Speaking as he addressed leaders and representatives from the schools, the Minister said: “There are many ingredients that make up successful schools and pre-school settings, institutions that deliver for all of our children and young people, including those with Special Educational Needs, from the early years, right through to leaving after Key Stage 4 or post-16 study.

“Common to all high-performing schools is strong leadership, which in turn fosters good teaching and I pay tribute to the school leaders, teachers and governors from all of the establishments who achieved a ‘Very Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ rating in the past year. Such a rating is proof that schools are meeting the complex range of pupil needs, helping them achieve to their full potential’.

A number of nursery schools and pre-schools were evaluated as providing outstanding or very good quality of education from May 2013 and will be included in next year’s list.

This recognition highlights the high quality pre-school experience for children provided by the early years sector. The commitment from the staff and the voluntary management committees which support them has ensured these great achievements and allows for an outstanding provision for our young children in their early years, something that will benefit them for the rest of their lives. Congratulations from Early Years!

Education Minister, John O’Dowd, has commended more than 100 top-performing local schools and pre-schools. The Minister hosted a reception at Stormont for 90 schools and 23 pre-school settings evaluated as ‘Very Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ following inspection from June 2012 to April 2013.
Dear Readers...

Dear members, welcome to the first Newsletter of the new autumn term. I hope you all had a well-earned rest over the summer and enjoyed the glorious weather in June and July. I also hope that you are ready for another busy and exciting period for the year ahead.

We are looking forward to the imminent launch of the new Learning to Learn Strategy and the new Child Care Strategy both of which will present enormous opportunities for the early years sector and for our member groups. The challenge of how we all deliver high quality integrated child-centred education and care services will be at the heart of these new strategies and Early Years looks forward to supporting our members think through the ways that we can be responsive to the new policy demands.

This is another packed newsletter featuring news and developments across the organisation. A major feature highlights the very successful International Conference and AGM hosted by the Foyle and Sperrin Branches in Derry/Londonderry in June. I would like to express our enormous gratitude to the staff and volunteers in the West who really pulled out all the stops to ensure that this was one of the best conferences we ever hosted. Plans are well underway for the 49th AGM and Conference in June 2014 so start planning now for what has become recognised as the best early childhood care and education professional development opportunity on the island of Ireland.

I look forward to meeting many of you at the very many local and regional events we have planned for the year ahead and I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank you for the work you all do on a daily basis to ensure that young children in Northern Ireland are getting the best possible start in life.

Siobhán Fitzpatrick CBE
Chief Executive Officer
Early Years – the organisation for young children

Cover story continued

The following member groups achieved ‘Very Good’ or ‘Outstanding’:

St Colmcille’s Pre-school Playgroup, Belfast
Nippers Alley Playgroup, Loughmacrory, Omagh
Puddleducks Playgroup, Omagh
Rascals Community Playgroup, Gortin, Omagh
St Joseph’s Community Playgroup, Galliaigh, L’derry
Straidarran Community Playgroup, Claudy
Greengables Playgroup, Carrickfergus
Glenarm Community Pre-school, Ballymena
Little Rainbows Playgroup, Maghera
Naiscoil Mhachaire Ratha, Maghera
St MacNissis Pre-School, Newtownabbey
Ballycrochan Playgroup, Bangor
Busy Bees Playgroup, Hillsborough
Country Kids Day Nursery, Donaghadee
Crawfordsburn Playgroup, Bangor
Kids Kabin Cross Community Playgroup, Castlewellan
Mount Oriel Playgroup, Belfast
Rhyme Times Playgroup, Lisburn
St Comgall’s Playgroup, Bangor
Teconnnaught Playgroup, Downpatrick
Attical Playgroup, Kilkeel
Giggles Day Care, Newry
An East Belfast inner city playgroup has been awarded accreditation from Early Years – the organisation for young children, thanks to its wonderful work in recent years, while a senior member of the management committee was also given a lifetime achievement gong.

St Colmcille’s Pre-school Playgroup is a voluntary and community setting for pre-school children, situated in the grounds of St Colmcille’s parish church on the Upper Newtownards Road.

The Early Years accreditation provided to the group follows on from a grade of ‘very good’ handed down by the Education and Training Inspectorate in June 2012, with the recent stamp of approval coming in “Recognition of the quality of care and education that is provided in this setting” following assessments in March.

Mary Walsh, Treasurer of the group’s Management Committee, was also given the Moyra Campbell Lifetime Achievement Award for her years of exceptional service. Mary began her volunteering experience with St Colmcille’s Pre-School Playgroup when her eldest child attended the group.

“I’m absolutely delighted and honoured. I didn’t take up the job with the intention of looking for awards, I did it because I enjoyed it and I enjoyed working with the other people involved in the group. The award was a bonus and an unexpected one at that.”

Around a quarter of children attending St Colmcille’s Pre-school Playgroup have English as an additional language, while a third require additional support from the group’s qualified staff.

St Colmcille’s is funded by the Department of Education, through the Pre-School Expansion Programme, and is supported with advice on curriculum and governance issues by Early Years – the organisation for young children.

Mums and dads have voiced their delight with the playgroup, while inspectors complimented the way staff interact with both children and parents, picking out how they deal with children with additional needs or those with English as an additional language, for particular praise.

Siobhán Fitzpatrick CBE, Chief Executive of Early Years – the organisation for young children, said: “I would like to congratulate St Colmcille’s Pre-school Playgroup on their recent achievements. The Management Committee, staff, parents and volunteers associated with the group should be very proud of all their efforts which are ensuring excellent care and education for young children and families in the area. “We recognise the enormous commitment it takes from everyone to reach the Early Years accreditation standard. We are also delighted that Mary Walsh, Treasurer for the group, was recently awarded the Moyra Campbell Lifetime Achievement Award for her voluntary contribution to the group over many years.”

The pre-school operates ten morning and ten afternoon sessions per week – split into two groups, called Apples and Pears, both of which received accreditation - and is registered with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust for 96 children.

Support from the local community and good work by the management committee led to new purpose-built premises for the group in 2010, with funding from the Department of Education through the Belfast Childcare Partnership, and ground provided by the local parish.

The community development committee-run facility has been going for 23 years.

Further details about membership can be obtained on 028 9038 7904 or by visiting www.early-years.org.
Leader of Ballymoney and District Playgroup stepping down after 34 years of committed service.

35 years ago a group of parents in my home town decided that there was a gap in the pre-school provision in the area and set up Ballymoney Playgroup; a few months after that they employed the first staff member and leader – Barbara Hill. All this time later she is still running one of the most welcoming settings in the area providing high quality pre-school education and care for the children of Ballymoney.

This summer Barbara decided to step down as leader, though we are happy to note that she will continue part time with the group for a while yet. We want to take this opportunity to say thank you for all that she has given to the community she has served so faithfully. In the 35 years of the playgroup’s life, pre-school provision has changed beyond all recognition; Barbara reflected to me recently that, when she started out, the only paperwork required was to mark a roll! However, what has not changed in that time is Barbara’s dedication and care; always putting the children at the centre of all her decisions and driving the group forward.

Ballymoney and District Playgroup is quite a mouthful and I have noticed that no one in the area ever calls it by the right name; most call it after the church building it meets in; but in our house it has only ever been called one thing – Barbara’s playgroup.

Barbara, the playgroup and the local community owe a debt of gratitude to you and we wish you well for your (semi) retirement.

Sharon Lyons
Northern Area Manager

An Early Years member in County Down has won a prestigious childcare award.

Bella Bambinos Day Nursery in Dromore scooped the ni4kids National Childcare Award at a recent awards ceremony in Belfast. ni4kids is Northern Ireland’s largest childcare centred publication, which provides parents with useful information on topics such as education, health and parenting.

Bella Bambinos owner, Julie Edens, said: “We were so shocked when we received the initial telephone call to tell us we had been shortlisted for the final three for the award, and that we were the only day nursery in Northern Ireland to be shortlisted. I felt very privileged even attending such an event, but when our name was called as the winner I honestly couldn’t believe it!”
A Sad Farewell to Violet

Violet Woods, Leader of Dromara Playgroup, has dedicated 25 years of service to the children, the parents and to the community since she took up post in 1988. At that time Sadie Hanna had retired and Julie Corbett and Violet took on the role of Joint Leaders.

In 2001 Violet became the sole Leader being accommodated in a mobile unit in the grounds of Dromara Primary School.

In the last ETI Inspection Report, it was stated that there were major strengths in all aspects of the educational and pastoral provision in this pre-school centre. The needs of the children were being met very effectively. The Report also stated that excellent communication and links had been established with the parents.

Violet always appreciated the efforts made by Sadie Hanna and Isa Hanna in establishing a playgroup in 1977 in Dromara for children in the area and how they managed a budget drawn from the 50p a week per child income which covered rent, wages and refreshments.

It was evident from Violet’s farewell retirement presentation held at the end of June in Dromara Leisure Centre, that the leadership shown by Violet continued to acknowledge the contribution from parents and children throughout the years. Her staff recalled fond memories of working with Violet and she was delighted and reassured in leaving the Playgroup in the care of the new but experienced Leader, Julie Corbett.

A number of Early Years staff took part in the recent CBeebies tour that visited Bangor in July.

The event – ‘Mr Bloom and Friends’ Big Day Out’ was a free event that stopped off at eight locations across the UK and Castle Park in Bangor was the only stop in Northern Ireland.

EYS staff Jacqueline Reid, Aira Oates, Elaine Sterritt and Anne Marie Mulholland were there over the weekend hosting different activities that promoted numeracy and literacy through the HighScope approach and Liz Graham, Membership Officer, encouraged mums and dads to join the Early Years parental membership. All activities on the day were designed by BBC Learning and had a learning through play philosophy.

Mr Bloom’s Nursery is a popular CBeebies series where children learn from the experience of growing vegetables; Mr Bloom and his team of helpers tend to the plants and produce in their allotment.

It was a busy two days for everyone, as parents and children were queuing well before the gates opened and with the hot weather, lots of families were enjoying the sunshine. Numbers attending topped 7000 visitors on the Saturday alone.

Early Years staff were working inside a tent designed in the style of a big top and there was lots of interest in the stand, with leaflets and flyers handed out to let people know more about the organisation. Everyone had a great weekend and it was a great opportunity to take part in a well-known BBC event.
Early Years International Conference and AGM 2013

The International Conference and AGM ‘Culture, Creativity and Community Connections’ organised by Early Years – the organisation for young children and hosted by the Foyle and Sperrin Branches was held on Thursday 6 and Friday 7 June 2013 in the City Hotel Derry as part of the City of Culture Celebrations in Derry/Londonderry. The conference attracted 450 delegates from 18 countries.

The aims of the conference were to:

- Contribute to debate and discussion.
- Enhance continuous professional development.
- Network with key experts and others.
- Provide access to practical messages to take home.
- Find out about available training opportunities.
- View latest equipment and pick up educational resources.
- Refresh and enhance knowledge.

The Early Years Annual General Meeting took place on Thursday evening culminating with the presentation of the annual Volunteer Awards. This was then followed by the Gala Dinner and presentation of the Accreditation Awards. Friday morning commenced with a keynote speech from Toni Christie followed by a choice of seven seminars. Friday afternoon included a keynote from Dr Lilian Katz followed by a choice of the same seven Seminar sessions that were available in the morning. The event concluded with closing remarks, the annual raffle and the traditional cake cutting ceremony.

Presentations from all sessions can be downloaded from the following link:

www.early-years.org/conference2013/
Dr Lilian Katz, Professor Emerita of Early Childhood Education, University of Illinois, USA, provided a keynote presentation entitled ‘The adult’s role in supporting the development of social competence’.

Toni Christie, Director of Childspace, New Zealand, provided a keynote presentation entitled ‘Respectful care is only fair’.

Both keynote speakers facilitated a Master Class session during the conference.

“very interesting speaker, passionate about children and good practice, engaging and enthusiastic”

“the delivery was fabulous and content really encouraged and informed my current practice”

“I was totally blown away and very much inspired by everything Toni Christie had to say. She has really encouraged me to think outside the box and not be satisfied with what has been established as ‘the norm’ in an early years setting”

“this session really challenged my thinking around how we deliver services to those youngest in our setting. We want to make changes as a result of this”

“I really enjoyed Toni and Lilian, wonderful inspirational speakers. They remind us all to focus on the most important part of our work … the child”

“Lilian is very knowledgeable and engaging”

Feedback from 2013 conference participants included:

“a fantastic event that was really inspirational and supportive. Full of up to date key information that will add to and enhance practice”

“the whole conference was very well organised, everything ran like clockwork. Had a great two days and hope to put some of the information gained into practice”

“I especially enjoyed the walk over the Peace Bridge”

“great to see another setting and ask practice questions and compare delivery styles of programmes, etc”

“Wonderful programme! Made me rethink what we could do at our setting to inspire our little people”

“session was rich and condensed”

“our plan from today is to work through Toni’s book ‘respect’ and reflect and evaluate on where we are and then ask ourselves who is it for?”

“I have gained a wealth of knowledge which I will be able to use within my role”

“still thinking about what I learned and how it will impact upon my practice”

“Lilian Katz has fuelled my passion for early years”

“the conference keynote speakers were excellent and gave a lot of food for thought about our own practice”

“the master classes were very informative”

“very enjoyable to listen to other perspectives and view points”

“I have gained invaluable knowledge which I will use within my role. I gained insight into different practices which I can adapt to my own practices and experienced a very enjoyable and informative field visit”

“so inspiring to see what others are doing and to go home with a revitalised view of our own programme”

“opportunity to network with key experts and avail of their knowledge”
**MASTER CLASSES**

**Being with infants and toddlers: an in depth look at respect facilitated by Toni Christie**

Toni started the Master Class with a traditional Maori welcome and shared pictures and life experiences about life in Wellington, New Zealand. ‘Honging’ is a traditional greeting whereby you touch noses and foreheads.

Toni and Robin Christie created ‘Childspace’ after finding a lack of appropriate childcare services and training in their area. Childspace was developed firstly in Toni and Robin’s own home and embraces the use of natural materials, sustainable practice and the outdoor environment. Toni stated ‘babies should be at home with someone who loves them but if they do have to go to day care, it should be the best’.

Childspace is based on the work of Emmi Pikler, a paediatrician from Hungary, who was asked to establish a nursery for displaced children after World War II. The Loczy Institute followed three principles (1) Primary Care Giving, (2) Freedom of Movement and (3) Respectful Practice.

Childspace believes there should be less emphasis on curriculum, “a child has a long time to learn how paint tastes, but a short window to learn they are loved and form relationships” Toni Christie.

Childspace follows a number of principles: working in partnership with parents; allowing children time and space to make choices; give full and focused attention; 1-2-1 attention; teamwork – same base philosophy; verbal and non verbal communication; respect – in the child/parent/childcare staff relationship and reflective practice.

Children will have a primary care giver within the setting but they are encouraged to build relationships with other staff as well and the ratio in settings would be 1-4 in children aged 0-2. “If you give children full attention some of the time, children are happy to go and play but if you only give part attention, children will always want more” Toni Christie.

Childspace promotes less interference from adults as it allows children to innately explore. Reflective questions like ‘who is it for’ ensures improvements over time. Relationships ensure the parent is happy, then the child is happy which means staff are happy. Maintain a consistent environment, offer both indoor and outdoor experiences for play, eating and sleeping.

Staff are qualified to Diploma and Graduate level, they follow children through all stages within the centre offering consistency. There are shared spaces which allow integration. Childspace has a strong routine but no schedule – it’s all done within the natural rhythm of the centre. Meal times are ritualistic rather than routine. Staff view children as competent and capable. A child can learn helplessness if you put them in a position to fail.

“Tell me and I’ll forget, show me and I may remember, involve me and I’ll understand” Chinese Proverb

Analysed by Karen McGuigan
Recommended Reading

Respect. A Practitioner’s Guide to Calm and Nurturing Infant Care and Education
Toni Christie’s book presents timely research on respectful infant and toddler care and education seasoned with practitioner wisdom. Toni explores the most important relationship for infants and toddlers in centre settings – primary caregiver relationships – and illustrates how they worked easily and well when a teaching team approach was taken involving the parents.

Member Price: £20.00
Non-Member Price: £22.00

Supporting young children in resolving social conflict facilitated by Margaret Fullerton
This master class was a great opportunity to explore and learn about HighScope’s six steps to conflict resolution for young children. Participants were able to try out the strategies for themselves; in pairs, participants chose a type of conflict and when they found this conflict occurred most often in their environment, then they discussed ways in which this conflict could be resolved and shared throughout the group. Participants built up a great discussion around social conflict using their own experiences through either their work environment or their personal life as an example to put forward to Margaret Fullerton, all questions and queries were dealt with by Margaret with full confidence and faith in HighScope’s approach to conflict resolution. The six step approach was broken down and explained fully to participants to ensure it was used correctly and to highlight the importance of how to adapt the approach when it comes to each individual’s own setting.

This master class explained the child’s need for parental support to help them learn how to recognise and deal with their own feelings and those of others in times of disagreement. Having a neutral perspective when approaching social conflict was stressed by Margaret as well as addressing the attitude and mindset you must possess when faced with a conflict. I thoroughly enjoyed this master class and feel as though it is definitely an approach I can put into action through my work within Early Years.

Analysed by Davina Kelly

Recommended Reading

You Can’t Come to My Birthday Party
Presents a six-step mediation process adults can use to help young children resolve disputes. More than fifty scenarios of conflict resolution are included.

Member Price: £21.50
Non-Member Price: £24.00

You’re Not My Friend Anymore

Member Price: £12.50
Non-Member Price: £14.00

It’s Mine! Responding to Problems and Conflicts
This DVD illustrates many strategies caregivers can use to respond sensitively and positively to children’s social conflicts.

Member Price: £27.00
Non-Member Price: £30.00

Supporting Children in Resolving Conflict
This DVD will teach you six problem-solving steps you can use to help children in conflict situations.

Member Price: £28.50
Non-Member Price: £32.00
**You, Me and Us**

This book covers eleven separate topics of social-emotional learning - from developing a positive self-identity to creating and participating in democracy - and offers numerous teaching strategies and suggestions for professional development.

**Member Price:** £17.50  
**Non-Member Price:** £19.00

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**Educating parents developing children facilitated by Dr Pauline McClenaghan**

The master class began with Dr McClenaghan asking participants to consider and note the key experiences in early life that they think made them the person they are. This generated an interesting exchange wherein master class participants identified a number of factors associated with family life that they thought had influenced their development as children and as adults. Dr McClenaghan then presented the international research evidence on child development, outlining what the evidence tells us about child development risk factors, about producing better outcomes for children and the value of partnership working between parents, and community and professional/statutory stakeholders. Mary Walker Callaghan then described a practice model of parenting support developed in partnership with HSE West in County Donegal and designed to synthesise the Lifestart Growing Child programme and home-visitation service with the child protection and family support goals and objectives of the Health Service Executive. The case study looked at the organisational implications and practice issues in the implementation of an integrated evidence-based model of early intervention and prevention and the practice adaptations the implementation of the integrated model required. Finally, drawing on practice experience, the case study identified a number of factors shaping the capacity of the partnering organisations to develop a model of best practice in family support; a model that would offer a highly effective, targeted service aimed at vulnerable families, supported by an early intervention and preventive service for first-time parents, while at the same time maintaining the Lifestart ethos of inclusivity and fidelity to the Lifestart logic model. After the presentation participants were divided into groups and asked to draw on their own professional practice (1) to outline the key characteristics of an effective family support model (2) to identify the constraints to integrated practice and how these constraints might be overcome and (3) to identify three key factors in measuring and costing service outcomes and impacts.

**Recommended Reading**

**Key Issues: Working with Parents**

‘Parents as Partners’ is one of the four themes of the new Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and this book looks in detail at why the relationship between the parent/practitioner/child is so important, backed up by research into emotional development, studies from Scandinavia and other countries.

**Member Price:** £11.70  
**Non-Member Price:** £12.99

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**Engaging children’s minds facilitated by Dr Lilian G Katz**

“We must resist the temptation to start education too early and it should be developed appropriately by age and stage of development.” These are some of the inspiring words delivered by Dr Lilian G Katz during the master class on Engaging Children’s Minds. She compared early learning to the foundation of a home and highlighted that education should not begin on the third floor or have weak foundations as it will be expensive to make the corrections needed in later life.
Dr Katz is Professor Emerita of Early Childhood Education at the University of Illinois, USA. She is a past president of the National Association for the Education of Young Children and is Editor of the first trilingual early childhood journal, Early Childhood Research and Practice. Dr Katz has lectured in all US states and 55 countries and is an author of many publications in the field of Early Education and Teacher Education.

Engaging children’s minds, Dr Katz explained that children will always learn; the curriculum should be delivered so that children have a fuller and deeper understanding of their own experiences. By going outside to play and completing projects on local areas such as the shops, children make better sense of their own experiences. It is important for teachers to listen to children, prepare children for learning by asking them what they want to find out and ask them to tell you where she/he is “teach the learner to teach you where he/she is.”

Dr Katz defined dispositions in children as a pattern of behaviour exhibited frequently by a child. From birth the child has the natural disposition of curiosity and exploration. As they grow older, social dispositions including accepting, befriending and generosity towards others form. Environmental dispositions include being sensitive to the world around them and intellectual dispositions include problem solving, making predictions and amending their work to further develop it. “Dispositions are always more or less influenced by experiences in early childhood programmes whether by intent or default.” Lilian emphasised how they cannot be learned from instruction, the disposition to go on learning required interactive experiences preferably with a mixed age group and if lost it may be lost forever. She gave examples of early childhood experiences that tapped into the natural capacity for interest. Lilian emphasised that dispositions and learning experiences are equally important and practitioners can and must encourage certain dispositions. She urged practitioners to evaluate their own behaviours in settings and to consider whether their behaviours empowered or undermined a child’s disposition.

Lilian concluded “as teachers all we ever have is our own best judgement throughout our professional life”. She recognised that teaching involves many conflicting pressures, however she emphasised that we must cultivate the habit of speaking to children as people with minds, be genuine, warm and humorous and always give informative feedback.

Recommended Reading

Intellectual Emergencies by Lilian Katz
Lilian Katz has spent many years conducting workshops for teachers, parents and students all over the world, and during those workshops she has often referred to her son, Stephen, and what she has termed the ‘intellectual emergencies’ she experienced during the years he was growing up. Her responses to these ‘emergencies’, the moments when he analysed her actions and challenged her decisions as a parent and a teacher, are pulled together in this book. With music and words from Stephen incorporated into the book, Katz presents an inspirational work for parents and teachers, or anyone who has ever looked into the face of a child and wondered if she was making the right choices.

Block Play - creating an enabling environment where every child feels at home facilitated by Martin and Helen Huleatt, Community Playthings

Martin and Helen clarified the benefits of how open ended play using simple materials provides children with a free rein for their imaginations, a hands on approach
with shared experiences, good opportunities for communication and lets children express their ideas in concrete ways before abstract ways.

Block play progresses through seven stages when young children are given time and support to engage with blocks as open ended materials: handle blocks; play with individual blocks; use as symbols; vertical or horizontal rows; bridge making; making enclosures; pattern and design production, and finally purposeful play.

Block play should be placed in a corner of the room and can be used in conjunction with storytelling or used to paint picture resources, eg feathers and mark making materials can be provided. Block play creates focus, supports physical development, social and emotional development, language, literacy and mathematical skills and creativity.

Analysed by Margaret Alton

Recommended Reading

Play and the revised Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)
The free booklet and PowerPoint training details how children’s play naturally fulfils the revised EYFS, and cross-references that play to the statutory guidance.

The guide is divided into sections based on the activity areas seen in most early years settings including a section on block play. Each section gives sample observations, and outlines how the play that takes place meets the seven areas of learning and development.

This document can be downloaded at: www.communityplaythings.co.uk/learning-library/training-resources/play-and-the-revised-eys

I made a unicorn
Open-ended play with blocks and simple materials. Although children’s play just happens spontaneously, it is complex and comes in myriad forms. One universal type is open-ended play, also known as free-flow play, in which the children themselves determine what to do, how to do it, and what to use. Open-ended means not having a fixed answer, unrestricted, allowing for future change. In the course of such play, children have no fear of doing it wrong since there is no correct method or outcome; and observant adults are privileged with insights into children’s development and thinking. Open-ended play is intrinsic to childhood; children have an impetus to explore and create. When free to experiment with the simplest materials, they find ways to express and develop their thoughts in imaginative play.

This document can be downloaded at: www.communityplaythings.co.uk/learning-library/training-resources/i-made-a-unicorn

Rhythm is a fundamental necessity to human existence. It has been all around us from before our birth: our mother’s heartbeat and the whoosh of amniotic fluid. These are our first encounters of rhythm. In everyday life we experience rhythm, from the tick of a clock, to the rising and setting of the sun. Everyone has rhythm, but in previous years the select few were given the opportunity to engage in music. However, music is for all!

In early years settings we have the perfect opportunity to provide children with a positive experience of music and include all children regardless of their capabilities, as we all have inner rhythm. As parents and staff, we are the primary influence on children and can make music an enjoyable experience. Music can be used to educate children, through songs and rhymes, teaching about cultures, exploring our feelings. The benefits of music are vast where the Institute of Music and Mind Research found that music is soothing, improves speech and increases self-esteem.

This document can be downloaded at: www.communityplaythings.co.uk/learning-library/training-resources/i-made-a-unicorn
Africa was given as a positive role model. Africans are so musical, as wherever they go they sing, dance and are extremely enthusiastic and proud of their musical talents. Children in Africa are not taught music, they are already born with it and grow up living with rhythm all around them in their daily activities.

Northern Ireland is similar to Africa, where it too has a strong relationship with music. Traditions such as singing, storytelling and playing musical instruments with friends made music a sociable, fun experience. However, technology has changed our lives and has made us much more isolated. It is important we do not lose our musical culture, and that we encourage young children to participate in music activities.

Ronan provided an excellent practical experience with African drums on how we can include music daily in our settings. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed this activity, and it certainly confirms that music empowers people and makes us feel good! Groups can make their own instruments using water drums, bottles, wooden sticks as a few ideas.

**Documentation, Participation and Observation facilitated by Orla Kenny and Naomi Draper**

The main objectives of the workshop were to provide a ‘hands-on’ exploration of documentation; the purpose and value of it, the challenges practitioners face with documentation, and how we can use it to inform future work processes. The hands-on approach to the seminar gave us a flavour of what children would experience in this project-based approach to documentation. Orla and Naomi guided practitioners through a project they would work on with children around making their own books. They began by introducing practitioners to some of their own books. These were made from recycled cardboard and inside they were filled with many different types of materials and colours. It was clear that this opening activity although adult-initiated would ignite children’s imaginations and thought about stories they would like to tell. The seminar continued with practitioners then making their own books from simple materials, paper, recycled materials and glue. As practitioners worked they had the opportunity to reflect on their current practice and the challenges and constraints they have, and how this method of documentation could be used to support their work. The seminar showed practitioners how one piece of work could gather so much information about a child’s learning and development, using the most basic of resources.

**Helping children resolve their problems through therapeutic play facilitated by Sinead Doherty, Eugene Woods and Sile O’Loughlin from Play Therapy NI.**

The Play Therapy Seminar was presented by Sinead Doherty and Sile O’Loughlin who are qualified to postgraduate level in Non–Directive Play Therapy.

The seminar explained the role of what Play Therapy is and the benefit to users of the service. Play Therapy provides an opportunity to ‘play out’ feelings and problems in a safe environment where qualified therapists use their professional knowledge to understand the child who uses play, behaviour and communication as a vehicle to express their feelings. The primary objectives in therapeutic work with traumatised children must be relevant and developmentally age
appropriate. Carl Rodgers and Virginia Axline are the exponents of Play Therapy and are experts in their field. Virginia Axline has eight principles that are at the core of Play Therapy which therapists use in their environment which are:

- Establish a Relationship with the child.
- Accept the child as he/she is.
- Establish a feeling of permission.
- Reflect feelings back so that the child gains insight into their behaviours.
- Respect the child’s ability to solve his/her own problems.
- Allow the child to lead the way the therapist follows.
- Acknowledge it’s a gradual process and must not be hurried.
- Only establish those limitations necessary.

The benefits of Play Therapy include concentration and problem-solving where play is used to help resolve issues that are affecting the child.

The presentation ended with this quotation from Winnicott stating that ‘Inside each child there is a story to be told’.

Analysed by Jacqueline Reid

Recommended Reading

Developing Everyday Coping Skills in the Early Years
A treasure trove of activities to help practitioners and parents build coping skills and self-esteem through creative play and imagination. Build on children’s existing knowledge and skills and improve their emotional health, creativity and respect for others. This book also represents how to identify children at risk for early intervention and how to help children cope with stress, ie transition.

Member Price: £18.00
Non-Member Price: £19.99

Tough Times
Designed to help early years practitioners support very young children who are experiencing particular stress or anxiety such as the arrival of a new sibling or moving house. This book looks at what the child might be feeling and offers guidance, practical advice and support.

Member Price: £18.00
Non-Member Price: £19.99

Seven Skills for School Success
All children need social and emotional skills so they can learn and be successful in school and in life. This book provides information, activities and experiences that will help you develop the seven skills that children need to become successful learners.

Member Price: £17.10
Non-Member Price: £18.99

Using the Empathy Dolls Approach
A discussion of the definition of empathy, its historical roots and its use today. Presenting research focused on the links between lack of empathy and aggressive behaviours and the impact empathy has on decreasing these issues.

Member Price: £11.70
Non-Member Price: £12.99

‘My Place? Exploring the social ecology of young children’s interaction with the environment in areas of contested space’ facilitated by Clionagh Boyle
Our session began with the realisation that our identities are much larger than our names! Clionagh then invited us to think about our own environments when we were in our early years, and then to create something that
reflected that from the natural concrete materials she had brought with her - we were then invited to share our thoughts with the rest of the group.

Clionagh’s presentation throughout was themed on walls and bridges, she quoted “people are lonely because we are better at building walls than building bridges”. Clionagh then gave us an insight into the ‘Contested Spaces Programme’ in which she is involved:

• How her work is based in interface areas of the city where walls have been built to segregate the city.
• The important work that youth mentors are doing in the community – how they are able to bring their own very different experiences to the programme.
• The importance of the parent workshops and the way in which they provide a neutral forum for parents to share their experiences.

She concluded by showing a display of inspirational photographs of the children’s shared activities focusing on respect for differences, building friendships and inclusion. To end the session Clionagh invited us all to go for a walk across ‘The Peace Bridge’ - a lovely tranquil experience!

Analysed by Noletta Smyth

Effective Support and Supervision facilitated by Roisin Dobbs and Dr Marleen Collins

The rationale for introducing regular support and supervision meetings and annual appraisals for all staff members has been clearly identified as a requirement for both the ETI for groups in the PSEPs and the Minimum Standards.

Managers and leaders need to set aside time to observe staff members and to really know what is happening. It is essential for managers and leaders to understand and recognise what good practice really looks like by visiting high quality settings and using The Together Towards Improvement document as a self-evaluation tool. Effective support and supervision can identify issues of concern and training needs and provides the opportunity to recognise good work.

Support and supervision are a cornerstone of performance management in an atmosphere of confidentiality and provide an opportunity to improve communications, improve quality in the setting and to demonstrate how staff are valued. Useful templates for settings to use were distributed.

Analysed by Margaret Alton

Recommended Reading

Supporting Your Workforce. A practical toolkit for induction, support, supervision and appraisal

Supporting your workforce through induction, support, supervision and appraisal has a significant role to play within any workforce. Continual improvement of these services can only be achieved by recognising the value of each individual worker, whatever their role, being clear about the standards of practice required and by investing in their development.

This publication will complement the work of management teams and will provide better information and practical resources which will support those involved in the support, supervision and appraisal process, provide templates which offer a format for recording details of the induction, support, supervision and appraisal processes, as well as providing tools which can assist management teams review and manage poor performance through ongoing support and supervision meetings.

Available from the Early Years Bookstore in September www.early-years.org/bookstore.
Early childhood environment design: a New Zealand perspective facilitated by Robin Christie

Robin Christie opened the session by providing an overview of Childspace New Zealand and explained from the outset that all environments they developed clearly emphasised the cultural identity of New Zealand.

Robin shared with the group wonderful examples of effective spaces they had created and explained by simply changing floor height, enclosing the space and including different light intensity and colour encourages young children to further explore and provides excellent retreat areas where quiet play will not be interrupted. Robin also pointed out that further privacy can be created with mesh curtains or pot plants. This protected space will encourage play to develop naturally and relationships will evolve.

Childspace creates all experiences from the child’s point of view and emphasises that children must be involved to successfully create environments that will challenge and offer freedom to children. In New Zealand practitioners empower children by allowing them to make their own choices. Removing barriers to their free movement had led them to embrace new ways of thinking about indoor and outdoor environments. Robin’s presentation was energetic, motivational and extremely creative.

Analysed by Yvonne Tracey

Recommended Reading

Childspaces 2. Another design sourcebook for Early Childhood Environments

This book is full of practical, aesthetic and accessible design ideas for early childhood environments.

Member Price: £12.00
Non-Member Price: £14.00
New partnership seeks to address reconciliation through early childhood development in the Balkans region and Europe

Building on 10 years of successful partnership working, promoting the inclusion of all children and the development of the early childhood curriculum in Serbia and also resulting from outcomes established by the International Network on Peace Building with Young Children project, Early Years is contributing to the work of a new early childhood partnership focusing on the Balkans region of Southeast Europe.

The project, entitled the ‘Partnership for Reconciliation through Early Childhood Education and Development in Europe’ or ‘PRECEDE,’ is funded by the European Union. PRECEDE seeks to support civil society influence over peace and reconciliation and cohesion processes through the creation of a sustainable Balkans region network of organisations concerned with early years education and care, inclusion and respect for diversity with learning which can be applied across Europe.

The PRECEDE project also aims to facilitate and link research, analysis, capacity building, monitoring and advocacy work and associated learning of local country level networks with each other and also the Early Years led International Network on Peace Building with Young Children.

The contribution of Early Years to the PRECEDE project is a reflection of the significant track record of the organisation of successful partnership working at European level and the considerable learning and experiences of the organisation and Early Years members from the impact which striving to promote and develop high quality, evidence-informed early childhood services for young children, their families and communities can have on the peace and reconciliation process, advancing child rights and the fight against child poverty and social exclusion.

Other partners within the PRECEDE project include early childhood organisations and experts from Serbia, Macedonia, Albania, Croatia and Kosovo.

We look forward to bringing you more updates on the PRECEDE project over the next two years.
AGM Acc

Early Years Accreditation

Ardsraw Community Playgroup, Newtownstewart, Co Tyrone

Saul Community Playgroup, Downpatrick, Co Down

Rainbow Playgroup, Carrickfergus, Co Antrim

St Colmcille’s Pre-school Playgroup, Belfast

HighScope Trainer of Trainers

Early Years Specialists presented with HighScope Certified Trainer certificates. Elaine Sterritt is presented with the HighScope Ireland Consultant Training certificate.

All Ireland Centre of Excellence Award

Jolly Tots Day Nursery, Antrim
AGM Accreditations

EARLY YEARS ACCREDITATION
Straldrum Community Playgroup, Claudy, Co Londonderry

EARLY YEARS ACCREDITATION
Sugar and Spice Early Years Centre, Drumquin, Co Tyrone

EARLY YEARS ACCREDITATION
Tober Tynys Community Playgroup, Magherafelt, Co Londonderry

HIGHSCOPE IRELAND INSTITUTE ACCREDITATION
Balloughry Integrated Community Playgroup, Londonderry

HIGHSCOPE IRELAND INSTITUTE ACCREDITATION
Clady Tiny Tots, Armagh

HIGHSCOPE IRELAND INSTITUTE ACCREDITATION
Brockagh Pre-school, Coalisland, Co Tyrone
AGM + Dinner

Early Years - the organisation for young children
AGM Field Visits

Early Years International Conference and AGM 2014
Thursday 5 and Friday 6 June 2014, Hilton Hotel Templepatrick.
The Early Years Volunteer Awards 2013

The Early Years Volunteer Awards were launched in 2011 as a result of the European Commission designating 2011 as the European Year for Volunteering.

The 2013 Awards were a great success and clearly demonstrated how indispensable volunteers are to our day to day work. Volunteering is a commitment of time and energy which comes with its challenges but is fruitful in its rewards. Early Years - the organisation for young children believes it is imperative that the valuable contribution made by dedicated volunteers is recognised.

Any volunteer working to help Early Years member groups can be nominated for an award. It gives an opportunity to recognise volunteers for their enthusiasm, commitment, passion and expertise and how they have made a real difference to the groups they work with.

The volunteers demonstrated:

- A high level of personal commitment.
- Positive contribution and difference to the local community.
- How they overcame obstacles or difficulties in their role.
- How they benefited children, parents, staff members or the setting.
- How they supported volunteers within the setting.

The Volunteer Awards had four categories recognising the outstanding achievements of volunteers in an early years setting. The awards were presented at the AGM by Lady Moyra Campbell to:

- Outstanding Pre-school committee volunteer
- Outstanding volunteer at a Parent and Toddler Group
- Outstanding volunteer at a Pre-School
- The Moyra Campbell Lifetime Achievement Award

Sarah Khan, from Aughnacloy Playgroup Ltd was unable to attend the ceremony but received the award for ‘Outstanding Committee Volunteer’.

(Shirley Hawkes, Community Development Manager and Lady Moyra Campbell presenting Judy Campbell with the Outstanding volunteer Award in a parent and toddler and Emma Frew collecting ‘Outstanding Committee Volunteer Award’ on behalf of Jill Coote)
(Pauline Walmsley, Director of Knowledge Exchange and Lady Moyra Campbell presenting Mary McKeivitt from Meigh Community Pre-school with the ‘Outstanding Volunteer in a Pre-School Award’.)

(Pauline Walmsley, Director of Knowledge Exchange and Lady Moyra Campbell presenting Colin Torrington from Happitots Pre-school Centre with the ‘Outstanding Volunteer in a Pre-School Award’.)

(Pauline Walmsley, Director of Knowledge Exchange and Lady Moyra Campbell presenting Pauline Sharkey from Sugar and Spice Early Years Centre with the ‘Outstanding Volunteer Award’.)

(The ‘Outstanding Committee Volunteer Award’ collected on behalf of Owen McLaughlin.)

(Pauline Walmsley, Director of Knowledge Exchange and Lady Moyra Campbell presenting Mary Walsh from St Colmcille’s Pre-school with the ‘Moyra Campbell Lifetime Achievement Award’.)

(Shirley Hawkes, Community Development Manager and Lady Moyra Campbell presenting Judy Campbell with the Outstanding volunteer Award in a parent and toddler and Emma Frew collecting ‘Outstanding Committee Volunteer Award’ on behalf of Jill Coote.)
Community Development Training 2013

Roles and Responsibilities

‘Roles and Responsibilities’ training for management committee members aims to help committees be more effective through understanding governance, the roles of office bearers and responsibilities of the committee.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE (Two sessions)</th>
<th>VENUE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday 21st October and Monday 28th October</td>
<td>Early Years HQ Wildflower Way, Belfast</td>
<td>6.30pm to 9.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 22nd October and Tuesday 29th October</td>
<td>Seagoe Hotel Portadown</td>
<td>6.30pm to 9.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 5th November and Tuesday 12th November</td>
<td>Sandal Centre Coleraine</td>
<td>6.30pm to 9.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday 6th November and Wednesday 13th November</td>
<td>Strabane Enterprise Centre</td>
<td>6.30pm to 9.30pm</td>
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Making Good Grant Applications

The ‘Making Good Grant Applications’ workshop is for management teams to develop confidence in making grant applications to funders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>VENUE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday 23rd September</td>
<td>Armagh Teachers Centre</td>
<td>6.30pm to 8.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 30th September</td>
<td>Early Years HQ Wildflower Way, Belfast</td>
<td>6.30pm to 8.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 30th September</td>
<td>Strabane Enterprise Centre</td>
<td>6.30pm to 8.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday 2nd October</td>
<td>Sandal Centre Coleraine</td>
<td>6.30pm to 8.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday 2nd October</td>
<td>Early Years HQ Wildflower Way, Belfast</td>
<td>2.30pm to 4.30pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Financial Sustainability

‘Financial Sustainability’ training will provide tools for management committees to have better understanding of financial management and inform their decisions to develop sustainable settings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>VENUE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 8th October</td>
<td>Sandal Centre Coleraine</td>
<td>6.30pm to 9.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday 9th October</td>
<td>Silverbirch Hotel, Omagh</td>
<td>6.30pm to 9.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 14th October</td>
<td>Early Years HQ Wildflower Way, Belfast</td>
<td>6.30pm to 9.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday 16th October</td>
<td>Ballybot House Newry</td>
<td>6.30pm to 9.30pm</td>
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</table>
### Recruitment and Selection

'Recruitment and Selection' training aims to provide management teams with increased knowledge and a better understanding of good practice when recruiting and selecting new staff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>VENUE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday 18th November</td>
<td>Early Years HQ</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wildflower Way, Belfast</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 19th November</td>
<td>Armagh Teachers Centre</td>
<td>6.30pm to 9.00pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday 21st January 2014</td>
<td>Silverbirch Hotel, Omagh</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday 22nd January 2014</td>
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<td>6.30pm to 9.00pm</td>
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<td>Monday 3rd March</td>
<td>Early Years HQ</td>
<td>2.30pm to 5.00pm</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wildflower Way, Belfast</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday 5th March</td>
<td>Seagoe Hotel Portadown</td>
<td>2.30pm to 5.00pm</td>
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### Support, Supervision and Appraisal

'Support, Supervision and Appraisal' training will assist members of management teams, leaders and managers to recognise the importance and value of good induction, supervision and appraisal processes for staff members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>VENUE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday 25th November</td>
<td>Early Years HQ</td>
<td>6.30pm to 9.00pm</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wildflower Way, Belfast</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday 27th November</td>
<td>Ballybot House Newry</td>
<td>6.30pm to 9.00pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 4th February</td>
<td>Sandal Centre Coleraine</td>
<td>6.30pm to 9.00pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday 5th February</td>
<td>Strabane Enterprise Centre</td>
<td>6.30pm to 9.00pm</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Recognising and Sustaining the Workforce

'Recognising and Sustaining the Workforce' training aims to support managers in their role to ensure a planned approach to recognise, grow and retain qualified and experienced staff delivering good practice in the setting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>VENUE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday 2nd December</td>
<td>Early Years HQ</td>
<td>6.30pm to 9.00pm</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wildflower Way, Belfast</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday 4th December</td>
<td>Strabane Enterprise Centre</td>
<td>6.30pm to 9.00pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday 5th February 2014</td>
<td>Seagoe Hotel Portadown</td>
<td>6.30pm to 9.00pm</td>
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Respecting Difference in the Education Sector Project

The Respecting Difference in the Education Sector project is a three year project supported by the European Union’s Peace III Programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body. The aim of this project is to develop a Respecting Difference Programme within the primary school system in Northern Ireland and the border counties of the Republic of Ireland. It focuses on children aged between five and eight, their teachers and parents, and aims to create real and discernible changes in attitudes, behaviour and awareness of sectarian, racial and ethnic differences among children, parents and teachers.

Over the duration of the project, members of the MIFC Inclusion Team are working with thirty schools in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, targeting approximately 1,000 children, 120 teachers and 1,000 parents.

The schools are being encouraged to develop cross community and cross border partnerships with neighbouring schools that are also involved in the project.

On the 23 May 2013 children from St Tiarnach’s National School, Clones, Co Monaghan, met with children from McClintock Primary School, Seskinore, Co Tyrone, at the Lakeland Forum, Enniskillen, as part of the cross border partnership that has been established under this project. The purpose of this joint activity was to explore similarities and differences, friendship building and the outdoor environment. 68 children attended the joint activity with nine adults (including three teachers and six classroom assistants). Three main activities were offered on the day including:

- Arts and crafts area – the Kim puppet was introduced and the children were able to recall what had happened to Kim in relation to the message ‘Kim Joins In’. Discussions ensued about how Kim felt when her family moved here from China and how she missed her Granny who still lives in Hong Kong. Children then made kites that they could take outside to fly in the park to make Kim feel better.
- Bouncy Castle – friendship building games in relation to similarities and differences. In pairs children were asked to retrieve letters and numbers from the bouncy castle relating to things they had in common or things that were different, eg same initial letters in their names, same age, different school names, teachers’ names, football teams they supported, etc.
- Outdoor Play Area – children went outside to the play park where they could engage in free play, fly their kites and have their snack together.

On 24 May 2013 a similar event was held in St Patricks PS in Crossmaglen, where Principal, Michael Madine, and his staff welcomed the children in Senior Infants and First Class and their teachers from Scoil Eanna, Ballybay, Co Monaghan, to spend a day in their school and local community centre. 104 children attended the joint activity with 10 adults (including four teachers and six classroom assistants).

Respecting Difference in East Belfast – starting with young children and extending into the community

The staff team in Little Ducks Pre-school at Carew Family Centre in East Belfast has been naturally weaving the Media Initiative for Children Respecting Difference Programme (MIFC) into their early years curriculum since January 2012. The centre is involved in the Early Years ‘Faces and Spaces’ programme which is funded by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMdFM) and Atlantic Philanthropies (AP) and aims to build good relations within and between communities.

Faces and Spaces has piloted a number of shared aspects into the already evidence-based MIFC and Little Ducks has been paired with Short Strand Community Playgroup to engage in shared activities with children and parents.

Despite the flags issue of recent months where conflict was experienced in particular in East Belfast, Carew and Short Strand have continued to hold joint activities with children and parents as well as joint parents’ workshops.

Indeed both groups have extended the programme to the younger children in the centres through the more recently developed MIFC Programme for two to three year old children which focuses on children’s emotional well-being and social development.

‘Faces and Spaces’ includes a youth mentoring aspect and young people within the community are trained in the MIFC and placed in early years settings where the programme is being implemented.

Little Ducks has had a teenage boy working with them under this aspect of the programme for the last two years and he has proved to be very popular with the children … and the puppets!

Older sisters and brothers have also become interested in the programme as puppets are taken home to spend the weekend with families and as a result can spark off conversations around diversity.

The older children in one family whose younger sibling attend Little Ducks Pre-school channelled their artistic abilities into creating a mural of the MIFC characters at Carew. Images of the characters now have pride of place in the playroom showing that they are an integral part of the early years curriculum but are also creating a dialogue amongst all age groups in the community.
The Rural Respecting Difference Programme is six months into implementation. It involves the unique partnership of Northern Ireland Rural Development Council, Early Years and the Border Counties Childhood Network. The Rural Respecting Difference Programme is part financed by the European Union’s PEACE III Programme, managed for the special EU Programmes Body by the Pobal Consortium.

The Rural Respecting Difference Programme is based on the Early Years Media Initiative for Children Respecting Difference Programme and is aimed at rural-based primary schools and afterschool clubs in a number of geographic areas along the border in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

The Media Initiative for Children has been proven to deliver positive attitudes towards difference in both young children and their families. This project brings another dimension to the Media Initiative as it gives Early Years an opportunity to engage with harder to reach families in rural areas through our innovative approach to inclusion and diversity related work.

A busy autumn schedule has been planned with upcoming training dates as follows:

**Clones:** 8th and 9th October 2013  
**Kesh:** 21st and 22nd October 2013  
**Muff:** 12th and 13th November 2013

If you would like additional information on the project, please contact:

**Moira Graham-Cruz,**  
Early Years Specialist,  
**on 074 3681 7841**  
or **email moirag@early-years.org**

or

**Colette Quigley,**  
Early Years Specialist,  
**on 074 3681 7842**  
or **email coletteq@early-years.org**

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**European Union**  
European Regional Development Fund  
Investing in your future

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**BCCN**  
Border Counties Childhood Network  
**rdc**  
Rural Development Council  
**Special EU Programmes Body**  
Foras Um Chlár Spéisalta an AE  
**early years**  
the organisation for young children
Early Years - the organisation for young children

HighScope Ireland presents at the Childminding Conference in Dublin – Adults’ Interactions which Support Children’s Development

This HighScope practical workshop was held in April 2013 at National College of Ireland (NCI) Dublin. It looked at children’s play and how as adults and childminders in particular, we may best support it. Children need to actively explore materials, ideas and people to grow in knowledge of their world. We can support their growing awareness with our attentive presence. This workshop explored practical ways to engage and extend children’s learning and development.

A large number of childminders attended this practical HighScope workshop and were very attentive and supportive with their comments and interactions. They created a mission statement for children in their care and found this exercise very rewarding as it set the scene for all their interactions with young children. Participants looked at their current practice and what works well and what could improve. Having studied and practised the ingredients of active learning and intrinsic motivation, participants then planned for future change. They realised the importance of listening, being totally attentive, accepting children’s views, understanding the child’s development and actively supporting individual stages of development. They looked in-depth at the role of the adult within each interaction and the importance of that role at all times. Participants looked in detail at how to participate in children’s play and experienced appropriate conversation strategies, discussed problem solving and encouragement strategies and how to be present to each child. This is what grows a child’s worth.

Evaluations were very positive. Great fun was had by all who attended the conference. We must realise that when we play with children, fun is central to the learning process.
The North West implements the ‘Tendercare and Early Learning’
HighScope Approach

Three groups in the North West have continued to implement the
Tendercare and Early Learning HighScope Approach to support
the young children and families in their settings and
have also contributed in additional special ways to sharing their
practice this year.

SureStart Shantallow
SureStart Shantallow has been committed to the HighScope
Tendercare Approach, has trained in and implemented the
Approach in their settings to support the children/families for
many years and continues to train newer members of their
staff teams in the Approach.

In June of this year, three Shantallow SureStart settings -
Steelstown, First Friends Developmental Programmes for 2-3
Year Olds, and Galliagh creche - shared their high quality
practice with delegates at the Early Years Conference with a
series of visits which enabled delegates to view and discuss
the practice both in the settings and in the range of services in
SureStart Shantallow for parents and children.

The teams also supported the sharing of the Approach at the
roadshows organised by HighScope Ireland in October 2012
and at the HighScope Conference in May 2013 in America
where the delegates were very interested in the visuals from
the group which illustrated how the approach is implemented
in Ireland.

Little Orchids Centre
Little Orchids Centre has just completed a TenderCare and
Early Learning Course which enabled both staff and volunteers
in the centre to train together with two staff members from
SureStart Shantallow.

End of Course site visits from the course showed high quality
practice and implementation of the approach and a celebration
of this took place at the end of May in the centre with Elaine
Sterritt (HighScope Ireland trainer/Early Years specialist), staff
members, volunteers, parents, children and Amanda Doherty
from Big Lottery Fund, who presented the certificates.

The celebration event afforded the opportunity for everyone
to share their reflections on the course, the impact on the
development of the setting and further implementation ideas
and was enjoyed by everyone.

Strabane SureStart
Strabane SureStart continues to show its commitment to
implementing the Approach with both their initial completion of
a Tendercare and Early Learning Course for 16 staff members and
their current training on a second Tendercare Course for 16 further
members of their staff team.

This commitment to training has enabled team members from the
various SureStart Centres to train/discuss/reflect and implement
HighScope in a consistent and thoughtful way.

In addition, Strabane SureStart has been both proactive and
supportive, both in sharing visuals and reflections on their
continued implementation of the Approach at the HighScope
Roadshows which are organised by HighScope Ireland and also
at a workshop delivered this year at the HighScope International
Conference in Ypsilanti.
Showcasing the Family Health Initiative

Early Years presented the Family Health Initiative at the European Child Health Conference in Dublin City University. This was a brilliant opportunity to display the positive impact of the Family Health Initiative, and learn from other countries’ experiences. Child health was highlighted and it was stressed that this needs to be added to the forefront of policy making, as children are our future generation.

At the close of the conference a student council provided their views and experiences, highlighting it is important to hear the voice of the child and seek their opinions in all areas. Information on the Family Health Initiative poster can be viewed on www.obesitylearningcentre.org.uk which provides relevant updates on obesity and health.

Family Health Initiative Update

We are delighted to announce that The Family Health Initiative has been extended in the SHSCT area for an additional six months until the end of March 2014 through funding from the Public Health Agency. Please see below future programmes planned, spaces are still available for anyone interested in attending these sessions.

If you would like to register or would like any further information, login to www.early-years.org/health or contact Diane on 077 9133 4012 or Davina on 028 8554 9416.

The Family Health Initiative has been awarded funding from Fit Futures – ‘A Fitter Future for All’ which outlines a 10-year strategy seeking to tackle the prevalence of obesity across Northern Ireland. The Family Health Initiative will be delivered within super output areas in Greater Belfast from September 2013 to March 2014.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prevention Programmes</th>
<th>Management Programmes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oasis Centre, Portadown 03/10/13 (10.30am to 12noon)</td>
<td>Hart Memorial P.S, Portadown 02/10/13 (6.00pm to 8.00pm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish Parent and Toddler Group, Portadown (date and time to be confirmed)</td>
<td>St Francis P.S, Lurgan 08/10/13 (6.00pm to 8.00pm)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please download the document above at: www.early-years.org/health/docs/FHI.pdf
Workplace pensions law has now changed. Since October 2012 every employer has new legal duties to help their workers save for retirement. Your setting will have to provide staff with a workplace pension and pay into the scheme. If you don’t already offer a pension, you must set one up before your staging date.

The Early Years Members Group Personal Pension Scheme has been successfully launched and adopted by a number of groups over the past year.

It takes a considerable period of time to get the scheme up and running.

To help you deal with this important matter, Joe McAllister and John Joe Muldoon from Verity Pensions will meet with your committee, management team and staff and take you through the following steps:

- Explain your obligations and the costs of introducing the pension scheme.
- Formulate a plan to clarify what you have to do and when.
- Provide specific pension advice to your staff.
- Set up the employee pensions.
- Provide ongoing support and guidance on the running of the scheme.

It is important you act now.

For an initial discussion call Joe or John Joe directly on 028 7938 6624 (office) or:

Joe McAllister – 077 4101 1157
John Joe Muldoon – 077 4101 1156

Time is running Out
Time to Act

As an employer you need to know your obligations under new pension reform legislation.
The Early Years pension advisers at Verity will guide you every step of the way.

Call Joe or John Joe on 028 79 386 624
Clogher Valley SureStart

Clogher Valley SureStart has had an exceptionally busy summer period! The sunshine and the exciting variety of activities provided brought record numbers to our summer activities this year again! Great fun was had by all.

We hosted our Annual Family Fun Day 'FARMYARD FUN' on Saturday 29 June with Blackberry mobile farm in attendance. Mr Piggles, Daisy the Cow and Genevieve the goat made a welcome appearance and we had the Live Launch of CVSS 'Farm Yard Dance'!

This September we look forward to meeting our new children and getting them settled into Two's Company, our programme for two year olds.

Don’t forget to check out CVSS monthly ‘Dates for Diary’ for our wide variety of various programmes and events coming up over the autumn/winter period available online at www.early-years.org/surestart

Flying High with SureStart South Armagh

SureStart South Armagh annual family fun day in Bessbrook Community Centre was once again a great success. Families enjoyed face painting, music, arts and crafts and lots of family fun events.

All children received an age appropriate kite kit and under the watchful eye and instruction of Warren Polly from NI kitesurfing constructed their own kites. Warren said 'I was delighted to attend SureStart South Armagh’s family fun day, children of all ages thoroughly enjoy making, designing and ultimately flying their own creations, boosting their confidence, ability and team work skills from an early age. Kevin Green, SureStart South Armagh's newly appointed Fathers Worker, was kept busy at the penalty shoot-out – no final score was available!

SureStart South Armagh ran over 100 free programmes for members over July and August including Teddy Bears picnics, Forest Walks, Storytelling, Art Attacks, Big Cook Wee Cook, Baby café, Baby Massage and Family Fun Days in Slieve Gullion, Cowan’s Yard and Silverbridge GAC. Lyndsey O'Neill, SureStart Member, said “really enjoyed spending our summer out and about with SureStart, the children love meeting their friends at SureStart programmes and there is always loads for them to do and I get some great ideas for games and playing with them at home.”

For further information please contact SureStart South Armagh on 028 3083 0022, email: info@sureestartsa.org or visit our website www.sureestartsa.org
On 25 and 26 June 2013 Early Years participated, with 67 other full and associate members from across Europe, at the Eurochild General Assembly 2013 in Brussels.

Eurochild (www.eurochild.org) is a network of organisations and individuals working in and across Europe to improve the quality of life of children and young people and promote partnership and participation. The work of Eurochild is underpinned by the principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the network is funded by the European Commission within the PROGRESS Programme. Eurochild has members in 35 countries all over Europe (both within and outside of the EU).

Participation in the Eurochild network provides an important opportunity to ensure that the perspective of Early Years and its members, in aiming to promote and develop high quality, evidence-informed early childhood services for young children, their families and communities, contributes to the early childhood policy debate in Europe and influences and supports the strategic and advocacy work of both the Eurochild network and the EU in this field.

The major topics this year at the General Assembly were the election of parts of the network’s Management Board, approval of annual budgets, networking discussions, the approval of 25 new organisational and individual members and the endorsement of the network’s Strategic Plan 2014-2018.

The five primary goals stipulated in the Eurochild Strategic Plan resonate very clearly with the visions and values of Early Years to which the organisation and our members work. These include:

- Putting children’s rights and well-being at the heart of policy making.
- Building a community of professionals who integrate children’s rights and well-being into their daily work.
- Giving a voice to children and young people.
- Changing the way society views and treats its children and young people.
- Developing the Eurochild network in order to deliver a powerful force for change.

Eurochild’s Annual Report 2012 was also published at the General Assembly outlining the last year’s activities and success stories.

More information on the Eurochild Strategic Plan and Annual Report 2012 can be obtained from the following links:

**Eurochild Strategic Plan**

**Eurochild Annual Report 2012**

At the General Assembly Management Board member Ivano Abruzzi from Albero della Vita also gave a short overview of the 2013 Eurochild Annual Conference ‘Building an inclusive Europe – the contribution of children’s participation’ to take place 13 to 15 November 2013 in Milan, Italy. The main aim of the 2013 Conference is to promote wide recognition of children’s empowerment and influence on their own lives, their families and communities and society as a whole so that children are fully fledged citizens with a voice of their own, not mere recipients or passive dependents of decisions made by others on their behalf. Further coverage of the Annual Conference event will be featured in a later edition of the Early Years Magazine.
The Network for the Quality in Early Childhood Education from 0-6 years is a co-operative network with educative and training institutions in Europe, aimed at comparing, analysing and facing the socio challenges that arise in the growth of early childhood 0-6 years, and finding solutions for the new realities and special needs found in their education systems. The project has been funded with support from the European Commission Lifelong Learning Programme.

Representatives from each partner country attended the third NetQ6 Technical Committee Meeting held in Belfast. All the partners contributed to the project progress with tasks and discussed actions to grow the project beyond the consortium. These meetings provide us with a forum in which to discuss the real world application of implementation best practices.

The network visited Carew Family Centre which is participating in Early Years ‘Faces and Spaces – Children’s Shared Space Programme’ along with Short Strand Community Centre, East Belfast. The programme promotes a culture of respect for difference in terms of race, religion, disability and ethnicity and is one of five projects in Northern Ireland to receive funding from the Contested Space/Interface Programme from OFMDFM and the Atlantic Philanthropies. It has been designed to promote the role of early intervention in building good relations between interface communities.

In the final stage NetQ6 will enable members to find out about practices and approaches in other contexts that they might adopt, discuss issues relating to the field that no-one has solved yet, new ways to collaborate and develop training, discover research done in other places and have the value of being a member of this wider network.

For further Information please refer to www.early-years.org/netq6
Your views on the next ’Contribution of the Voluntary, Community and Independent Early Years Sector in Northern Ireland’ report

In December 2011 Early Years officially launched the ‘Contribution of the Voluntary, Community and Independent Early Years Sector in Northern Ireland’ report at Parliament Buildings, Stormont. The report was based on the results of an extensive consultative exercise, completed in both online and hardcopy formats, with members.

It represented the first comprehensive analysis of such early childhood providers in Northern Ireland. The three key elements of this study related to:

- **Financial Contribution to Northern Ireland’s Economy**
- **Trends in Diversity and Inclusion Policies and Strategies**
- **Workforce, Staffing and Qualification Standards in the Sector**

The headline findings from this study, that the voluntary and independent members of Early Years support the needs of almost 32,620 children and an estimated 12,500 families in Northern Ireland and, in employing over 6,540 staff directly, the sector also makes an important social and financial contribution by generating £55m in salaries with a further £14m spent in the wider economy on overheads, annual running costs and capital investment programmes, have proved to be considerable messages, highly applicable to our engagement with legislators, policy makers, academics, funders and other relevant stakeholders in the area of early childhood education and care alike.

It is proposed to undertake a further study to provide an updated assessment of the contribution of the voluntary and private childcare and education sector to the Northern Irish economy and society; explore how providers feel about the future; and gather key information on services.

Some discussion regarding a further assessment took place in early 2012. However, the need for an updated assessment is even more relevant now in an environment which has experienced the launch of the Minimum Standards, ‘Learning to Learn’ Framework proposals, movement towards a childcare strategy for the region and discussion on what shared education, and even a shared future, should look like in Northern Ireland.

The final version of the last sector contribution report released in December 2011 is available via the Early Years web link below.

Contribution of the Voluntary, Community and Independent Early Years Sector in Northern Ireland Report 2011


Please provide any comments, ideas or suggestions regarding additional areas or topics to be refined in an updated assessment to Noel McAllister by email (noelm@early-years.org) or telephone (028 9038 7951) by Friday 20 September 2013.
Early Years Salary Service
Salary Service To Members

We will
• Maintain pay and deductions records for your staff.
• Process SSP/SMP/student loans as required.
• Provide monthly payslips for your employees.
• Calculate HMRC liability (P32) and forwarded payment slip to you each month.
• Process leavers and provide P45.
• Process new employees.
• Process Pension contributions.
• Provide government departments with statistical and financial information as requested.
• Complete the end of year return to the HMRC and online filing as required.
• Provide year-end P60 to all employees.

Is your group prepared for RTI?

Online returns to HRMC are due from Monday 1 April 2013. This service is covered within the Early Years Salary Service.

Please complete the expression of interest form and return it to:

Mr Colm McCaughley
Early Years
6C Wildflower Way
Belfast
BT12 6TA

Phone 028 9066 2825
Fax 028 9038 1270
Email pgwages@early-years.org

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FAX: 02890 233902

Your Early Years Approved Broker

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Online returns to HRMC are due from Monday 1 April 2013. This service is covered within the Early Years Salary Service.

Please complete the expression of interest form and return it to:

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6C Wildflower Way
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Submit your articles to the Early Years Newsletter

Have you an anniversary celebration planned, a Branch event scheduled or would you like to share the success of good practice or recent training and professional development? Early Years is inviting all our readers to send us articles along with photos to feature in our Early Years Newsletter or on the Early Years website and online communities*.

Practical guides for creating an article and ensuring high resolution images are submitted are available online within the Early Years Members’ Area. The guidelines help to ensure your article gets the attention it deserves. Images are a great way to capture an audience and entice them to read your story. Please ensure all images are high quality and you have obtained parental permission before submitting.

If you have any queries or would like a copy of these guidelines, please contact Tonine McMenamin, Web Master, on (0)28 9066 2825 or email toninem@early-years.org

*Early Years discretion applies – if your article has missed the deadline or needs to be edited further, it will not be featured in the newsletter.
The Turner Prize 2013 Family Programme

Join us in our dedicated, welcoming space for the whole family to explore the themes in The Turner Prize 2013 exhibition.

In Partnership with Early Years

The Turner Prize 2013 will work with Early Years to ensure the highest quality experience for our young visitors and their families.

Invitation to families to get involved in our partner programme

We would like you to come along to our specially designed Early Years family sessions.

Who you are
You would like to explore a new adventure in art with your children and meet other families in a safe and informal environment.

What will happen
These sessions will work with the whole family unit, so parents/caregivers can come to the session with children of different ages and we will all work together.

The emphasis will be on looking at art and discovering things together and rather than the facilitator giving information, the sessions will be led by you and your ideas. If this sounds daunting, don’t worry, the facilitators are highly experienced and you will be in a relaxed, informal setting with other families all at the same starting point. Some of the sessions will be based in the Turner Prize galleries, some in other visual arts spaces around the city, and some in the Turner Prize Learning space where studio work with different artists will take place to complement the discussions and sound, touch and movement will be used in the sessions to deepen engagement.

A maximum of five families can take part in this programme and you will be asked to commit to three sessions, the dates of which will be worked out between the group at our first meeting.

If you would like to take part, please contact Lynn McGrane, Head of Learning, by emailing:

lynn.mcgrane@cityofculture2013.com

The closing date for applications is Monday 14 October and the first meeting will take place on a date that suits everyone.
Early Years is acting as an Umbrella Body for processing AccessNI checks for our members. If you are a member of Early Years and would like to avail of this service please contact the Early Years Disclosures Service.

The Early Years Disclosures Service will carry out the following services:
- Disclosure tracking
- Form processing
- Guidance
- Training on AccessNI process

The Early Years Disclosures Service, 6c Wildflower Way, Belfast, BT12 6TA
T: 028 9038 7908  E: disclosures@early-years.org
### Membership Comparison 2013/2014

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<th>Early Years 2013/14</th>
<th>Pre-School Learning Alliance</th>
<th>WPPA</th>
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#### MEMBERSHIP FEES Group Members

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<th>Creche</th>
<th>Out of School Club</th>
<th>Parent and Toddler</th>
<th>Nursery School/Unit/class</th>
<th>Schools (Foundation Stage - Years 1 and 2)</th>
<th>Dual (combinations of the above)</th>
<th>Family Centre</th>
<th>Multi-site</th>
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<th>Individual</th>
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#### Notes
1. Through our insurance package
2. Funding opportunities not exclusive to members
3. WPPA - Dual Membership = Playgroup (under five provider) and Parent and Toddler group together
4. SPPA - £113 = Daycare only/£130 = Daycare including After Schools Club. Under fives with out of school care
5. SPPA - voluntary sector = £88 - £108 depending on income; non-voluntary sector = £149
6. Early Childhood Ireland - €31.50 affiliation fee for first time applications
7. Early Childhood Ireland holds network meetings rather than branch meetings
8. As part of structured programmes

Please note that the Pre-School Learning Alliance, WPPA, SPPA and Early Childhood Ireland may offer additional benefits to those stated in the table.

For further information on Early Childhood Ireland’s additional benefits, visit

http://www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/membership-services-insurance-benefits/benefits-of-membership/
The Southern Health and Social Care Trust recently held its annual pre-school Boost Better Breaks Awards. The programme is in its 19th successful year, aiming to encourage and highlight the importance of healthy food and drink choices for children at breaktimes.

The competition was organised by the Trust’s Community Dental Services and was sponsored by the Dairy Council for Northern Ireland, with Vice-Chairperson Michael Drayne presenting the prizes. Each year, the competition involves submitting a piece of creative artwork to promote Boost Better Breaks and all education facilities implementing the programme are invited to participate in the competition.

Dr Mike Johnston, Chief Executive of the Dairy Council for Northern Ireland, said: “Through our sponsorship of the Boost Better Breaks competition we welcome the chance to work with the Southern Health and Social Care Trust to highlight the importance that a good diet can play for a child’s health and development.

“Healthy eating habits can give children the best chance of doing well at school. Healthy snacks are part of this and milk can be a good choice, providing essential nutrients including calcium, protein, iodine and vitamins B2 and B12. We hope that the scheme will also encourage children to develop healthy habits from a young age that they will continue into adulthood.”

Winning entries were judged by Sharon Flanagan, Early Years Specialist and will be displayed on a calendar, which is circulated throughout the Trust’s area. Sharon said: “I liked the wide range of materials used and had a very difficult task choosing the winners. It was very evident that child initiated ideas were incorporated into the entries and I loved the photographic supporting evidence. Congratulations to all those who took part.”

This year’s winners were:

1st Bella Bambinos Day Nursery, Dromore
2nd Happy Faces Pre-School, Glassdrummond
Joint 3rd Downshire Nursery School, Banbridge; Dunnaman Children’s Playgroup, Kilkeel

Donard School Nursery Class, Banbridge and Tiny Stars Playgroup, Clonmore both received ‘Highly Commended’ recognition for their entries.

Michele Oliver, Head of Dental Services at the Southern Trust, said:

“We are delighted that the Boost Better Breaks awards this year took place during National Smile Month. By promoting healthier food and drink choices at break times, we encourage children to make good decisions from an early age which will hopefully lead to a healthier future for them. We would thank all the pre-schools who made such an effort in participating in the Boost Better Breaks programme.”
Early Years – the organisation for young children is an acting agents for the Sesame Tree programme, incorporating the perspectives and values into early years work to ensure the Sesame Tree programmes leave a legacy in Northern Ireland. Programme Consultant, Eleanor Mearns launched the translated outreach materials for series one and two of Sesame Tree at the Early Years International Conference and AGM in the Derry City Hotel. The outreach materials are available in English, Polish, Lithuania and Irish.

The outreach materials have been developed in accordance with the Personal, Social and Emotional (PSE) area of learning in the Curricular Guidance for Pre-school Education. It is based on the understanding that good personal, social and emotional development gives children the best opportunity for success in other areas of learning.

The materials focus on themes from the local ‘Sesame Tree’ television series (e.g. co-operation) and suggests a range of play activities which aim to develop a sense of personal worth, increase self-confidence and promote positive relationships. Sesame Tree, launched in 2008 on BBC NI and CBeebies, includes live action films capturing depictions of daily life circumstances, presenting real children in meaningful activities, thereby making concrete for young children their awareness of ‘others’ and fostering positive community relations.

The Sesame Tree online platform was also promoted at the International Conference and incorporates the pre-school outreach materials for series one and pre-series two of Sesame Tree, as well as all the full episodes from each series. The platform will act as a support for pre-school practitioners who are currently implementing, or intending to implement, the Media Initiative for Children or other inclusion approaches.

Early Years practitioners have found that the Sesame Live Action Films and the Media Initiative resources can work well together and actually complement each other to reinforce some of the concepts covered in both and make them meaningful to young children in Northern Ireland. You can get ideas of how practitioners have done this on the Sesame Tree Online Learning Platform. Navigate through the site by clicking on series one above to start your learning journey at www.early-years.org/sesame-tree/

Financial support from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure in Northern Ireland enabled Sesame Workshop and Early Years to share these resources with early years practitioners across Northern Ireland.

Early Years Online Community

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