

# Information Briefing



Issue No 9 - May 2008

Welcome to the latest edition of the Early Years Information Briefing for the early childhood sector. This is one in a series of briefing papers which will be issued for Early Years staff, members and key stakeholders including MLAs, Ministers and Civil Servants.

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## EARLY YEARS WORKING WITH DOE TO RESOLVE TRANSPORT ISSUES

Early Years - the organisation for young children is working with the Department of the Environment and the Driver and Vehicle Agency to address the difficulties relating to the transportation of children by nurseries and day care centres which have arisen as a result of a change in the enforcement of regulations. The change means that staff using cars and other vehicles to transport children may now have to license their vehicle as a taxi.

Early Years' Chief Executive Siobhan Fitzpatrick says this law was due to be enforced in September, and Early Years would be working with the DOE and DVA to resolve the issue and a meeting is planned for this week.

*"We have been in touch with the department and are working in partnership with the DVA in order to resolve the situation. We have relayed the seriousness of the situation, which would have a logistical fall out for nurseries, playgroups and particularly parents across Northern Ireland and are encouraged by the helpful stance taken by the Minister, the DOE and the DVA. We intend to work closely with the DVA in the coming days to resolve the situation, and are very confident that a solution can be found in the short term."*

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## CROSS BORDER TRAINING IMPROVES CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Early Years and the Border Counties Childcare Network (ROI) held an event to celebrate the achievement of one thousand early years practitioners who participated in the Cross Border Training Programme and Respecting Difference Training Programme. The celebration event took place at the City Hotel in Armagh and featured contributions from Republic of Ireland Minister for Children and Young People, Barry Andrews, and Chair of the OFMDFM Committee at the Assembly, Danny Kennedy MLA.

Despite the need for more investment on both sides of the border, Siobhan Fitzpatrick paid tribute to the work done so far, in particular to the fact that over one thousand people have now availed of the training and respecting difference programmes. Over the past two years the funding has enabled Early Years to make a positive contribution to peace and reconciliation by providing accredited cross border training for staff working in the early years sector in Northern Ireland and the Six Border Counties.

The project increased the employment prospects of people working in the sector and assisted them to fulfil their potential by achieving recognised qualifications. The Training Programme and Respecting Difference Programme is part financed by the European Union through its Programme for Peace and Reconciliation managed for the Special EU Programmes Body by Cross-Border Consortium.

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## **ZOO DAY GREAT SUCCESS**

Hundreds of pre-school children from across Northern Ireland had a day out to remember at Belfast Zoological Gardens on May 14th as they took part in the annual Zoo Day organised by Early Years.

Early Years defied the old adage of never working with children or animals by hosting the event which was attended by over 1500 children, parents and staff from playgroups, day cares and parent and toddler groups.

Many of the children enjoyed their first ever visit to the zoo, where they put the fun into learning by discovering more about their favourite animals.

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## **EMERGENCY EMAIL CONTACT WITH MEMBERS**

Issues that require urgent contact with members can arise from time to time and the best and quickest method of contact is by email. Early Years would like to request the email addresses of our members and the permission to use this method for urgent communications. If you are happy to receive electronic communication from Early Years please email [jennieh@early-years.org](mailto:jennieh@early-years.org)