

# early years

## This Month

Rathfriland Playgroup Receive  
Highest Inspection Award

Rainbow SureStart Launched

New Members' Insurance Scheme

New Early Years Area Managers

early  
years  
the organisation for young children



Delegates from 80 countries will attend the World Forum in Belfast, Pauline Walmsley and Siobhan Fitzpatrick are pictured at the ISSA Step by Step Conference in Budapest with international delegates from around the world who plan to come to Belfast next summer.

## WORLD FORUM ON EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION COMES TO BELFAST IN 2009

Early Years - the organisation for young children is to host the 2009 World Forum in Belfast on the 16-19 June at the Europa Hotel in Belfast. Over 600 early childhood administrators, trainers, caregivers, public officials, and advocates from over 80 countries around the world, will gather in Belfast for the 2009 World Forum to exchange ideas about the quality of services for young children in diverse settings.

Siobhan Fitzpatrick, Early Years Chief Executive said: *"We are delighted to announce that the World Forum on Early Care and Education will be held in Belfast next year. The World Forum will promote the improved delivery of quality services for young children by bringing together early childhood professionals from six continents to share ideas and perspectives and to develop relationships that continue into the future"*.

The 2009 World Forum in Belfast will mark the 10th Anniversary of the World Forum Foundation, in the last 10 years over 5,000 early childhood professionals from 90 nations have participated in World Forum gatherings in Hawaii, Singapore, Greece, New Zealand, Mexico, Canada, Malaysia and now Belfast in 2009.

Bonnie Neugerbauer of the World Forum on Early Education and Care said: *"We are very excited about bringing the World Forum to Belfast and have had great interest from our members on holding the event in Belfast. Early Years - the organisation for young children is a highly-respected comprehensive early childhood agency working throughout Europe and internationally and it is a credit to their work that the World Forum is being held in Belfast"*.

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## DEAR READERS ...



Members and readers, welcome to the first newsletter of the 2008/09 pre school year. I hope all of you had a well earned if perhaps a wet break over the summer.

The summer period continues to be an increasingly busy period for the organisation. The AGM and Conference in June led to a flurry of on going advocacy and lobbying activity. We were delighted at the number of MLAs who attended the Conference in Derry and the subsequent Branch event in Fermanagh. As a result I have spent a lot of time in Stormont meeting with Ministers, Committee Chairs and MLAs. Their commitment to our lobby for a Transformation Fund is solid and we hope to see this translated into a real programme of staff training, development and remuneration once the 0-6 Strategy is launched. We continue to be hopeful that we will have the draft strategy out for final consultation before Christmas.

The AGM and Conference also brought with it the announcement that Early Years will host the World Forum on Care and Education in June 2009. This is an enormous honour for the organisation giving us the chance to showcase all that is good within the early years sector in Northern Ireland. We will also have the opportunity to show Ulster hospitality to more than 800 delegates from over 80 countries world-wide. Keep an eye on our website for more information on what promises to be a truly international event.

In this edition of the newsletter you will read about our new partnership with Allianz who will be responsible for the Early Years insurance scheme for the next 3 years. The scheme will continue to be managed by Lockton but will bring a range of increased cover for member groups at a very competitive price. I am particularly delighted to announce that Directors and Committee members will have liability cover included in this new cover. This move is a direct result of members requesting that this cover be made available given the highly complex tasks and responsibilities now expected from Management Committees.

I hope you are all looking forward to a busy and rewarding year with the young children in your care. Give of your best, engage with your local Early Years Branch, attend the training and development opportunities which will be available in your local area and most of all enjoy the time you spend nurturing and growing our youngest citizens. Like them you will never have this time again.

Siobhan Fitzpatrick  
Chief Executive Early Years

## WORLD FORUM ON EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION from page 1



Delegates will have the chance to participate in a range of activities such as plenaries addressing major issues in early years with internationally renowned keynote speakers, over 50 workshops on policy, leadership, and curriculum issues, study tours to early childhood centres across Northern Ireland as well as experiencing the local history and culture. The World Forum will have over 120 presenters from 60 nations, the 10th Anniversary International Dance, five networking receptions, Gala Welcoming Receptions and Farewell Luncheons and an International Children's Art Exhibit.

### Home Hosting at the World Forum

Early Years has also invited members and staff from Belfast and the surrounding area to act as a Home Host for the World Forum 2009 for delegates from developing countries attending the

Conference. As a Host, you'll be asked to provide accommodation from 15th to 20th June 2009, breakfast and a meal on two or three evenings.

Early Years would like to encourage our members to take part in this exciting opportunity to showcase the hospitality of Northern Ireland. At the same time, hosts have the interest and pleasure of making friends with well-informed adult guests from overseas and in doing so will enable participation of people from developing countries. The experience that delegates gain from staying with local hosts gives them a far better insight into life in their host community. They gain an invaluable and unique perspective of the culture in a way they might not otherwise. Home Hosts will be invited to attend the World Forum at the Europa Hotel including the international opening and closing ceremonies.

## UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

You will have read the good news in this month's Early Years about the World Forum on Early Years Care and Education coming to Belfast in June 2009. The World Forum is a once in a generation opportunity to showcase the work and achievements of Early Years and to show 80 other nations what's best about Northern Ireland.

A theme for the World Forum in 2009 is the 20th birthday celebration of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely supported international treaty in the world.

Early Years - the organisation for young children has been a consistent supporter of the rights of children and of the UN convention. There are 42 articles in the convention which set out how governments promise to respect the rights of children. Fundamental to the convention is the principle of the best interests of the child (Article 3) and the rights to life, survival and development (Article 6) and to have your views heard and acted upon (Article 12). The remaining rights of the convention are grouped into three clusters; Provision, Protection and Participation.

In 1989, the United Nations approved the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is now an international agreement that countries sign up to obey. Once a country agrees to uphold the convention they are legally bound by what it says. The

UK government ratified the Convention on December 6th 1991. This means that the UK government; at both Westminster and Stormont, has to ensure that every child enjoys all the rights in the Convention. Every five years the government has to report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on progress in meeting children's rights - known as an examination.

On September 23rd 2008 the UK government was examined by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Barney McNeany, Early Years Deputy Chief Executive was part of the NGO delegation from NI who provided oral evidence to the CRC on the key issues facing children in the UK. Last week they produced their recommendations to the UK government - the 'concluding observations'. These can be found at [www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/CRC.C.GBR.CO.4.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/CRC.C.GBR.CO.4.pdf)

There are many concerns raised by the committee that are the focus of the work of Early Years; poverty, educational attainment, the status of Travellers, discrimination and equality to name but a few. Early Years - the organisation for young children will continue to advocate on their behalf in order to support the valuable work of the CRC and to highlight the rights of children to play, care and education to support their development.

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## EARLY YEARS LOBBY LOCAL POLITICIANS

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**Early Years members in Fermanagh and South Tyrone made an urgent appeal to local MLAs for funding to help bring members up to a graduate level as part of the Transformation Fund at a lobby event at the Killyhevlin Hotel, Enniskillen at the end of June.**

Fermanagh, Dungannon and Omagh members from Early Years - the organisation for young children, called on MLAs to support the introduction of the fund, which would ensure staff are qualified to a graduate level, similar to the system operating in England and Wales. The event also focused on the effect of primary school reception classes' displacement of playgroup numbers and finances and the need for equal funding for playgroups to support children with special needs.

Early Years - the organisation for young children, strongly believes that a properly remunerated graduate-led workforce will improve the quality of the care and education children receive. They also feel that this investment in the future of our children will reap financial and educational benefits for children for the rest of their lives.

Speaking after the event, Early Years Deputy Chief Executive, Barney McNeany said: "Our members used this platform to vocalise their commitment across this sector and to outline the reasons why the children of Northern Ireland and their parents will be extremely well served by the introduction of a Transformation Fund and a better supported early years sector. Playgroup staff do a fantastic job but we want to raise their skills which in turn will allow them to provide higher quality care for young children".

At present in Northern Ireland there is no training and development strategy for



Pictured at the lobby event at the Killyhevlin Hotel in Enniskillen are Pauline Walmsley, Early Years Director of Knowledge Exchange, Tom Buchanan MLA, Tommy Gallagher MLA, Barney McNeany, Early Years Deputy Chief Executive, Tom Elliott MLA and Councillor Domhnall O Cobhthaigh

people working with young children, while in England and Wales £200 million has been allocated to this type of training.

Commenting on the success of the meeting Michelle McGrory, Early Years Fermanagh Branch Chair and Leader of Newtonbutler Community Playgroup said: "It is very beneficial for branch members to meet with the MLAs and to see first hand how our lobbying work is paying off. We are completely committed to this agenda and we want it to be heard at the highest level possible. We look forward in due course to hearing what the Department of Education's intentions are in relation to the Transformation Fund, reception class displacement, disability needs and to the whole early years provision".

Two more lobby events are planned for this November in the Belfast and Coleraine areas, details will be sent out closer to the time.

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## EARLY YEARS INSURANCE SCHEMES - 2008 UPGRADE

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**In conjunction with Early Years, Lockton have undertaken a detailed review of our insurance schemes looking at premiums, the scope of cover and whether we could obtain other added benefits from our Insurers. Early Years are pleased to announce that from November 2008, our insurance schemes will be underwritten by Allianz.**

What does this mean to members? Lockton have negotiated significant improvements to all of our insurance schemes and these benefits are unique and exclusive to Early Years members. The improvements include:

- Lower premiums for your forthcoming renewal on most schemes.
- A three year guarantee of the scheme rates by

Allianz. This will be very important as it is expected that insurance premiums will rise next year.

- A range of additional covers are now included as standard and Allianz have also increased limits and sums insured on the basic scheme policy.
- Additional added benefits including an exclusive Early Years members' discount scheme with Allianz Direct.

Enhanced Covers will also be available in the new scheme and the full scope of the improved cover will be confirmed by Lockton with the issue of your 2008 renewal documents. We would highlight just a few of the important additions to all the schemes:

- Directors and Officers Liability is now included and this provides important additional cover for all those members in a management role. There is now a growing range of legislation that also holds the owners or managers of businesses and organisations personally responsible for compensating "injured parties" when things go wrong. This can range from breaches of Health and Safety regulations to employment disputes. This policy extension ensures that you are personally protected as well as your business or organisation.
- The responsibilities placed on you as employers are becoming increasingly onerous. Not only could you have to deal with issues surrounding wrongful dismissal but there are also real challenges in relation to discrimination, harassment, terms of employment and so on. Lockton have also now negotiated the inclusion of Employment Practices Liability into the core policy and this will respond to a wide range of employment related incidents.

It may be a storm or it could be vandalism following a

break in. When something does go wrong it is vital that Insurers respond quickly and with minimal fuss to ensure you are open for business as soon as possible. Lockton have been working with Allianz to agree a streamlined approach to claims.

- We have a dedicated 24 hour claims helpline - notify all claims on 028 9037 1530.
- A dedicated loss adjustor - OSG will guarantee a response to scheme members within 24 hours of your claim notification.
- Introduction of Findel Education Limited as an approved supplier for items lost or damaged due to a claim.

Lockton have also negotiated a range of member discounts with Allianz Direct. Allianz Direct is Northern Ireland's leading Insurer for personal insurances - for your motor car, house contents and so on. We now have an exclusive agreement with them to provide discounts to Early Years members. For example:

- You make contact with Allianz Direct for a motor insurance quotation - contact number is 084 5782 8828.
- Once you have the quotation - quote the exclusive Early Years code and Allianz Direct will guarantee a further £35 discount.
- The discount can be used not only by Early Years members and their employees but also by the families of the children in your care!
- A supply of marketing leaflets will be sent out with your renewal pack.

Lockton will be in contact with you as usual to take you through your renewal, but if you do not at present have cover through our Early Years scheme - **call Kareen Wray at Lockton for a quotation on 028 9034 8446.**

## RATHFRILAND PRE-SCHOOL PLAYGROUP RECEIVE HIGHEST INSPECTION AWARD

Early Years member group Rathfriland Pre-school Playgroup have been awarded the highest grade possible following a Department of Education inspection. The report on the playgroup was released in June describing the playgroup as having 'excellent opportunities for learning in all aspects of the pre-school curriculum'. Carried out by the Education and Training Inspectorate section of the Department of Education, assessors spent a day at the pre-school in Rathfriland where they watched the leaders and staff at work, and observed how the children responded.

Playgroup Leader Karen Annett said: "The staff and I are really pleased with the report and are glad that we now have the recognition that the setting deserves".

The pre-school, which has been running for approximately 25 years, has a total of 47 children attending: 23 in the morning session and 24 in the afternoon. There are four full time and one part time members of staff, all of whom hold recognised childcare qualifications. Each session lasts two and a half hours and it was during these sessions the pre-school was assessed.

The inspection report describes the quality of education provided in the pre-school as 'excellent'. Parents, staff and management committee were given the chance to express their views about the centre and it was evident that a 'high level of satisfaction' was expressed by all.

Chairperson of the playgroup Elaine Weir said: "I have always known that we run an excellent setting, but it is nice to have this officially recognised. I would like to thank the staff for working tirelessly to ensure that each child attending achieves his or her full potential. The people of Rathfriland should feel very proud to have such a good facility on their doorstep".

The pre-school was described as having 'appropriate policies and procedures for child protection' and the 'quality of arrangements for pastoral care is very good'. The centre was also noted as giving 'good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity' and has policies in place to 'encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles'. The staff and parents at the pre-school feel an added sense of achievement as the management of the setting is voluntary, with the committee made up of mothers and fathers.

Many of the main strengths of the pre-school focussed on its educational and pastoral provision. The report discussed a 'friendly, caring ethos' which serves to 'promote the children's confidence, self-esteem and good behaviour'. Children 'make full use of, and clearly enjoy, the attractive, rich learning environment' created for them by staff and they 'display a positive attitude to learning' and 'engage in play which is purposeful and productive'.

The report's findings also commented on the interaction between staff and children as being 'consistently good, and at times, excellent'. A 'well organised daily timetable provides suitable periods of uninterrupted play'. Assessors also found the leader and deputy leader 'bring a high level of skill and enthusiasm to their work and promote a strong sense of teamwork among the hard working staff'. The report concluded by saying 'parents can have confidence in the pre-school centre's capacity for sustained self-improvement'

Catherine Russell, Early Years Specialist for the group, congratulated the staff on their success during the inspection. "The staff and committee of Rathfriland Pre-school are totally dedicated to providing excellence in all aspects of the pre-school. The children will benefit as they become strong, competent and visible in their communities, physically and emotionally healthy, eager and able to learn and respectful of difference".



Children from the morning session of Rathfriland Pre-School Playgroup are pictured with staff, Ruth Shields, Student, Lee-Ann Agnew, Playgroup Assistant, Karen Annett, Playgroup Leader, Gail Davidson, Playgroup Assistant.



Children from the afternoon session of Rathfriland Pre-School Playgroup are pictured with staff, Gail Davidson, Playgroup Assistant, Debra Kinley, Deputy Playgroup Leader, Lee-Ann Agnew, Playgroup Assistant and Ruth Shields, Student.



## NEW EARLY YEARS AREA MANAGERS

**Early Years has appointed four new Area Managers as part of the re-organisation of services for members. Early Years Specialists, Early Years Advisors, SureStart staff and project staff will now be organised in line with the Northern Ireland Health Boards and managed by the newly appointed Area Managers.**

The Area Manager's main role will involve identifying and meeting the needs of Early Years services, supporting and mentoring Early Years staff and working in partnership with other agencies. Each Area Manager will have a specific responsibility - Cross Border and High Scope, Inclusion and Community, Improvement and Accreditation and SureStart.

Clare Devlin, Early Years Director of Programmes said: *"The new Area Manager structure will give a greater local focus to the work we deliver to members in each Health Board area. It will enable us to improve services within and across all areas"*.

Kathleen O'Kane has been appointed as Area Manager for the Northern Board and will take the lead on 'Inclusion and Community' including the Toybox and Respecting Difference projects. Kathleen O'Kane started employment with NIPPA in 1998 working as an Early Years Advisor in the Magherafelt area, then as Early Years Specialist in the Sperrin and Strabane area. Kathleen then became Senior Practitioner and Toybox Co-ordinator helping to set up the innovative service for Travellers before being appointed to the Area Manager post. Kathleen has a BA Hons Degree in Early Childhood Education, a Postgraduate Certificate in Integrated Children's Services, a High Scope Training of Trainers Certificate and a Level 6 Certificate in Management from the Institute of Leadership and Management.

Mary O'Reilly is the new Area Manager for the Western Board and will take the lead for High Scope and Cross Border work. Mary began working as an Early Years Advisor with NIPPA in 1991 for the Tyrone and Fermanagh areas, before being appointed as Early Years Specialist for the Omagh area. Mary moved on to manage two EU funded Cross Border Training Programmes for Early Years in 2004 and 2006. Mary completed the NVQ IV in Enhancing Quality and Quality Control in Early Years Settings and the Postgraduate Certificate in Integrated Children's Services among many other professional development courses provided by Early Years and other organisations. Mary brings a range of expertise and skills in the field of early years and looks forward to the challenges ahead in her new post.

Joanne Morgan is the Area Manager for the Southern Board and will take the lead on the SureStart projects. Joanne was previously Manager of the SureStart projects for which Early Years are the lead organisation. Joanne has worked for Early Years for 4 years and previously held the posts of SureStart Manager for Early Years and Co-ordinator of SureStart South Armagh. She has over 12 years experience in management and was responsible for overseeing the development of District and Local Strategy Partnerships to administer Peace Funds for two district councils within Northern Ireland.

Roisin McGrann has been appointed as Area Manager for the Eastern Board and will take the lead on Improvement and Accreditation which will include the 'Eager and Able to Learn' research project. Roisin began her career as a teacher in primary and secondary schools, teaching primary and early years classes in Moira as well as post primary and nursery classes in the Lurgan area. More recently Roisin has worked as Field Officer for the South Eastern Education and Library Board, supporting teachers in their professional development and in the implementation of the revised curriculum. Roisin looks forward to joining Early Years and contributing to the Area Managers Team.

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## MASTER CLASSES BY PROFESSOR GUY CLAXTON: THE PLAYFUL BRAIN

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# 2008 AGM Master Classes by Professor Guy Claxton: The Playful Brain: What Neuroscience Tells Us About How To Develop Powerful Learners.

Professor Guy Claxton gave a thought provoking and challenging masterclass at this year's Early Years International Conference and AGM on the development of neuroscience which gives authority, validity and rationale to our knowledge of how children think and learn.

Professor Claxton started the class by saying how there has been a decrease in community knowledge, that is the passing down of traditional methods for example granny/mummy did it that way or by intuition. Therefore there is a need for neuroscience to explain the reasoning behind why we do things as nobody can argue with the promise of solid concrete foundations. Neuroscientific understanding can help in the treatment of neurologically based disorders such as dyspraxia, dyslexia and ADHD.

There are a lot of 'urban myths' around stimulating the brain development of young children such as:

- The Mozart effect - 'baroque a bye baby'
- Water consumption
- Fish oil
- Critical period - use it or lose it
- Brain exercises - left brain-right brain
- Learning styles
- Feel good - learn good
- Environmental enrichment

However there is no scientific evidence to support any of these urban myths. A lot of these myths have been created by large manufacturing companies who fund 'research' in order to increase sales of their products and much of the research did not have control groups. Professor Claxton stated that there was no need for 'hot housing' meaning rushing or putting the starting of teaching earlier and earlier (Blakemore and Firth 2000). He also said that formal teaching weakens reading dispositions (Marcon 1996).

Professor Claxton spoke about emotional well being, as many practitioners see it as making children happy all the time. He stated that emotion "directs learning - it does not block it", for example happiness makes you creative and sloppy whereas irritation makes you literal and precise (Forgas, 2001). Emotion is the glue which sticks our comprehension and competency together. Emotions colour learning, they don't impede it. He went on to say that self esteem is much more potent and long lasting when it is won through striving whole heartily for worthwhile ends, rather than derived from praise, especially praise that may be only loosely related to achievement.

Professor Claxton referred to the Mind Set work of Carol Dweck of Columbia University, giving the following definitions of her work:

- Human Beings - are complex, adaptive dynamic systems
- Embodies - brains are aspects of the body
- Embedded - body-brains are aspects of wider physical and social systems
- Intelligence is largely unconscious
- Minds are the conscious and the linguistic aspects of these systems

Professor Claxton said that it is minds that 'think' but systems that act - you can talk to the tip but it is the berg that moves. He highlighted that the essence of learning is when to think quickly and when to think slowly, as thinking takes time and we need time to 'mull over things'. Babies are born with natural learning ability (NLA) and their observant pattern extraction delivers intuitive expertise throughout life. He said that implicit learning is ubiquitous, essential and intelligent. Natural learning ability is slow, passive, holistic and cumulative but can be disrupted by too much:

- Description (Schoolers faces)
- Thinking (Coulson, Masters)
- Consciousness
- Pressure (Easterbrook)

Natural learning ability is boosted by increasing control of the 'core of attention' and this happens through development of the pre frontal cortex and it helps children ignore distractions and maintain intentions. Children from dysfunctional backgrounds may not develop this core of attention due to distractions and insecurity in the environment around them. They may be distracted by the 'fight or flight' reflex.

Learning power is further boosted in young children by:

- Active information seeking - exploring, prodding, questioning
- Increasing motor skill control - practising, playing, and mental rehearsal

Boosting by expanding the pool of possibilities:

- What else could I try? - better guesses
- Imitation 'how do they do it?' - wired in: mirror neurons - seeing someone else doing something and two year olds are faithful mimics (Paul Harris)
- Imagination (as internalised imitation) - extracting good guesses, generalise models of other people, allows perspective taking
- Playing with ideas - the power of reverie - gives your brain bubbling time
- Explanations - maybe it is because - and if so then
- Logic - it follows that
- Reminiscence - what happened last time?

This natural learning ability can be boosted by developing a learning echo-niche which entails building up more powerful material and social



Professor Guy Claxton speaking at this years AGM

ecology for children through:

- Resources and research skills
- Contacts
- Collaborators

This is the way that we as adults learn - we build up our resources - we research the theories behind what we are doing we build up our contacts of expertise and collaborate with others to share and develop our knowledge and it is the same for children.

Professor Claxton finally looked at how we as practitioners can develop the learning capacity of young children by:

- Immersion in experiences - natural learning ability
- Investigation - pro active, top down, looking for
- Imitation - thing to try, innate, mirror neurons
- Imagination - mental rehearsal, self imitation
- Intuition - creativity, modulating arousal levels
- Intelligence - language
- Interaction - collaboration, debate
- Introspection - mull over

Professor Claxton concluded that the top priority of early years education is to respect and protect the learning eagerness and ability with which children are born and to stretch, strengthen, amplify and diversify these dispositions.

He finished by saying that our job should be to try to turn out young people who love learning so much and who learn so well that they will be able to learn whatever needs to be learned. Professor Claxton concluded with the quote:

*"In times of change the learners will inherit the world: while the merely learned will remain beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists."*

## RAINBOW SURESTART IS OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED



### Rainbow SureStart officially opened its Castlederg Office and its Outreach Centre in The Old Mill Drumquin at the end of June

Barney McNeany, Early Years Deputy Chief Executive presided over the ceremony with a little help from children from the local Sugar and Spice Playgroup. The event was attended by statutory, community and voluntary organisations from the local area, including the Vice Chair of Omagh District Council, Dr Josephine Deehan who welcomed the Sure Start investment in the area.

Early Years - the organisation for young children is the lead and accountable body for Rainbow SureStart which covers the areas of Castlederg, Clare, Glenderg, Newtownstewart and Drumquin, providing advice and support for parents to be, parents, carers and children aged 0 to 4.

The aim of Rainbow SureStart is to ensure that

the 816 children age 0 to 4 and their families in the area will have the opportunity to have a 'sure start' in life. Rainbow also plans to empower parents to have confidence in engaging in programmes to enable their children to enjoy the journey they will experience in learning and achieving. Yvonne Tracey the co-ordinator of the project said: *"I am in the privileged position to work with a multi disciplinary team. Children and families registered with the project will have the opportunity to receive advice and support on child health issues, be supported to live in safety and have the right to be heard and listened to"*.

Following consultation with the local families, children, community and voluntary groups, programmes have been designed with the parents including home visiting, infant massage, Programme for 2 Year Olds and Rhyme Time. These are only a small sample of what is available to date. The team have also established links with the breastfeeding group, core health practitioner services, community associations, parent and toddler groups, playgroups, nurseries and daycare facilities in the area.

To date 318 families have registered and 55% of target children have registered totaling 446, enabling the team to provide programmes in a creative and resourceful manner. According to Professor Edward Melhuish, Executive Director of the National Evaluation of SureStart: *"It takes three years to get a Sure Start Project up and running"*.

Yvonne Tracey added: *"At Rainbow SureStart we have just completed our first year with a small team and without any doubt have achieved a lot. However we realise we still have a very long journey ahead but look forward in anticipation to celebrate the impact*



Barney McNeany officially opens the Rainbow SureStart project with Maura Taggart and her daughter Eva Rose, Dr Josephine Deehan, Vice Chair of Omagh District Council and Yvonne Tracey, Rainbow SureStart Co-ordinator

*the SureStart initiative should have for the children and families in our rural area.*

*"As co-ordinator I would like to take this opportunity to applaud the hard work and dedication of a devoted multi disciplinary team who are committed in working to a common plan. It takes drive to sell the SureStart idea and create partnerships and having the encouragement and support from Early Years - the organisation for young children has attributed to the development of Rainbow SureStart. Finally, we can't forget to congratulate the families who also make time to attend programmes and avail of the services Rainbow SureStart Provides; without whose support our journey would come to an end"*.



The staff of Rainbow SureStart at the official opening in June

## SLOW TAKE UP BY DAYCARE NURSERIES ON DVA EXEMPTION SCHEME

**Applications for the new DVA exemption scheme for courtesy transport with registered childcare providers is now available from the DVA. However day care businesses have been slow to apply and are required to either have a PSV license or to apply for the DVA exemption scheme. Day care businesses must have one or the other or they may not be properly licensed to operate a vehicle as part of their business, even if they do not directly charge for transporting children.**

Over the summer Early Years met with the Minister for the Environment, Sammy Wilson to develop the exemption scheme for courtesy transport with registered childcare providers. Siobhan Fitzpatrick of Early Years said: *"Early Years lobbied the DOE closely to ensure that this issue was resolved. Courtesy transport for childcare cannot be subject to the same licensing rules as commercial taxis. The cost and knock on effect to parents and childcare businesses would have far reaching consequences. I thank the minister for resolving the issue so quickly"*.

Early Years and the Driver Vehicle Agency (DVA) held an 'Information Day' at Early Years Headquarters in August to advise groups on the temporary exemption scheme.

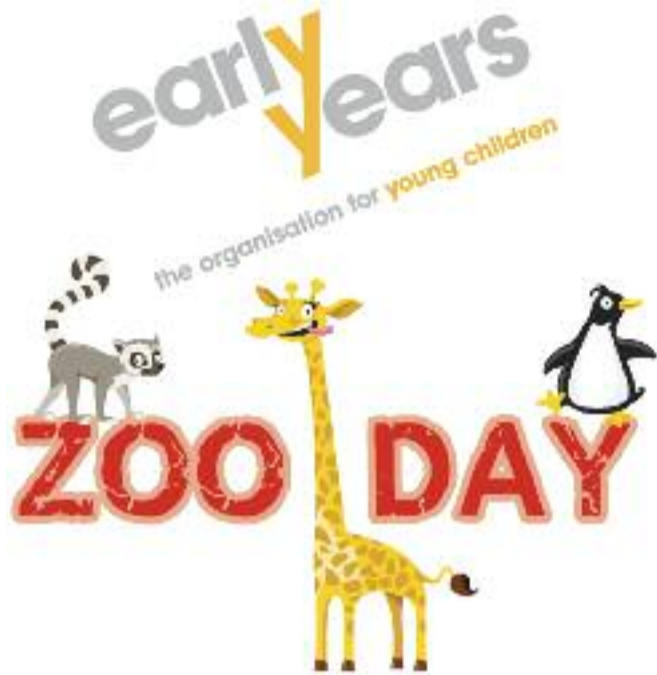
The information day took the form of an informal drop in session to pick up the information pack and provide day nurseries with the opportunity to talk to DVA officials about how the scheme will work, how to apply, and to ask any questions about the scheme.

The DVA has advised that minibuses are different from people carriers and cars as they are defined as a separate class of vehicle in the relevant legislation, therefore the DVA have no option but to deal with minibuses separately. Minibuses will be included in the temporary exemption scheme and will not require a PSV vehicle license under the scheme, but you will still need specific driver and vehicle licensing for the use of a minibus.

Minibus drivers will need a full category D1 driving licence as the vehicle is used for commercial purposes. The owner also requires a Road Service Licence (RSL) which is required to operate the minibus. As transport is not the main business of the nursery, a reduced number of requirements will have to be met in order to obtain an RSL. It is also important that the minibus owner checks with their insurance company to ensure that they have the appropriate level of cover in relation to the transport that they are providing.

**To clarify the licensing regulations for minibus use and for any other information please contact the DVA on 028 9025 4171.**

## ZOO DAY 2009



Zoo Day 2009 will be held on Wednesday 13th May 2009 so please add the date to your diary. As you will have seen in the June edition of Early Years, our 2008 Zoo Day was a great success. For 2009 we intend to run two sessions for admission to the zoo on the day: 10am-12 noon and 1pm-3pm. We anticipate that this will allow more of our members to come along and join in the fun. Further details will follow in due course.

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Membership renewal time is here and your membership is now available to complete and pay online at [www.early-years.org/membership](http://www.early-years.org/membership) with an online discount of 10% per application.

Membership information and application forms have been sent out for 2008/09 but the new online application will save considerably on administration time and save members 10% of their membership fee.

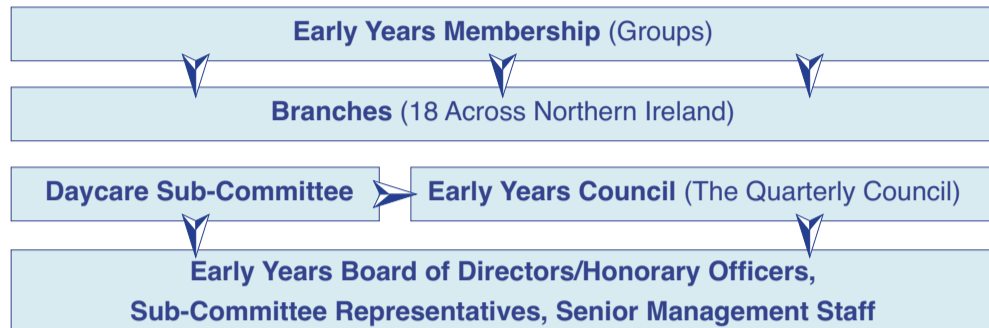
Jennie Hammond, Membership Administrator, said: "With up to 1000 membership applications to process each year, using the online system will greatly speed up the process and service to members. Even if you do not have a computer in your group the application can be completed online from any home computer with internet access or even at your local library".

If you have any queries about the online renewal process please contact Jennie on 028 9038 7904.

## JOIN YOUR LOCAL EARLY YEARS BRANCH

### Early Years Branch structure provides a great opportunity for members to work together and learn from each other

Each of the 17 Branches represents a geographic area and welcomes representatives from Early Years members in the area. The branches are constituted, have office bearers and separate bank accounts and as such can make applications to funding bodies. The branch will also have a representative who is invited to attend the Early Years Quarterly Conference. This process generates a democratic dialogue between Early Years board members, senior management staff and the grass roots membership as illustrated below:



Members who wish to find information on their local branches can access the Membership section of the Early Years website at [www.early-years.org](http://www.early-years.org). Members can email the contact directly for details of the branch activities, dates and venues.

Branch meetings offer a range of activities and may include:

- Advice on practice in settings
- Information and news from Early Years
- Changes in legislation affecting the sector members
- An opportunity to debate pertinent topics
- Information on funding
- Information on relevant training
- Peer learning from experiences shared between branch members
- Social evenings

The branch members not only have the opportunity to raise issues of concern at the Early Years quarterly council meeting but may also raise topics for discussion at the Annual General Meeting through resolutions and proposals. Members are encouraged to engage in debate at the AGM to ensure that resolutions are not simply seconded and voted on. Training for members of the quarterly council and Early Years staff to encourage greater debate and strengthen the democratic process will be introduced.

In the Western area a consortium of 5 branches have been successful under an EYDF small grants scheme to deliver committee training and the IMMPACT in the 5 areas. Training will be provided for committees in the remaining areas and will be facilitated through the branch structure.

The branch meetings planned for the coming year, although subject to change, are listed below:

	Date of meeting	Branch	Early Years Specialist
Nov.	25th Nov.	Fermanagh	Joan Jackman
	26th Nov.	Newtonabbey, Larne and Carrickfergus	Isobel McClean
Dec.	8th Dec.	Down and Lisburn	Diane Baxter
Jan.	27th Jan	Fermanagh	Joan Jackman
	27th Jan	Newtonabbey, Larne and Carrickfergus	Isobel McClean
Feb.	9th Feb.	Craigavon and Banbridge	Diane Baxter
	9th Feb.	Down and Lisburn	Diane Baxter
	24th March	Fermanagh	Joan Jackman
March	25th March	Newtonabbey, Larne and Carrickfergus	Isobel McClean
April	-	-	-
May	11th May	Craigavon and Banbridge	Diane Baxter
	11th May	Down and Lisburn	Diane Baxter
	26th May	Newtonabbey, Larne and Carrickfergus	Isobel McClean
	26th May	Fermanagh	Joan Jackman
June	-	-	-

## NES ARNOLD AND EARLY YEARS - WORKING TOGETHER



NES Arnold are delighted to be working alongside such a well renowned and successful organisation as Early Years. We have enjoyed a successful relationship since 2004, and we look forward to many more years working with Early Years and its members.

As market leader within both the Early Years and Primary sectors NES offers an innovative, curriculum-based product range with many of our products having been recommended by early years and teaching professionals.

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