Scottish Government, Care Inspectorate, Scottish Childminding Association, COSLA, ADES, Unite Childminding Group, Care and Learning Alliance, and Early Years Scotland.

Visit: [Our Commitment to Childminding](#)



# How Guide Dogs Scotland changes the lives of children with a visual impairment

**G**uide Dogs Scotland celebrated their 90th anniversary last year, and over the years have expanded their services to offer much more than life changing dogs, and to support children with a vision impairment, starting from the moment of diagnosis. The charity is the largest employer of specialists dedicated to helping children and young people with sight loss learn, grow and access the same opportunities as everyone else.

Last year, the charity piloted [My Time to Play](#), play sessions for children aged 0-4 who have a vision impairment. The sessions are designed to provide the kind of early intervention with very young children that can have a positive lifetime impact, as well as provide information, support, and networking opportunities for parents. It focuses on five key areas of the child's development:

- Concept development
- Sensory skills
- Fine and gross motor skills
- Self-help and independence
- Communication skills

The sessions are run by Habilitation Specialists, who are qualified to work with children with sight loss. They help children and young people with a vision impairment develop the skills they need to navigate the world around them as confidently and independently as possible. Each child is individually assessed beforehand, using both the developmental journal and Oregon assessment tool, and Guide Dogs staff keep in touch with any other professionals providing ongoing habilitation to the child.

Lisa Petrie, Head of Children, Young People and Families at Guide Dogs said: 'Discovering a child has a vision impairment can be a worrying and



My Time to Play are play sessions for children aged 0-4 who have a vision impairment. Here, Alfie plays with with a sensory toy during a virtual session

confusing time for families. Every year we help hundreds of families build their skills, knowledge, and confidence, and provide tailored support that is right for each family's specific needs. Small adaptations and innovations can really

**“ I found the group very beneficial as a parent trying to get to know other parents in similar situations. It was quite emotional the first week to hear the other parents' stories and to learn they have gone through similar situations too. The content of the group was excellent, and Fergie enjoyed it and engaged with the sessions really well. I wasn't sure how virtual delivery would work for him but Guide Dogs staff made it fantastic! Carly: Parent, Shetland.**

support families to help their children to live the life they choose.'

This free service will help children with sight loss aged from birth to four to develop a broad range of skills through play in a group setting, with each of the seven sessions based around a sensory story and including songs, movement, and related activities. Initially the sessions ran online, and at the end of 2021, a block of seven sessions were hosted in Edinburgh and Hamilton. The team are keen to hear from families who would be interested in attending, to help with their planning 2022 locations. If there is not a location near the family, there will be an online option available. Extensive free resources are also available on Guide Dogs Scotland's website for parents to use at home, or professionals, including [sensory](#)

[games](#) and [songs with actions](#).

Additionally, Guide Dogs may be able to support children of all ages with a vision impairment with their other services, including:

**My Life Skills:** Specialist habilitation support to help children navigate the world around them and explore the world with confidence.

**CustomEyes Books:** Large print custom-made books tailored to individual requirements (font size and type, line spacing, paper colour and more), all available at the recommended retail price.

**Family Events:** Events hosted at a variety of exciting venues, offering families the chance to relax and have fun, as well as meet other families with similar stories.

**Buddy Dogs:** Friendly, well-behaved pet dogs which help improve the self-confidence and well-being of children



Guide Dogs Scotland provides a Buddy Dogs service for children with a vision impairment

with a vision impairment, available for children aged 4+.

**Technology grants and sensory toys:** Advice to help choose the right assistive technology or sensory toys to best reflect the child's age and development stage. Grants are also available to support their purchase.

Guide Dogs Scotland accepts self-referrals and professional referrals, as long as professionals have permission to share details. You can call Guide Line on 0800 781 1444, email [children@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:children@guidedogs.org.uk) or a visit the website: [www.guidedogs.org.uk/children](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/children)

If you would like more information on Guide Dogs Scotland services, to request leaflets or arrange input with your staff group of professionals, please contact [Emma.Brown@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:Emma.Brown@guidedogs.org.uk)

• [Hear more about My Time to Play via a short interview on RNIB Connect.](#)

# Menopause matters

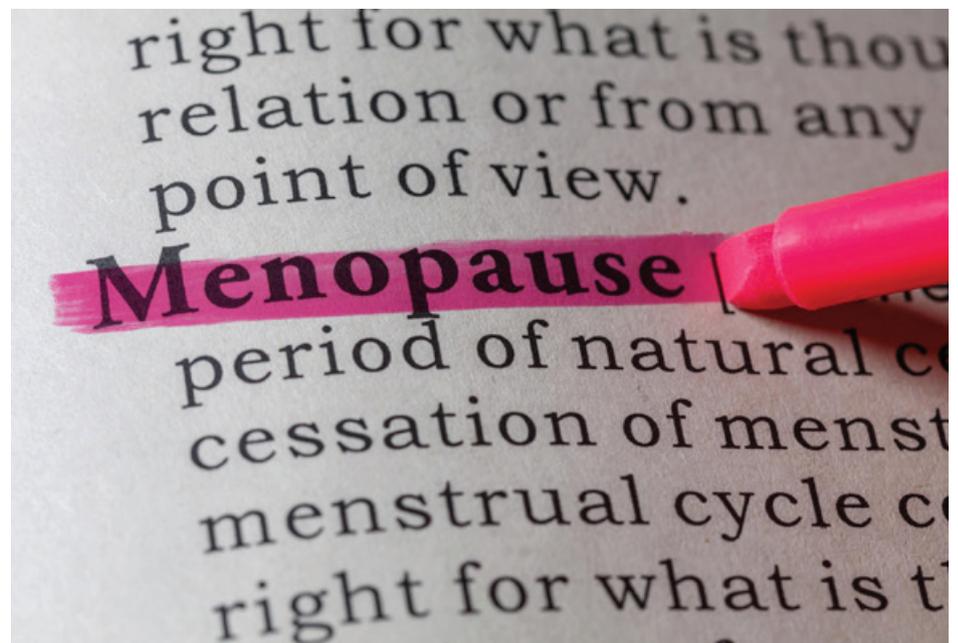
*'Women's health is not just a women's issue. When women and girls are supported to lead healthy lives and fulfil their potential, the whole of society benefits.'*

So writes Maree Todd, MSP, Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport in the Scottish Government's Women's Health Plan: A plan for 2021-2024. The aim of the plan is 'to improve health outcomes and health services for all women and girls in Scotland.' This of course includes the menopause.

In the plan, Dr Heather Currie\* comments, 'Menopause affects all women and yet many feel unaware of and unprepared for the range, severity and impact of symptoms, and of treatment options.'

The good news is that not only is the Women's Health Plan working towards improving services but that there is a lot of very helpful information about the menopause available online. In particular there are the excellent NHS Inform website and the award winning Menopause Matters website which are well worth visiting.

• Visit: [www.menopausematters.co.uk/index.php](http://www.menopausematters.co.uk/index.php)



• Visit: [www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/sexual-and-reproductive/the-menopause/overview-of-the-menopause/menopause](http://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/sexual-and-reproductive/the-menopause/overview-of-the-menopause/menopause)

\*Dr Heather Currie, MBE MB BS, FRCOG, MRCGP, DRCOG, MRCGP, is a Gynaecologist and Associate

Medical Director, Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary. She is Founder and Managing Director of Menopause Matters Limited, a Trustee and past Chair of the British Menopause Society and Co-editor of Post Reproductive Health, the journal of the British Menopause Society.

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T: 0115 9725005

E: [info@allmyownwork.co.uk](mailto:info@allmyownwork.co.uk)



# Family Support for 2 Stay Play and Learn

**Last summer our Policy Officer, Lorna Kettles, began to offer support and assistance to those attending our 2 Stay Play and Learn sessions in Glasgow. Here, she tells us how this engagement has benefitted children and families.**

While volunteering to cover sessions as part of our 'Get into Summer' programme last year, it became clear that the parents and carers who come along to our 2SPL services would benefit from some additional support across a range of topics. Our dedicated early years practitioners had worked hard to build strong, trusting, and caring relationships with families and, as such, were able to identify who required assistance and at what level.

Since that time, I have been providing practical advice, help and signposting to parents across Stay Play and Learn

on a weekly basis. This has focused on areas such as income maximisation in the early years, ensuring that parents are aware of, and supported to apply for any financial assistance, such as 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 have also been provided on housing, education, employment, domestic abuse, and health, however the areas in which support is required has been very much guided by the parents themselves. Alongside the early years practitioners and project management, I have also worked with other agencies in order to signpost parents to more specific, specialist advice.

The offer of support has, to date, been well received by those

attending. Parents have been supported to maximise their family's income, as many were unaware of the full range of financial support available to them and apply for social housing. I've been able to provide practical assistance around advice about returning to work or choosing not to return to work following maternity leave, engaging in volunteering, and getting into work. I am extremely lucky to have been able to build positive relationships with families due to the bonds already established by our early years practitioners, which has in turn meant that parents and carers have felt comfortable enough to share and disclose information in a safe and trusting environment. I look forward to developing this aspect of my role to further support the amazing work that our early years practitioners do!



# Supporting oral health across Glasgow

**F**rom 2019 to 2021, through the receipt of a grant which was awarded from the Oral Health Community Challenge Fund, our Off to a Good Start project has provided support to parents and carers across Glasgow (neighbourhoods) to become more knowledgeable and confident in developing positive parenting practices in oral health and family nutrition. Early Years Scotland practitioners have facilitated play based early learning experiences in these communities through 'Together we can' sessions within parent and toddler groups and Early Years Scotland Stay Play and Learn sessions for children and families, cascading important key oral health messages to families raising parental awareness of their primary role in supporting their child's optimal health and development.

These sessions have supported parents and carers to achieve improvement in their family diet, oral health, toothbrushing routines and increased physical activity for children within the home environment, with an intended aim to reduce tooth decay in the early years. Through participation in the programme, children and families have had the opportunity to make healthier choices to their diet by recognising the impact that sugar can have on their teeth, and they have gained a better understanding of good oral health and dental care services.

As the project was delivered during the COVID-19 pandemic our planning always had to be flexible and in line with the Scottish Government guidelines for 'Organised activities for children'. Therefore, in Year 2 we adopted an approach that was responsive and flexible to our service

users' needs and developed the programme to include outdoor Stay Play and Learn sessions across Glasgow's parks and, where that was not possible, we reverted to online sessions. Our online sessions meant that many more children and families the length and breadth of the country could join in with the activities, reaching a wider audience with our messages.

## Project outcomes

### Outcome 1

To increase parents' confidence and skills to provide good daily oral health routines for their children.

### Outcome 2

To support families and children to adopt healthier and more active lifestyle choices.

### Outcome 3

To raise parents' knowledge of dental care services to increase children's dental registrations and attendance.

## Activities and service users' feedback

### Our focus

We focused on delivering key oral health messages in our work and communication with children and families. We recognised the need for early intervention support and offered guidance to support an uptake in dental registrations to reduce tooth decay for our youngest children, whilst providing a service that families wanted to participate in that was fun, educational and within a relaxed environment by learning through play.

### What our service users said

'The time Early Years Scotland spent with our toddler group was very beneficial to us. The weekly activity blocks you delivered gave us the structure to our normal casual classes. We looked forward to each week with the children and parents enjoying and learning new things. I remember the week there was a lot of information on the board about sugar in certain products and for the mums and grans to be able to see this plainly with how many spoonfuls of sugar there are in each product, made us more aware of what we were putting in our bodies and shocked some of us. The children loved making the play dough with the



## We focused on delivering key oral health messages in our work and communication with children and families

clove oil, the smell reminded us all of the dentist. Overall, the information and fun games and ideas you gave us, provided us all with a really good outlook on not only our own oral health but the health and oral health of our children and what we do for them can impact positively, especially from this young age before going to nursery and school, they will have a basic knowledge of how to look after their teeth.'

'As a toddler group we have benefitted greatly from Dawn's input and support as an early years practitioner. Dawn is a natural and whatever she brings in terms of activities, from role play to oral health sessions, playdough fun and much more, is relevant, fun and educationally appropriate. Her passion to support children and their carers at the early stages is evident, practical and professional. We always welcome her visits to our toddler group, and she has a wonderful rapport with children, parents, and our volunteers. Thank-you!'

'I am happy the dentist is back open as he's never been to the dentist, and I want them to check his teeth'

'I am taking my kids for a check-up today. He's never been, and she's never been great and hasn't been for over two years and I am worried how she will be.'

• Watch Conrad's story:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=usGhjjxSuLk>



# Embracing change and challenge



## Early Years Scotland 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 the way we work. We are delighted to slowly and safely, and in line with current restrictions and guidance, start to plan once again for in-person events in the Early Years Scotland (EYS) Professional Learning Academy. We are also developing a 'hybrid' model of delivery, with 'roomers and Zoomers', which will enable us to continue to expand our reach across Scotland, as well as meet the access needs of all practitioners. All our virtual and in person events can be explored here.

The sector continues to experience significant challenges and there is no doubt that the resilience, commitment, and dedication of staff has been, and continues to be invaluable for babies, young children and their families. As the pandemic was changing lives, we saw the launch of the new practice guidance *Realising the Ambition: Being Me*. The guidance 'builds upon the original principles and philosophy of Pre-Birth to 3 and Building the Ambition. The new guidance retains the relevant content from the previous guidance which it replaces, extending and strengthening it in line with current

research and evidence about how children develop and learn'. Education Scotland, 2020

Opportunities and the ability to engage with the guidance varied greatly across the sector as practitioners navigated operational and personal challenges. The desire within the sector to connect with the guidance was unquestionable but for some it was not possible.

A key message of these professional learning sessions is captured by Sian Neil of Education Scotland; the purpose of *Realising the Ambition* 'is to help deepen practitioner

understanding and guide their actions and interactions. It is not intended to be used as curriculum guidance or a developmental checklist. It provides information about what children need from us, what we need to do at each of three broad periods of their development’.

The willingness of this staff team to embrace the guidance in the midst of a challenging situation was hugely commendable and is reflected in this quote from Paulo Coelho: ‘When we least expect it, life sets us a challenge to test our courage and willingness to change.’

For some, engaging with learning online can be a challenge but we are proud to have supported many colleagues in the sector to engage with this mode of learning. Funding from the William Grant Foundation, coupled with the pandemic, accelerated our plans to offer online learning. We now have a dedicated area in our Professional Learning store for online courses: the E-learning Hub. We are excited and proud of all our courses, but particularly our Collaborative Courses as we believe they strike a unique balance between self-study and guided learning. These innovative courses take place over a number of weeks, with an

“ I really enjoyed the course and although I felt a bit nervous at first about joining the discussion forums, they have been a great way to connect to others on the course. ”

### Collaborative Course Participant

early years expert on hand throughout to support users’ engagement with content and other colleagues, through moderated forums and weekly live webinars.

Our recent Collaborative Course The Art of Open Ended Play explored how to develop a highly engaging and creative environment for children and

offer children opportunities to express themselves freely and creatively, not bound by pre-set limitations. One element of the course which inspired the imagination and practice of participants was the section on The Art of Tinkering and Putting STEM into Practice. One practitioner response read: ‘I will be introducing more tinkering to the environment using nuts and bolts and various other pieces of materials. As an Eco School I will ask parents to donate broken clocks, bikes etc. to allow discovery and exploration or creation of something new.’

Collaborative Courses can be scheduled and tailored for local authorities and private, voluntary and independent settings (PVI) on an individual basis, as we recently did for Argyll & Bute Council. The overwhelmingly positive feedback we received demonstrated how this style of delivery and learning fits in with people’s busy lives while supporting the professional connections that are so important to all of us.

We would love to hear from you to discuss how we can support your setting or authority. Please contact us at [professionallearning@earlyyearsscotland.org](mailto:professionallearning@earlyyearsscotland.org) to explore your individual needs.

## Realising our training ambition

**Gowanlea Nursery, Glasgow, an Early Years Scotland member, is an excellent example of this position within the sector. Siobhan Gillies, Nursery Manager, shares an insight into the nursery’s engagement with Early Years Scotland’s Professional Learning Academy in relation to Realising the Ambition.**

As part of our staff appraisals in 2021 we could see that although we had some in-house sessions within bubbles, staff across the board were lacking in confidence using Realising the Ambition. After some discussion it became clear that due to the release date of the guidance coinciding with the beginning of the pandemic, we had not had an opportunity to meet as a whole staff team to read and process the document. This led us to request a training session with Early



Years Scotland (EYS) that would support our whole staff team in understanding the document.

Positive discussions with the EYS team provided excellent opportunities

to understand exactly what it was that we hoped to get from the sessions. EYS then tailored the course to suit our specific needs. The delivery of the course was great as it put everyone at ease, and all staff regardless of their experience could become involved in the discussions. Staff fed back that they felt very comfortable speaking out, spoke highly of their experience and they were not afraid to say they didn’t know or understand anything during the sessions.

The staff’s confidence at all levels has improved greatly and we are now confidently working with the document as a team.

I would absolutely recommend this to any nursery team who are feeling unsure and looking to improve their knowledge and boost their confidence in implementing Realising the Ambition.



# Taking sensory play to families



**Nicola Flinn, Early Years Scotland Early Years Practitioner, describes the creation of some innovative play sessions.**

At the beginning of the pandemic Early Years Scotland made the decision to continue with ongoing projects and aimed to continue to deliver sessions to families. As we were unable to run our usual Stay, Play and Learn sessions we delivered our sessions via Zoom. This enabled us to provide baby massage and Bookbug sessions. However, to provide a more inclusive play approach to our families, our early years practitioners came up with something

a little bit different and created our sensory sessions.

The practitioners developed activity information sheets and made up sensory packs. With the support and funding from our generous funders Comic Relief, Renfrewshire Council and Charles Gordon, we were able to purchase low cost sensory items and make our own sensory ribbons at a lower cost than buying premade ones. Their great support enabled us to supply each of the families with their own pack which we delivered to their door. The packs included the following sensory resources: a foil blanket, bubbles, sensory ribbon, feathers, coloured scarves, rattles and empty sensory tubes.

Once the families had received their home learning pack, we would

meet every week on Zoom for a group sensory session which was led by a qualified early years practitioner. Using the sensory props, we would show the parents different ways to use the items whilst incorporating this into a fun singing session, creating that inclusive group environment from the comfort of their own home.

There are many benefits to sensory play. It helps to develop other aspects of learning, for example:

- Using a foil blanket can help to develop the child's 'tummy time' as the senses are stimulated with the texture colour and sound of the blanket, which is a great way to distract a baby if they don't normally enjoy this.
- Using the sensory ribbons and coloured scarves provides the child with

bright colours to focus and concentrate on. You can see this happening to babies by looking out for when they follow the colours and patterns with their eyes and head movements.

➤ We would show examples of how to fill the empty sensory tubes with various everyday items such as dry pasta to make a noisy shaker, water, food colouring and oil to make a lava lamp effect, and by adding some black and white contrasting items together for younger babies, such as black and white ribbons, buttons, elastic bands etc. that can be found at home. The reason we suggest adding this contrast is because younger babies are able to focus more on black and white and high contrast patterns. They provide great visual stimulation for the eyes and focus.

➤ Children love to play with bubbles, and this can be a great way to develop gross motor skills as they aim to pop the bubbles, as well as oral motor skills while blowing the bubbles, which can help to develop the muscles in the mouth which are used to speak.

➤ Using the maracas, we would sing and make music together while showing different ways to observe our children's reactions to stopping and starting, for

## The parents are enjoying finding new ways to interact with their babies and seeing them react and develop using the sensory props

example, by singing 'shake and stop' while shaking the rattle fast and then suddenly stopping, and watching the children react to this and communicate with their parent or carer through this activity of response and reaction.

➤ The feathers can be used to encourage interactive play, for example, parents can use a feather as a prop whilst singing 'round and round the garden' and tickling their child's hand, foot, and tummy. Their child may respond to the texture of the feather by giggling and laughing.

Since returning to our indoor Stay Play and Learn sessions, we have continued to provide the sensory sessions by creating a small sensory area with our printed activity cards, and allowing the families to explore this area on their own as well as being guided through different ways of how to use the sensory props.

We provide a baby massage session which we have changed a bit after seeing how successful these sessions were online particularly with our baby massage parents. Within our Renfrewshire and South East Glasgow sessions we have now introduced a mix of both. We start the session with a short singing sensory session followed by the massage session. The early years practitioners who have been implementing this have noticed that parents are developing more confidence with their babies. They are enjoying finding new ways to interact with them and are appreciating seeing them react and develop using the sensory props. The parents are given a bag each week to use, and at the end of their block of sessions they are given their own bag to take home to continue this home learning and to have fun with all the family.

## Win Alice Sharp's Eco Build a World from TTS

TTS, suppliers of high-quality educational resources, are delighted to offer one lucky reader the chance to win an Alice Sharp's Eco Build a World worth £149.99. Build a World is a beautiful, engaging, and open-ended addition to small world play.

Developed with award-winning and internationally respected early years specialist, Alice Sharp, this collection of open-ended, environmentally conscious, easy to connect loose parts can be used for a plethora of STEAM, construction, small world, inventive and imaginative play scenarios. The pieces can be configured, placed and joined in different ways to create all kinds of locations, sculptures and pathways. This unique array of resources is amazingly versatile so that the child is very much the architect of their own play.

For your chance to win an Eco Build a World, email your name, address and name of setting (if applicable) by Friday 25 March 2022 to [gwen.garner@earlyyearsscotland.org](mailto:gwen.garner@earlyyearsscotland.org). The first entry drawn at random will receive it.

As a member of Early Years Scotland, you can also take advantage of a discount when you order resources through TTS. You will qualify for 10% off all orders using code EYS10, and 15% off one order using code EYS15. For more information visit the TTS website <https://tts-group.co.uk>

The winner of the 4 Light Up Phones was Nicolle Saunders from Dumfriesshire.





Photo: gpointstudio @Freepik

# Getting the WOW factor!

**T**he first two years of a child's life are the best time to encourage a positive, healthy, interactive approach to food and eating.

An exciting new programme of Weaning guidance and advice was recently launched in Dumfries & Galloway. Wee Ones Weaning Well (WOW) includes a set of eight short videos that give parents really clear messages and practical advice about introducing solid foods to their baby's diet. The videos provide answers to questions that many parents want to know and show how to prepare meals, snacks, and drinks to complement breast or bottle feeding. The videos were developed by a partnership involving A&E Health Improvement Team, Health Visitors and the local Dietetic Team.

Elaine Lamont, Public Health Improvement Lead for A&E explains. 'Before beginning this work we spoke to parents and carers to get their ideas about the content, length and approach we should take. They told us about some of the questions they had and



anxieties they had felt with previous weaning experience, and we have tried to capture all of this in these easy to follow clips. People don't need to have great cooking skills or lots of equipment and we've tried to use basic everyday ingredients. We have also included Easy Read versions of the recipes so that they are accessible to all.'

Katie Squires, Project Development Officer added, 'Throughout the development of Wee Ones Weaning Well we worked with professionals from Health Visiting Teams, Dietetic Teams, the Scottish Government, and the Young Parents Group to ensure all information

was evidence based and up to date. We wanted parents to know the information was trustworthy and reliable, to ensure the comfort and safety of their Wee One.'

There are two ways to access the Wee One Weaning Well series. The first is to access it via the YouTube Channel DGHSC and look for the playlist Wee Ones Weaning Well. The links for the recipes are found in the videos. These will open the DGHSC webpage. DGHSC is Dumfries & Galloway Health & Social Care Partnership. Visit: [WOW Week Introduction - YouTube](#)

The second way is to download the free Grow Well in D&G app which contains information on pregnancy, weaning, tasty recipes, and physical activity. Download Healthzone UK from the App Store/Play Store. Once downloaded, open the app and search Grow Well in D&G and find Wee Ones Weaning Well under the Weaning tab.

Users' thoughts and comments about the Wee Ones Weaning Well series are welcome. Please email your feedback to [dg.healthychildfeedback@nhs.scot](mailto:dg.healthychildfeedback@nhs.scot)

# Top tips for parents and carers: **Fussy eaters**

**M**any children go through phases of refusing to eat certain foods; this is particularly common in young children but can occur at any time. It is often a child's way of exerting their independence and testing the boundaries and is a normal part of growing up. This 'common fussy eating' is often frustrating and stressful for you as a parent, but rarely causes any serious nutritional, medical or growth problems, and is a phase that children grow out of.

Fussy eaters need a lot of exposure to get comfortable with new foods. Think about what texture and flavour of foods your child likes. Do they like a lot of crunchy foods? Use that to your advantage.

## Ten top tips to help your fussy eater

1. Give your child the same food as the rest of the family but remember not to add salt to your child's food. Check the label of any food product you use to make family meals. Accept it will be messy - make sure you have plenty of bibs to hand and even a messy mat under the highchair.
2. The best way for your child to learn to eat and enjoy new foods is to copy you. Try to eat with them as often as you can.
3. Give small portions and praise your child for eating, even if they only eat a little.
4. If your child rejects the food, don't force them to eat it. Just take the food away without saying anything. Try to stay calm, even if it's very frustrating. Try the food again another time.
5. Don't leave meals until your child is too hungry or tired to eat.
6. Your child may be a slow eater, so be patient.



**Mealtimes shouldn't just be about eating. Talking and having fun can encourage your fussy eater**

7. Don't give your child too many snacks between meals — two healthy snacks a day is plenty.
8. It's best not to use food as a reward. Your child may start to think of sweets as nice and vegetables as nasty. Instead, reward them with a trip to the park or promise to play a game with them.
9. Make mealtimes enjoyable and not just about eating. Sit down and chat about other things.
10. Changing how you serve a food may make it more appealing. For

example, your child might refuse cooked carrots but enjoy raw grated carrot.

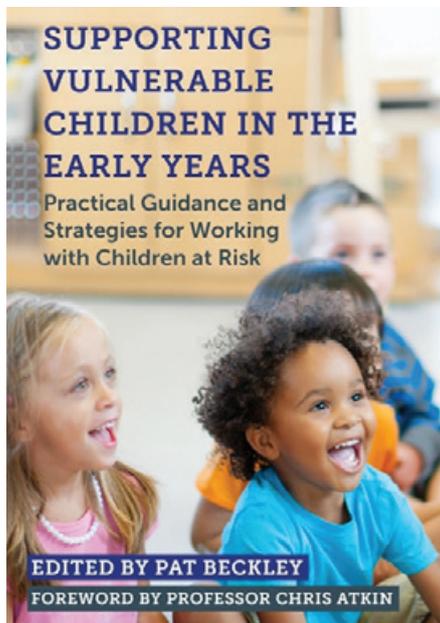
Check out this fantastic webpage from the NHS, which has some varied meal ideas to try help and encourage your baby to eat: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/weaning-and-feeding/baby-and-toddler-meal-ideas](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/weaning-and-feeding/baby-and-toddler-meal-ideas)

**\* This information comes from one of the series of Early Years Scotland's Top Tips for Parents/Carers which are available for members to download from the 'MY EYS' members' area of our website [earlyyearsScotland.org](http://earlyyearsScotland.org)**

# Books for early years professionals



**Jenny Carey, Course Leader for the Early Years Master's degree at The University of Strathclyde, and Early Years Scotland's resident book reviewer, looks at supporting vulnerable children and making sense of neuroscience**



**Supporting Vulnerable Children in the Early Years: Practical Guidance and strategies for working with children at Risk (Beckley, P., 2019)**

The issue of supporting 'vulnerable' children is never far from the gaze of media reporting or from local and national policy directive in Scotland. As educators we are now, more than ever, acutely aware that building relationships and not just following systems matters for our communities. As we start to unpack the continuing social and emotional impact that COVID has had and is having on children and families we are reconsidering our approaches to supporting 'children at risk'. This first book helps us to do just that.

The forward from Professor Chris Aitken summarises the content of this edited compilation succinctly: 'This book explores the specific experience

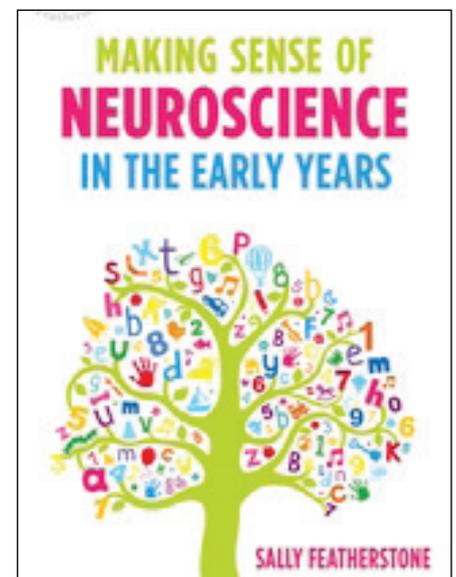
that makes a child vulnerable' (p.7). English policy context and theoretical perspectives are pulled upon to support ways of seeing and defining 'vulnerability' and 'risk' in an early years' context, which offers an interesting comparison to GIRFEC. Chapters position vulnerability as a constant or an 'unexpected event' that changes the circumstances and stability within a child's life. It looks at driving concerns such as poverty, ASN provision and safeguarding as ways into seeing the child within the situations, events, and experiences they face. I must be honest some of the discussions of practical applications seemed a wee bit tokenistic to me and the focus is very much on an English policy and practice. However, for anyone looking to build a foundation knowledge of the social, cultural, emotional, and intellectual implications of adversity then this is the book for you.

**Making Sense of Neuroscience in the Early Years (Featherstone, S., 2017)**

Often the topics of neuroscience and adversity are situated side by side when exploring the effects that certain types of stress have on early neural development. 'Making Sense of Neuroscience' goes way beyond this offering useful insights for everyday practice. It navigates the complex landscape of neuroscience from pre-birth to the age of seven and concludes with a thought-provoking section on the educator as a researcher. From the beginning Featherstone doesn't disappoint. Her book is based on insights from current research, but still warns that the pace of progress in this area means that there is a lot of misinformation that should be

treated with caution. I love her five health warnings (the pace of progress; babies and bathwater, 'snake oil' and neuromyth; mice monkeys and mankind and the great divide) each systematically highlights the importance of a reflexive and evidence-based approach to reading, interpreting, and implementing the work of scholars and other educators.

This book is both intellectually engaging and useful for providing a contemporary overview and basic knowledge of the mechanics of brain development. It's an easy to access and relatable text which encourages the reader to interrogate the intersections between psychology, neuroscience, and education. The unpacking of research, case studies and the 'messages for educators' at the end of each chapter, promotes active questioning and noticing in everyday practice. In my opinion, this is a cracker of a book and I highly recommend that you read it.



# Books for young children



**Keira O'Sullivan, Early Years Operations Administrator at Scottish Book Trust, discusses Luna Loves Dance by Joseph Coelho and Fiona Lumbers, published by Andersen Press. Keira recommends this book for children ages 3 years and up.**

*'Luna shows everyone how to leap, leap, leap over hard times, with joy bounding in your heart.'*

Some of us may already be familiar with Luna, who explored books in Luna Loves Library Day and made a new friend in Luna Loves Art. In the third instalment, which stands alone as well as part of the series, Luna is a little older and learning to dance. But Luna is not sure that she does love dance. At first she is excited, preparing for her dance exam, sure that once she passes she'll be a 'real dancer'. When the

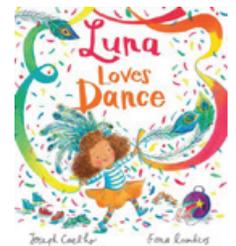
time comes... she stumbles. The story follows Luna's loss of confidence, feeling that she'll never be a real dancer now that she's finding it difficult.

This book is a bright, inclusive representation of dance, showing not only Luna's lessons but all different types of dance, shimmying along to a musical, doing the Charleston to her Grandparents' jazz records and ducking and diving at Carnival. This shows dance as not only rehearsing or perfecting moves, but as movement, music, culture, and shared experiences. When she feels sad, Luna's Dad assures her that she is a 'dancer' whenever she's dancing, not just if she passes an exam, reminding Luna and the reader that self-expression and taking part matter more than passing or failing. Luna's struggles illustrate that it's okay to practise, and that not being perfect at something doesn't define you or undermine the joy in it.

Luna's story has a lovely depiction of family. The most important thing is that Luna is supported and encouraged

by everyone who loves her, and the story illustrates that families come in all different forms in a subtle and unobtrusive way. It's also a fantastic example of discussing emotions, not just naming them but explaining how they feel inside. When Luna is happy and confident, it feels like 'the world's volume turns up' and 'the sun sparkles behind every cloud', but when she is disappointed and insecure, it feels like the 'colours have been dulled'. While taking on the difficult topics of disappointment, confidence and belonging, Luna Loves Dance remains a joyful, warm, and colourful story.

• To find a copy of this title and the other Luna stories, visit your local library or go to the Andersen Press website: <https://www.andersenpress.co.uk/luna-loves-dance/>



**Nicola Flinn, Early Years Scotland Early Years Practitioner, describes her experience of reading books with her son Leo.**

As an early years practitioner, I know the importance of reading to your child and how this can have many benefits such as language development, encouraging the imagination, curiosity, attachment with your child and many more. This is why from a very early stage I have introduced books to my son, Leo. Every night we read a bedtime story and over the whole 22 months of his life we have read many stories together. It's such a special thing for us to do as a family as we enjoy the one to one time together after a busy day of working, housework, and everyday busyness.

Although we have read several types of books such as story books, lift-the-flap books, pop up books, and sensory books, I've noticed that Leo has a particular favourite book which is 'Dear Zoo' by Rod Campbell. The side of this particular version has animal sound buttons which you

## Little Leo's favourite book



press on each page. While reading the story we press the buttons together to hear the noise of each animal, while I encourage Leo to make the animal noises and attempt some of the names of the animals. As he now knows this story well, he is able to identify some of the animals behind the flap, before pulling it up by making the animal noise first, and then revealing who is hiding behind the flap.

After lockdown I took Leo to the library for the first time and got a library card for him. Once a month we enjoy a visit to the library and now that Leo is older, he has more of an understanding of what to do in the library and is beginning to choose his own books to take home.

Leo has a small book corner in his room and enjoys taking a book and sitting on his chair with it. He will browse through the stories and look at the illustrations himself. It is lovely to see him developing a love for books at such a young age and watching him admire the pictures in the books and enjoying these little moments of happiness to himself in his own world of imagination.

# Are you and your team head injury aware?



**Louise Wilkinson, Head of Information & Learning at the Child Brain Injury Trust, explains why it is important for practitioners to be aware of head injuries**

Head injury is referred to as the “hidden disability”. Some babies and children may be fine in the immediate aftermath of a bump to the head and for many children, a head injury will have no long-term effects. However, a small minority of children may go on to have difficulties in the future. This is because brain cells do not repair, once damaged they are gone. Also, the full outcome of an injury may only become apparent as key developmental markers are passed; this is because the human brain does not finish maturing until a person has reached their mid-20s.

In 2016 a research study<sup>1</sup> of 5,700 children with head injuries aged 0-14.9 years, showed that 54% of the study participants were under 5 years of age, and that the most common cause of head injury was falls. Other key outcomes from the study were:

**Colliding with each other, running into walls, doors, radiators**

12.3% of children included in study  
Average age was 3.7 years

**Fall from less than 1m**

32.1%  
Average age was 2.1 years

**Fall from higher than 1m**

17.6%  
Average age was also 2.1

Five causes account for 90% of unintentional injury hospital admissions for under 5s, these are:

- choking, suffocation and strangulation
- falls
- poisoning
- burns and scalds
- drowning

All but one of those causes can result in a head/brain injury (also known as an acquired brain injury or ABI).

As well as the evidence of the high prevalence of head injury in the under 5s, with the advances in both medical science and neuroscience, more children are now surviving what in the



past may have been fatal head injuries. Therefore, it is vital that those working in early years settings are head injury aware.

The Child Brain Injury Trust is the UK’s leading charity supporting children and young people affected by acquired brain injury (ABI), no matter what the cause. Because of the high numbers of head injury affecting the under 5s, the charity has their Early Years Awareness Project. Early years settings are invited to apply to be a Head Injury

Aware Nursery. This project offers CPD approved awareness training on acquired brain injury, and once at least one senior member of the team has completed and passed the online course, the nursery/setting will receive a range of support resources to help manage head injury and bumps. Some examples are shown here, together with the Certificate to confirm they are a Head Injury Aware setting.

As well as bumps to the head, babies and toddlers can also acquire a brain injury as a result of illness (meningitis, encephalitis, hydrocephalus), tumour, stroke, poisoning or non-accidental injury. Babies and toddlers cannot say exactly how they feel or what is hurting, so they need to ensure responsible adults take appropriate action after an injury or if the child is poorly, on the child’s behalf.

The course will cover why training on acquired brain injury is needed, basic brain functions and early years neuro development, what is acquired brain injury and how can it impact development and learning, together with basic understanding of illnesses that can cause brain injury and how to recognise them.

**For more information on the project and training visit:**

• <https://childbraininjurytrust.org.uk/events/2022-early-years-course-this-is-an-open-ended-course-you-can-register-at-anytime/>

• or email [learning@cbituk.org](mailto:learning@cbituk.org) to find out more.

<sup>1</sup>*Epidemiology of children with head injury: a national overview. L Trethan et al 2016*

# Come and connect at the Team ELC Wellbeing Hub

Working in early learning and childcare (ELC) can be hugely rewarding. Making a real difference to the earliest years of Scotland's children. But we all know it is not without its pressures - and nobody appreciates this more than your colleagues in Team ELC.

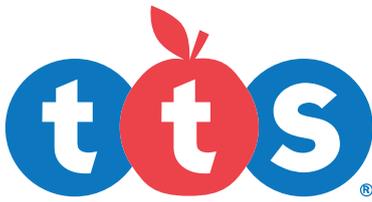
At the ELC Wellbeing Hub, you can connect with someone who understands just what you do every day. You might find it helpful to offer advice, support or just have a chat. The choice is yours!

**"I spoke with my connection a few times, during the January lockdown when things were especially stressful at work. It was hugely helpful to have someone understanding who wasn't in my own workplace. I was able to let off steam and share concerns that I didn't want to place on my colleagues. I hope I was a good listening ear in return."**

**"I would recommend this to others as I do very much see the benefits of having someone to act as a sounding board and I can see it would have a positive effect on mental health."**

**"Being able to connect with other practitioners through Team ELC Wellbeing Hub has allowed us to see/share the great work that we all do. Going into this new term, I hope that we have a renewed sense of ourselves, ensuring we take the time to allow us to be all we can be for our youngest children. Wellbeing Events are vital for us now and in the future."**

Start your connection journey now by going to the Team ELC Wellbeing Hub at [teamelcwellbeinghub.org/connect](https://teamelcwellbeinghub.org/connect) and completing the online form. Early Years Scotland will then contact both you and your Team ELC colleague and you can take it from there!



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