Top Honour for Early Years CEO

Chief Executive of Early Years, Siobhan Fitzpatrick is being honoured for her services to early years education and community development both in Northern Ireland and internationally. She has been awarded a CBE in the Queen’s Birthday Honours list.

Siobhan took her Masters of Social Work degree in UUC in 1978, and in 1980 as mother of three young pre-school children, she joined the early years movement as a volunteer. Working her way up to become Chief Executive of Early Years (formerly NSPCC) in 1989, Siobhan oversaw a dramatic expansion of the movement over the following twenty years to its current level of over a thousand member groups.

During the same period, the Early Years sector in Northern Ireland established an enviable international profile. Early Years professionals from Northern Ireland have worked on partnership projects with professionals in Serbia, Albania, Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, Italy, Turkey and Colombia helping apply the Northern Ireland Early Years model of local empowerment, educational excellence and community development.

That international stature was underlined when Siobhan was elected President of the International Step by Step Association in 2007, an organisation based in Budapest serving early years educational needs in former Warsaw Pact countries across Europe and Asia.

Siobhan, and Early Years, also play a central role in the highly regarded International Working Group on Peace Building, and the position of Early Years as a world leader in its field was reinforced by the success of the 2009 World Forum in Belfast, which drew 800 delegates from 80 countries across the world. The economic impact of the conference was substantial - it generated more than £1,000,000 for the local economy.

Siobhan says that she sees the award as an honour for the entire early years movement.

“I am delighted to accept this honour on behalf of all our members, past and present, in the Early Years movement in Northern Ireland. It is primarily a recognition of the work which has been done over the decades by thousands of committed volunteers and professionals. It is a tribute to the optimism and ingenuity of ordinary people, which inspired them to lay the foundations of the services we see today, services which drew the admiration of experts from all around the world, who came here as delegates to last year’s World Forum for Early Childhood Education in Belfast.”

The Publication of the Early Years 0 – 6 Strategy is now available for Consultation

The publication of the Early Years (0 – 6) Strategy by the Department of Education for consultation marks a new recognition by Government in Northern Ireland that education begins at birth. The proposed new 0–6 Strategy recognises that the most critical and sensitive period in human development is that of the early years. During the first year of life the neural pathways within the brain which support vision, hearing, language and higher cognitive function are wired. Brains and skills are shaped by the “serve and return” nature of human interaction between the child and his/her parents and others.

The Strategy recognises that appropriate education of young children builds the skills and love of life long learning necessary to improve education, health and well-being for future generations of all children in Northern Ireland. We also know that barriers to educational achievement emerge at a very young age. By the age of 18 months differences in the vocabulary (number of words) of a child open up according to the economic status of the parents. Children who experience significant challenges in early childhood are 90 – 100% more likely to have developmental delays by age 3 years and 3.5 times more likely to develop heart disease as adults.

In the past 12 years there has been an increased focus and investment on services for young children and their families in Northern Ireland. Since 1998 the Preschool Education Expansion Programme has led to the delivery of a one year funded preschool provision for all children whose parents wish to avail of this service. A part time funded preschool place is available in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors with all providers having to follow the Northern Ireland Preschool curriculum. This welcome development has however not been without its difficulties. Disparity in funding arrangements, issues around access for children with special needs, debates about part time and full time provision, the continued use of reception provision in some areas and the occupancy rates by two year olds in some statutory provision are some of the issues which now need to be dealt with in the new 0-6 strategy.

The provision of Sure Start services in the top 20% disadvantaged wards across Northern Ireland, with a focus on improving health and education outcomes for children has been a significant development. The development of a new programme for two year olds has become a highly sought after service for parents but is currently limited to Sure Start areas. The consultation on the new 0-6 Strategy gives us an opportunity to think about how the two year old programme could be expanded and how the thinking and evidence from Sure Start developments could be used to reshape all services for young children.

For more on the 0-6 Strategy see page 3

This Month

- It’s Here! The 0-6 Strategy is Finally Released!
- Early Years’ CEO Receives Top UK Honour
- Annual Conference and Accreditation Photos Inside

Recognition that Education Begins at Birth
Dear Readers…

Welcome to the first Early Years Newsletter of the new term, a period which we feel will have monumental significance for the early years sector in Northern Ireland. As you all probably will be aware of by now the long awaited 0-6 Strategy was launched for final consultation at the end of June. Early Years welcomes the publication of the strategy and will be hosting a number of consultation events through out September and October both to inform members and parents and hear views before we put forward the organisation view point to the Department of Education. We will also be encouraging members to make their own responses to the consultation. At this stage the strategy document is light on specific details and we will be calling on the Department of Education to set up an implementation group to work on the detailed actions required to put in place a first class strategy and operational plan for Northern Ireland’s youngest citizens and their families.

During the summer the Office of First and Deputy First Minister also launched for consultation their strategy and operational plan for Northern Ireland’s youngest citizens and their families. The strategy was light on specific details and we will be calling on the Department of Education to set up an implementation group to work on the detailed actions required to put in place a first class strategy and operational plan for Northern Ireland’s youngest citizens and their families.

It is important to be specific about the nature of the disadvantage in a request for funding, and to be clear about the difference your project will make.

Sibohan Fitzpatrick
Chief Executive Officer
April 2010

Outstanding ETI Reports September 2009 - 2010

Congratulations to the following member groups and those Early Years staff who supported them on obtaining an “outstanding” or “very good” ETI evaluation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Early Years Advisor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>Stevegallion Playgroup</td>
<td>Ann Dixon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legacurry Playgroup</td>
<td>Anne Marie Mulholland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discovering Kids Playgroup</td>
<td>Ann Dixon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Happy Days Playgroup, Coalisland</td>
<td>Sharon Flanagan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tiny Tots Cleishish</td>
<td>Joan Jackman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>Glenview pre-school Centre</td>
<td>Ann Dixon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Banana Bunch Playgroup</td>
<td>Isobel McClean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Kirk Community Playgroup</td>
<td>Janet Preston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taylorsfoss Cross Comm. Playgroup</td>
<td>Janet Preston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Longstone Community Centre</td>
<td>Janet Preston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greysteel Playgroup</td>
<td>Marie Wilson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Little Diamonds Community Playgroup</td>
<td>Marie Wilson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clonduff Playgroup</td>
<td>Catherine Russell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Little Acorns Pre-school Playgroup</td>
<td>Janice Mawhinney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ardsivah Playgroup</td>
<td>Christine Robinson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Happy Faces Playgroup</td>
<td>Christine Robinson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Applications have more chance of success when the project is focused directly on the needs of the children. In an Early Years project for example, that might involve funding toys or play equipment, and children’s activities like arts and crafts or gardening. BBC Children in Need does not normally fund salaries of playgroup workers as the provision of pre-school education is a government commitment. Before making an application, the NI staff team can advise you on how best to proceed if you telephone 028 9033 8221.

You can make an application at any time throughout the year to fit with your project plans. There are 4 grant rounds:

- **Apply by 15 October** - notification by end of October
- **Apply by 15 January** - notification by end of January
- **Apply by 15 April** - notification by end of April
- **Apply by 15 July** - notification by end of July

Applications are made online at www.bbc.co.uk/need where you will also find detailed guidance notes to help you apply.

Letter to the Editor

“I don’t do competitions as a rule, no time to spare. However I was recouping from an operation before Christmas and entered the one in the Early Years newsletter, I was very surprised to find I had won and I want to thank Lockton Insurance very much for the night at the Opera House where we saw the ‘Sound of Music’ and had an overnight stay at the Radisson Blu. My husband and I thoroughly enjoyed it and our two granddaughters had a wonderful time. The staff at both places were very attentive and remarked how lovely our granddaughters looked when all dressed up to go to the theatre. However the youngest one did query crossly ‘why did he say I was dressed up when I am not!’ When we talked to her, we later realised that dressing up, was to her, playing dress up and not going out dressed up. We had a great time and have lovely memories of this occasion with them; many thanks to Early Years, Lockton Insurance, The Grand Opera House and Radisson Blu.

Rosemary Reid
Bees Neees Early Years Centre
The Publication of the Early Years 0 – 6 Strategy is now available for Consultation

Early Years – the organisation for young children welcomes the recognition and investment in young children’s care, education and health. We believe this new proposed Strategy is about restructuring our educational system and could provide free early years education from the age of 2 and therefore change how children learn before starting formal school education. These changes won’t cost parents either financially or in terms of their time, and if implemented fully will put in place the important building blocks to ensure the emotional and educational well being of our children, wherever their learning and development experiences take place. The proposed Strategy could also put in place the necessary conditions to allow Northern Ireland to think about raising the school starting age to 6, in line with most other countries around the world.

Parents and Communities – A Vital Role

The Strategy recognises parents as equal partners in the education of young children. It places parents at the centre of their own children’s learning and children at the centre of communities of learning. The Strategy requires the recognition of and respect for the role of parents of young children and requires DE (and its partners) to raise the level and quality of engagement with parents and communities. It is the responsibility of services to ensure that parents feel involved and are given an opportunity to influence the education of their child.

The Strategy proposes:

- A family programme in funded pre-school provision;
- Provision of information and advice on the availability of early years services;
- Consultation with parents on policy formulation;
- Expansion of the reach of Sure Start and Two Year Old Programme in areas of highest disadvantage;
- Development of the Play and Leisure Policy to deliver play-based activities for young children.

High Quality Delivers for Young Children

The Strategy recognises that improved outcomes for children will only be achieved where services are of the highest quality. The Strategy seeks to improve the quality of early years provision to achieve better learning outcomes for children at the end of the Foundation Stage (4-6 years), especially in language and number and in children’s personal and social development, emotional well-being and readiness to learn. It is well recognised through the work of Professor James Heckman and others that investing in early education is not only socially desirable, but economically prudent. Professor Heckman also cautions against the risk of endorsing very superficial programmes. The strategy focuses on investing in evidence based programmes that are implemented well and improved continuously.

The Strategy proposes:

- Work to set out the child development milestones up to the end of Foundation Stage and to identify best practice to achieve them;
- Development of a Quality Framework for the registration and evaluation of early years provision;
- A review of the pre-school curriculum;
- Under performance or inadequate provision in pre-school and in the Foundation Stage to be addressed;
- To strengthen the links, on an area basis between early years providers (from birth to six years of age) at points of transition from Sure Start (0 – 4), preschool (5 – 4) and Foundation Stage (4 – 6);
- To addressing an area basis the issues relating to two year olds in nursery provision and to reception classes in primary schools to ensure provision is age appropriate;
- The development of a mechanism for sharing key information across agencies on the child with a view to addressing any areas of potential difficulty early and getting in place appropriate interventions.

Access to High Quality Provision for All Children

The skills and qualifications of the adults working with young children is identified as a key predictor of children’s development. Research from many Countries supports the view that quality in the early childhood field requires adequate training and fair working conditions for staff (Starting Strong, OECD, 2001): “Staff working with children in early childhood education and care programmes have a major impact on children’s early learning and development. Research shows the links between strong training and support of staff – including appropriate pay and conditions and the quality of early childhood education and care services (Bowman et al., 2000, CQCO Study Team, 1995, EC Childcare Network, 1996, Whitebook et al., 1998). In particular, staff who have more formal education and more specialised early childhood training provide more stimulating, warm and supportive interactions with children” (CQCO Study Team, 1995, NICHD, 1997, Phillipsen et al., 1997, EPEE, 2004).

The Strategy recognises the need to increase the skills of the workforce by promoting a higher level of qualifications and wider access to professional development. The strategy supports the need to build an appropriately skilled early childhood workforce whose expertise matches the needs of the young children and families it serves.

The Strategy proposes:

- Raising the minimum level of qualifications for those working in all DE funded early years settings, including Sure Start to NVQ Level 3, the minimum level of the leader in charge to NVQ Level 4 or above;
- To procure an ‘early years leadership programme’ and provide access to it for those currently in leadership in funded pre-school provision;
- To identify and disseminate best practice to promote quality across the entire early years workforce;
- Support the non-statutory sector through capacity building to ensure they can benefit fully from the Special Educational Needs Policy;
- Changes to the funding mechanisms to address the quality issues in pre-schools;
- Improved management of the allocation of pre-school places on an area basis and to ensure provision is age appropriate;
- All voluntary and private pre-school providers funded through PEEP will be required to work within raised Special Educational Needs framework;
- Access to the full range of pupil support services for staff in funded pre-schools;
- Improved access to Irish medium pre-school provision;
- Maintain part-time provision with the statutory pre-school sector;
- An expansion provision for two year olds.

The North West Celebrates Early Years Respecting Difference Achievements

A celebration event and presentation of certificates for the Media Initiative for Children Respecting Difference Programme took place recently in the Fir Trees Hotel, Strabane. The Programme was developed and delivered by Early Years – the organisation for young children.

Pre-school practitioners from Derry, Omagh, Strabane, Donegal and Monaghan gathered to celebrate the success of the North West Respecting Difference Project and the Community Relations and Integrating Children (CRAIC) Project, which features a Training of Trainers Programme on the Media Initiative as well as a research and study intervention programme. Both projects were funded by the European Union Development Fund under the PEACE III Programme.

Early Years Chief Executive, Siobhan Fitzpatrick CBE, welcomed the event and the success of the range of programmes which the organisation is running across Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland:

“On behalf of Early Years, I would like to congratulate all those from the North West who have completed training under these two projects.”

“It’s always great to recognise the achievements which the organisation is making as well as the benefits which are being felt across our society. These programmes, funded by the Peace III Programme, are hugely important and have a real impact on young children, their families and the wider society. They teach small children valuable lifelong lessons on respecting difference and together we can build a better understanding among children of physical, racial and cultural differences.”
Looking Forward to your Annual General Meeting

Be prepared! Many groups hold their Annual General Meeting (AGM), from September onwards, so now is a good time of year to start considering what is involved.

The AGM is one of the best opportunities for the parents in the group to find out how the group is run, about the finances and about any future plans. It is essential that it is well organised. This requires careful planning. The group’s Constitution or Memorandum and Articles of Association must be consulted as it contains the rules for calling an AGM.

Here is a checklist of some of the issues that you need to think about:

- How does the group encourage new volunteers to serve on the committee? New members should be encouraged to join the committee before the AGM.

- Invite all members and consider extending an invitation to other interested parties, e.g. local clergy, teachers, health visitors, social workers and any trustees of the group, councillors and local MLAs.

- The group has to give 14 clear days written notice of any AGM or special General Meeting to the group’s membership, or if not using the Early Years Group Constitution, within the time limit which is set out in your constitution.

- Make sure that if there are proposed changes to the constitution, that two thirds of the members are present at the meeting to agree them. The two-thirds figure is from the Early Years Group Constitution, if this is not the constitution that your group has please refer to your own documents.

- Advertise the AGM on the group notice board, in shops, post office, health centre, and local newspapers.

- Prepare the agenda for the AGM and procedure for electing the new committee.

The AGM can be a good opportunity to promote a positive image of the group to new members. Organise a display of the work of the group or ask a guest speaker to say a few words in support of the group or on a topic of general interest.

EARLY YEARS recommends that the AGM be held no later than November each year.

Share in the fun with mums from across Northern Ireland with a brand new digital lifestyle magazine written by mums for mums.

Aimed at mums at all ages and stages, www.digimumsni.com covers a wide variety of issues of interest to mums including:

- Parenting
- Health
- Fashion
- Beauty
- Employment
- Shopping
- Technology
- Cars
- Food & drink
- Home & Lifestyle.

Have you had your digimums® makeover?

Come and visit us at www.digimums.com
Winners

Below is a list of the playgroups and daycares who received Playgroup Accreditation or an All Ireland Centre of Excellence Award at our Early Years Conference this year. Congratulations to you all!

**Playgroup Accreditation**
- Portaferry Pre-School Playgroup
- Ballykinlar Cross Community Playgroup
- Killincry Playgroup
- Little Doves Childcare Centre, Newtownards
- Bo-Peeps Community Playgroup, Ballybofey
- Busy Bees Playgroup, Warrenpoint
- Carebears Community Playgroup, Newtownstewart
- Cloudlaff Playgroup, Hilltown
- Happy Days Playgroup, Newry
- Heights Pre-School Playgroup, Kilkeel
- Loughbrickland Pre-School Playgroup
- Rainbow Community Playgroup
- Struidaran Community Playgroup, Claudy

**All Ireland Centre of Excellence**
- Rockmount Day Nursery, Ballynahinch
- Safe & Sound Daycare Nursery, Ballynahinch
- Country Kids Day Nursery, Donaghadee
- Kingdom Pre-School Playgroup, Kilkeel
- Loughbrickland Pre-School Playgroup
- Rainbow Community Playgroup
- Struidaran Community Playgroup, Claudy

---

Sunshine Celebrates 25 Years!!

On Saturday 5 June Sunshine Playgroup celebrated 25 years with present and past families and friends enjoying a fun filled day:

Proceedings began with delightful performances of music and dance from past attendees and the present Preschool children’s joyful rendition of “I can sing a rainbow.” A celebration cake was cut by founder member Mrs Iris Mitchell before a scrumptious lunch, kindly provided by local company ‘Soupernatural’, was enjoyed by all. While the adults chatted and relaxed to music there was plenty of fun and laughter as the children enjoyed penalty kicks, nail art, limbo pole, garden games and tombola … The afternoon was brought to a close with a moment to remember absent members and friends.

Sunshine Playgroup initially opened in the garage of a home in Ballinderry with approximately 9 children. It was founded by Mrs Sylvia Close and Mrs Iris Mitchell and in 1989 moved to its present location in Killultagh Hall, Legaterriff Road, Upper Ballinderry. As this day celebrated the achievements of the past 25 years Sunshine looks forward to the future. Today they offer 24 free Preschool places, 5 mornings a week and Playgroup Monday to Thursday 12.30-2.30pm for children from approximately 2 years and 10 months onwards.

Sunshine welcomes children from all backgrounds, abilities and beliefs and benefits from the vast experience and commitment of its 5 members of staff. During the past year the resources and facilities have been enhanced and modernised through generous grants received from the Big Lottery Fund and from Eastern Childcare Partnership providing a setting ready for the next 25 years.

---

Early Years International Conference and AGM 2011

“Shaping the Future of Northern Ireland’s Workforce for the 0-6’s”

9th and 10th June 2011

Magherabuoy House Hotel, Portrush, Co. Antrim www.magherabuoy.co.uk
HighScope Ireland is Now Delivering a New Two Day Maths Course based on HighScope’s Numbers Plus Maths Curriculum.

Did you know that current research states the importance of early maths learning for young children?

This 2 day course provides participants with the opportunity to learn about important maths concepts in the early years.

Participants will learn how to scaffold children’s maths learning using specific interaction strategies.

They will also use activities around the five content areas of Numbers Plus—
- number sense and operations
- geometry
- measurement
- algebra
- data

These two day courses are available from September 2010 to commission from HighScope Ireland.

For more information please contact our head office on 028 9066 2825 or email highscope@early-years.org.

HighScope Ireland Training Road Shows May 2010

During May 2010, HighScope Ireland hosted 6 days of training workshops throughout Ireland. Beth Marshall, Director of Early Childhood with the HighScope Educational Research Foundation and Sue Gainsley, Endorsed HighScope Trainer and Lead Teacher in the HighScope Demonstration Classroom in Ypsilanti, Michigan, delivered training on:
- Numbers Plus – the new maths curriculum from HighScope
- Scaffolding Children’s Learning at Small Group Times
- Working with Parents
- Home Visits
- Science in Preschool
- Liven up Large Group Times

The road shows were held in Dublin, Cookstown and Westport, Co. Mayo. The attendances on each day were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cookstown</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westport</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The workshops provided participants with the opportunity to get up-to-date with the new thinking and products from the HighScope Educational Research Foundation and be trained by trainers who have written many of the HighScope publications. A booklet, featuring all of the current HighScope publications was very busy throughout the road show. Participants commented on the high quality of the training and the relevance to their own practice. Additional comments included requests for further road shows – watch this space!

The HighScope Team would like to thank everyone who contributed to the success of the road shows.

Activities for Home Visits: Partnering with Preschool Families

A new book from HighScope Press titled ‘Activities for Home Visits: Partnering with Preschool Families’ was launched in Ireland during the HighScope Ireland training road shows in May 2010. The book includes 40 fun learning activities that practitioners and families with young children can do together during regular home visits.

Each activity focuses on one of eight curriculum content areas: approaches to learning, language, literacy, and communication; social and emotional development; physical development, health and well-being; mathematics; science and technology; social studies; and the arts. Each activity is outlined with a beginning middle, ending, materials list, and home extensions for parents. The activities are easy to follow and implement.

Also included in this book are tips for communicating with parents during home visits and ideas on how to extend home visits into the setting. ‘Activities for Home Visits’ helps you build a strong parent-practitioner relationship and support parents in their role as their child’s first and most influential educator. This book would be of particular interest to Sure Starts and preschools wishing to begin a home visiting programme.

For more information or to order a copy of this book at the special Early Years member price of only €15 or £12 please contact our resources department on 028 9038 7935 or email info@early-years.org.

HighScope Ireland is Now Delivering a New Two Day Maths Course based on HighScope’s Numbers Plus Maths Curriculum.

Did you know that current research states the importance of early maths learning for young children?

This 2 day course provides participants with the opportunity to learn about important maths concepts in the early years.

Participants will learn how to scaffold children’s maths learning using specific interaction strategies.

They will also use activities around the five content areas of Numbers Plus—
- number sense and operations
- geometry
- measurement
- algebra
- data

These two day courses are available from September 2010 to commission from HighScope Ireland.

For more information please contact our head office on 028 9066 2825 or email highscope@early-years.org.

HighScope Ireland Training Road Shows May 2010

During May 2010, HighScope Ireland hosted 6 days of training workshops throughout Ireland. Beth Marshall, Director of Early Childhood with the HighScope Educational Research Foundation and Sue Gainsley, Endorsed HighScope Trainer and Lead Teacher in the HighScope Demonstration Classroom in Ypsilanti, Michigan, delivered training on:
- Numbers Plus – the new maths curriculum from HighScope
- Scaffolding Children’s Learning at Small Group Times
- Working with Parents
- Home Visits
- Science in Preschool
- Liven up Large Group Times

The road shows were held in Dublin, Cookstown and Westport, Co. Mayo. The attendances on each day were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cookstown</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westport</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The workshops provided participants with the opportunity to get up-to-date with the new thinking and products from the HighScope Educational Research Foundation and be trained by trainers who have written many of the HighScope publications. A booklet, featuring all of the current HighScope publications was very busy throughout the road show. Participants commented on the high quality of the training and the relevance to their own practice. Additional comments included requests for further road shows – watch this space!

The HighScope Team would like to thank everyone who contributed to the success of the road shows.

Activities for Home Visits: Partnering with Preschool Families

A new book from HighScope Press titled ‘Activities for Home Visits: Partnering with Preschool Families’ was launched in Ireland during the HighScope Ireland training road shows in May 2010. The book includes 40 fun learning activities that practitioners and families with young children can do together during regular home visits.

Each activity focuses on one of eight curriculum content areas: approaches to learning, language, literacy, and communication; social and emotional development; physical development, health and well-being; mathematics; science and technology; social studies; and the arts. Each activity is outlined with a beginning middle, ending, materials list, and home extensions for parents. The activities are easy to follow and implement.

Also included in this book are tips for communicating with parents during home visits and ideas on how to extend home visits into the setting. ‘Activities for Home Visits’ helps you build a strong parent-practitioner relationship and support parents in their role as their child’s first and most influential educator. This book would be of particular interest to Sure Starts and preschools wishing to begin a home visiting programme.

For more information or to order a copy of this book at the special Early Years member price of only €15 or £12 please contact our resources department on 028 9038 7935 or email info@early-years.org.

HighScope Ireland is Now Delivering a New Two Day Maths Course based on HighScope’s Numbers Plus Maths Curriculum.

Did you know that current research states the importance of early maths learning for young children?

This 2 day course provides participants with the opportunity to learn about important maths concepts in the early years.

Participants will learn how to scaffold children’s maths learning using specific interaction strategies.

They will also use activities around the five content areas of Numbers Plus—
- number sense and operations
- geometry
- measurement
- algebra
- data

These two day courses are available from September 2010 to commission from HighScope Ireland.

For more information please contact our head office on 028 9066 2825 or email highscope@early-years.org.

HighScope Ireland Training Road Shows May 2010

During May 2010, HighScope Ireland hosted 6 days of training workshops throughout Ireland. Beth Marshall, Director of Early Childhood with the HighScope Educational Research Foundation and Sue Gainsley, Endorsed HighScope Trainer and Lead Teacher in the HighScope Demonstration Classroom in Ypsilanti, Michigan, delivered training on:
- Numbers Plus – the new maths curriculum from HighScope
- Scaffolding Children’s Learning at Small Group Times
- Working with Parents
- Home Visits
- Science in Preschool
- Liven up Large Group Times

The road shows were held in Dublin, Cookstown and Westport, Co. Mayo. The attendances on each day were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cookstown</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westport</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The workshops provided participants with the opportunity to get up-to-date with the new thinking and products from the HighScope Educational Research Foundation and be trained by trainers who have written many of the HighScope publications. A booklet, featuring all of the current HighScope publications was very busy throughout the road show. Participants commented on the high quality of the training and the relevance to their own practice. Additional comments included requests for further road shows – watch this space!

The HighScope Team would like to thank everyone who contributed to the success of the road shows.

Activities for Home Visits: Partnering with Preschool Families

A new book from HighScope Press titled ‘Activities for Home Visits: Partnering with Preschool Families’ was launched in Ireland during the HighScope Ireland training road shows in May 2010. The book includes 40 fun learning activities that practitioners and families with young children can do together during regular home visits.

Each activity focuses on one of eight curriculum content areas: approaches to learning, language, literacy, and communication; social and emotional development; physical development, health and well-being; mathematics; science and technology; social studies; and the arts. Each activity is outlined with a beginning middle, ending, materials list, and home extensions for parents. The activities are easy to follow and implement.

Also included in this book are tips for communicating with parents during home visits and ideas on how to extend home visits into the setting. ‘Activities for Home Visits’ helps you build a strong parent-practitioner relationship and support parents in their role as their child’s first and most influential educator. This book would be of particular interest to Sure Starts and preschools wishing to begin a home visiting programme.

For more information or to order a copy of this book at the special Early Years member price of only €15 or £12 please contact our resources department on 028 9038 7935 or email info@early-years.org.

HighScope Ireland is Now Delivering a New Two Day Maths Course based on HighScope’s Numbers Plus Maths Curriculum.

Did you know that current research states the importance of early maths learning for young children?

This 2 day course provides participants with the opportunity to learn about important maths concepts in the early years.

Participants will learn how to scaffold children’s maths learning using specific interaction strategies.

They will also use activities around the five content areas of Numbers Plus—
- number sense and operations
- geometry
- measurement
- algebra
- data

These two day courses are available from September 2010 to commission from HighScope Ireland.

For more information please contact our head office on 028 9066 2825 or email highscope@early-years.org.
Helpful Advice from Lockton

Before the new school year starts, it is an opportune time to assess the insurance needs of your playgroup, crèche or parent and toddler group. It is important to check that firstly you have insurance in place and also whether the insurance is adequate.

Remember that if you have any buildings on your premises even if it is a portacabin or wooden structure or if you have fixed outdoor play equipment that they need to be insured separately from the contents cover. Many groups that operate within the property of a school may believe that they are covered under the school’s insurance policy. It is vital to check if the school is providing cover for the playgroup and if not, you will need to arrange your own policy.

Lockton Companies International in conjunction with Early Years provides an exclusive comprehensive insurance package that covers all of your insurance requirements from Employers and Public Liability to Property and to Indemnity to Management.

Please contact Roisin McIvenny at Lockton for a quotation or if you need to make any amendment to your existing policy on 02890 348427.

Great Oaks from Little Acorns—Celebrating Diversity in the North West

During the months of May and June, two Early Years settings in the North West had the opportunity to take part in a shared programme focused on celebrating diversity. Both groups are successfully implementing Early Years Media Initiative for Children in their respective settings under the 3TI funded programme, and during the year an opportunity presented itself through a Council-led initiative in the North West. Senior Early Years Specialist Clionagh Boyle, who worked with the groups explains: “Derry City Council had accessed funding under the Peace III programme, Influencing Young Peoples Attitudes at an early stage through appropriate media. Early Years were awarded the tender as delivery agent for the CREE Community Relations programme which included implementing a shared diversity programme for two pre-school groups in the North West. Caw Community Playgroup in Nelson Drive and Jack and Jill Community Playgroup in Trench Road were selected by this steering group as two groups who it was felt would most benefit from the experience of a shared programme. The groups were enthusiastic and totally committed from the outset which we knew would be vital in meeting the logistical challenge of taking 44 children off site every week.”

The six week programme was based around the messages of the Early Years Respecting Difference programme; exploring these in more depth through shared creative activities and extending the programme concepts into the outdoor environment. The outdoor programme was developed in partnership with Pennyburn Nurseries (Playtell), a natural play facility purposefully focused on meeting the needs of children of all abilities and the ideal environment in which to explore the concepts of inclusion and diversity.

The outdoor and indoor sessions were planned in an integrated way offering the children the opportunity to explore the concepts in different contexts. An example was an activity where children made images of themselves, observing their features in the mirror then making images using a rich variety of paints and collage and textured materials: every shade of skin tone painted from ‘almond’ to ‘toast’ to ‘cinnamon’. Bridgeen Irwin, Early Years Specialist explains, ‘This activity celebrates children’s uniqueness and communicates through experience and observation that we are all different and that no one’s skin is black or white. In a complementary way the outdoor session with the Playtrail team used mirrors to observe diversity in nature, using natural colour cards showing how the leaves and the trees were all different shades of green and how each leaf is unique.

The children also explored music and movement looking at the different cultural traditions in an experiential and age appropriate way. After watching and discussing the Media Message ‘Playing the same Game’, which looks at the cultural traditions in Northern Ireland the children made their own drums and together explored the different sounds in the sensory garden at the Playtrail.

Parent involvement was key to the success of the project and a number of parents commented on how the project had changed their own perspective. Donna Adams, mother of twin boys Luke and Jacob who are at Caw playgroup had this to say: “It totally opened my eyes up I couldn’t believe how much they got out of it. I though they were way too young to be doing stuff like this. Then as I saw what they were doing each week they were like was sponges taking everything in.”

Sharon McCull whose daughter Ellen attends Jack and Jill playgroup commented on how the whole family enjoyed the Respecting Difference story books at home.

‘She read them with her baby brother and her daddy too. She was able to point out all the things that were going on in the story. I found that drawing the stories into real life and making the connections with her life, also telling the story from another child’s perspective was great. For her, the characters, the puppets are just the same as a real person.’

The programme closed with a Celebration of Music from across the World and with the sound of over forty children playing African Drums drifting out over the trees at the Playtrail.

Meigh Community Pre-School Celebrates 10 Years

Meigh pre-school celebrates 10 years in their purpose built building which was obtained in 1999 through the ‘Childhood Fund’. Meigh Community Pre-School has been operating for 27 years and currently has 26 PEAGS places and 4 members of staff which are funded by the Department of Education.

They are also on out of only five Reggio groups in Northern Ireland which is an excellent achievement. This came about when leader, Bridig Owens was lucky enough to receive a trip to Italy with Early Years (then known as NIPPA) where she train and observe the work of Reggio Emilia art.

Meigh Pre-School was also chosen as one of the groups for the delegates of the 2009 World Forum on childcare to come visit. Visitors included childcare officials from countries such as USA, Turkey, South Africa, Hungary, Norway, Canada, Holland, and Kenya.

Early Years have delivered an accreditation programme since 1991 and through hard work and dedication, Meigh Community Pre-School have managed to receive three of these awards. The accreditation process ensures that service providers have external verification on the high quality nature of their provision. Good quality early years experiences are vital to the health and development of young children and providing a quality early years experience ensures that young children are life long eager and able learners.

Catherine Russell, Early Years Specialist for the group says “Meigh Community Pre-School have consistently maintained extremely high standards and the leader and staff always strive to do the best for the children in their care. It is a pleasure to visit the group and our congratulations are conveyed to the staff, committee and children on another milestone in their beautiful building.”

The group would like to thank ‘Childhood Funding’ for the funding, as well as all the staff, committee members and parents over the years who have helped keep the pre-school running through fund raising events which they have organised. They look forward to being able to continue to service the local community and continue to provide high quality child care to many more families.
Early Years - The Organisation for Young Children

For more information on dates of courses or to discuss programme contents, contact the training department on 02866 342696 or at: training@early-years.org

FOR HIRE

Early Years has training rooms that are available for hire as a venue for courses, seminars and meetings.

There are two training rooms in the Belfast Headquarters, which can accommodate up to 80 people. We also have accommodation available in our Enniskillen offices.

Prices start at just £45 per half day for members.

For further information or to book contact our head office on 028 9066 2825.

Member Events 2010

Folk Day

Approximately 500 children, staff and parents from pre-school settings in the counties of Tyrone, Fermanagh and Derry took part in Early Years’ annual Folk Day at the Ulster American Folk Park on Tuesday 27th and Thursday 29th April 2010. In addition to visiting the Folk Park children were able to take part in dancing, sing-songs, feeding the hens, candle dipping, popcorn making and many more fun activities.

Zoo Day

On 12th May 2010, over 1200 children, and 900 parents and staff descended upon Belfast Zoo for Early Years’ annual Zoo Day. For many of the children it was their first ever visit to the zoo, and a chance to discover and learn more about their favourite animals and make lots of new friends. In addition to getting up close with the animals, the children received a surprise visit from representatives of the Fire and Rescue Service.

Exclusive Early Years Member Offer…

To help stretch your budget further, Early Years members are entitled to an exclusive 10% off all NES and first2learn orders all year round.

Simply quote NA174 when placing your order by phone, fax/scan or online at www.nesarnold.co.uk. New Early Years members can also benefit from 20% off their first order with NES by simply quoting NA175. (Please note discounts cannot be used in conjunction with any other offers).

If you would like copies of our 2010 catalogues call us today on 0845 120 4525 or alternatively visit our brand new website at www.nesarnold.co.uk to request one today!

Don’t forget to renew your Early Years membership now for 2010-2011 so that you can take part in more fun Early Years’ events again next year!

Remember all members receive a 10% discount off their membership price by renewing membership online by logging onto www.early-years.org/membership.

Mickey & Lionel

At Early Years’ first ever Theatre Day, 250 children, staff and parents from pre-school settings in the Co. Fermanagh and Co. Tyrone areas gathered at the Baasravee Leisure Centre in Limavady, Co. Fermanagh, to watch Replay Theatre Company’s production of Mickey & Lionel.

The show based on the table of the Mouse & the Lion was specially devised for young children aged 3-7 and encourages them to learn through their own imagination and creativity. The play tells the story about two young boys, one of whom has just nervously started school, it introduces young children to the themes of friendship, building confidence and mutual understanding, and aims to encourage children’s own visual literacy.

Nes and Early Years – Working Together for You

NES have been working alongside Early Years since 2004 and we are extremely proud to carry this successful relationship forward in to 2010.

We are a curriculum-led supplier of innovative educational resources for ages 0-18. Our unique early years range, first2learn is specifically focused on developing curricular skills for early years children enabling them to build upon their knowledge and understanding.

No. 1 choice for early years resources…

As the professional’s choice we pride ourselves on offering our customers a wide range of quality resources at affordable prices; we have over 10,000 resources to choose from, ranging across Early Years, Maths, Art & Craft, Furniture, Stationery and much, much more.

We have also reduced 1,000s of prices by up to 50%, ensuring our prices are some of the most competitive on the market.

Committed to Value

We are committed to offering our customers the best possible value for money. We know that you need more than affordable prices which is why we constantly monitor our service levels to offer you the best expert care and attention possible.

And that’s not all – we also work alongside teachers and industry professionals to offer practical guidance and advice on the application of our resources via our Teacher Approved and Nursery Approved schemes. Look through your catalogue today for these useful tips and comments!

Don’t miss out…

To highlight the work we do with our Teacher and Nursery Approved panel we are offering one lucky reader the chance to win a Dinosaur Floor Puzzle and Figure Pack as commented on by Julie Bonworth, Deputy Manager of Rocking Horse Nursery in Audenshaw:

“Fantastic for all dinosaur lovers. This pack is ideal for all ages and gives children the opportunity to learn about prehistoric times in a way that is fun and enjoyable.”

This beautifully illustrated dinosaur floor puzzle comes with its very own storage case and 12 dinosaur figures, bringing a role play conversational aspect to the much loved jigsaw time.

To be in with a chance of winning this lovely set simply send your establishment name and address details along with your name, email address and telephone number in an envelope to:

Sarah Maddox
NES
Gregory Street
Hyde
Cheshire
SK14 4SG

Exclusive Early Years Member Offer…

To help stretch your budget further, Early Years members are entitled to an exclusive 10% off all NES and first2learn orders all year round.

Simply quote NA174 when placing your order by phone, fax/scan or online at www.nesarnold.co.uk. New Early Years members can also benefit from 20% off their first order with NES by simply quoting NA175. (Please note discounts cannot be used in conjunction with any other offers).

If you would like copies of our 2010 catalogues call us today on 0845 120 4525 or alternatively visit our brand new website at www.nesarnold.co.uk to request one today!

Don’t forget to renew your Early Years membership now for 2010-2011 so that you can take part in more fun Early Years’ events again next year!

Remember all members receive a 10% discount off their membership price by renewing membership online by logging onto www.early-years.org/membership.

Look out for your copy of our 2010-2011 Training Prospectus included with this month’s Early Years Newsletter!

Early Years delivers a wide range of in-service programmes that continue our drive to improve practice by applying an appropriate play based curriculum.

Our training is for parents, all adults working with young children in pre-school settings, dayscares, SureStart, nursery and foundation stage and management committees.

All of our training helps develop the confidence and competence of the participants in the understanding of play and the needs of young children across the statutory, voluntary and independent sectors.

For more information on dates of courses or to discuss programme contents, contact the training department on 02866 342696 or at: training@early-years.org

Remember all members receive a 10% discount off their membership price by renewing membership online by logging onto www.early-years.org/membership.