

# Early years newsletter

An essential quarterly source of policy, research and practice news, views and ideas for everyone working with young children and their families in Scotland

Issue 3

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## Welcome Play, play, play

Play is not a trivial pursuit, and although children's play is ultimately the business of children, adults are never out of the picture. Adults can make play possible; enjoying, encouraging and learning from it, or they can be inflexible about it and actively stifle it.

But without child's play, adults' lives are lessened too. And where would adult creativity in all its forms be without play?

Play is a not usually a solitary activity; it is a business of striking up, strengthening and testing relationships.

Research suggests positive relationships with professionals are key to helping parents make changes to their lives and so also improve the lives of their children. But

establishing positive relationships can sometimes be difficult given time constraints and the current systems of public services.

If systems change to allow the development of stronger relationships between professionals and parents, it is to be hoped that the children who directly benefit from these might grow into adults – professionals and parents – better able to build these kinds of positive relationships.

*What do you think, and what are you working on? Please get in touch with questions or comments to contribute to and help shape the contents of the next newsletter.*

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## Early learning and learning environments

### Case study

#### Starcatchers and HNC Childcare

In 2006, the Starcatchers project began as a way to bring new, young audiences into theatre spaces. Now, five years, 20 productions and 40,000 participants later, artists are helping bring more creativity into an HNC childcare curriculum in Glasgow.

Starcatchers is focused around a model of artist residencies based within local arts centres. The most recent project, supported by the Creative Scotland National Lottery Inspire fund produced four year-long residencies in four very distinct communities in Scotland: Platform, Easterhouse, Glasgow and Tramway, Glasgow; Carnegie Hall, Dunfermline, Fife, through On at Fife and The Byre Theatre, St Andrews, Fife.

In addition to the residencies and research, Starcatchers also began to explore how they could provide professional development opportunities for childcare staff. From one-off practical workshops to the development of a creative nursery resource pack, the Starcatchers team looked at different ways of supporting educators to use creativity in their daily practice.

This project, run over two college terms, comprised: lecture demonstrations, practical workshops from artists including theatre makers, visual artists and dancers, performance visits, and a student placement project.

The most significant project in this strand was the development of a programme for HNC Childcare Students at John Wheatley College in Easterhouse,

Glasgow, which was an opportunity to explore how creativity could be built in to the childcare curriculum being taught in Scottish FE colleges.

The module aimed to increase knowledge and understanding of the potential uses of expressive arts activities in early education and childcare settings: increase confidence in leading expressive arts activity; increase awareness of opportunities to access live performance created specifically for early years, and give an increased appreciation of live performance as a stimulus for early years education and development.

The outcomes of the project made it clear that there was a lack of confidence from the students, and that they had a fear of what the arts and creativity were when they began, but for those who engaged fully with the programme this became less of an issue as the project developed.

*"I found it inspired me to try out new ideas although I still feel like I need to build skills [to be totally confident] in approaching new concepts; I need to build on this,"* Student, John Wheatley College

*"It's brilliant to get so many ideas and shows me that I don't need big complicated things at nursery to engage the children,"* Student, John Wheatley College

The project will run for a second time in 2011-12.

To view films of Starcatchers work in action visit:  
<http://vimeo.com/23543014>  
<http://starcatchers.org.uk/>

## Policy Matters



### Creativity and the early years - research

The **Starcatchers** residencies discussed above were supported by an action research study delivered by the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Studies at the University of Strathclyde.

The research findings, which are now online, include: "Children are highly attuned, absorbed and responsive to the whole Starcatchers process: they mirror what they observe in the development and performance process, and instigate, experiment and collaborate with the artists in ways that are outside their day-to-day experience."

The report comments on the experience and learning about the genre of performance: "they are the audience and they are learning to behave within the rules and conventions of theatre from an audience perspective."

Read the full report online:  
[http://starcatchers.org.uk/downloads/starcatchers\\_summary.pdf](http://starcatchers.org.uk/downloads/starcatchers_summary.pdf)

**Licketyspit**, a theatre company working with young children, is one of the Inspiring Scotland early years action fund recipients. One of the company's aims is to inspire young children's play.

A research study into the impact of their show LicketyLeap can be ordered from their website. The report, *Leaping into ourselves, a study into the layers of engagement made by early years children through Licketyspit's immersive theatre project, LicketyLeap*, is a discussion of the process of this interactive theatre and workshops in early years settings.

The work is described as, "action learning, in which the children develop new skills and learn through multiple intelligences, and have the opportunities to test these out and reflect on them, so reinforcing the learning process and building confidence." The report suggests that this kind of work can inform and develop professional practice, offering an opportunity to "create a vocabulary of shared intention" between education and health professionals.  
[www.licketyspit.com](http://www.licketyspit.com)

### Adults, and children's right to play

Starcatchers' work with students of childcare, and LicketySpit's immersive theatre in nurseries show that while the focus is on children, adults also need to be part of children's right to play. The experience of play, especially fantasy play, may be different for adults, but without their own experiences and understanding of the different ways children engage in play, adults may find it more difficult to create supportive environments.

Research-based reports detailing the impact of play, particularly outdoor play, on learning and behavioural change in young children, as well as physical and health improvements, might suggest professionals could profitably redirect education-based behavioural programmes into high quality play and outdoor play experiences.

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) announced in February 2011, that it would adopt a 'general comment' on article 31, which includes reference to children's right to play. A 'general comment' is a review of how a UNCRC article is understood and adopted worldwide, with recommendations for action.  
[www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/comments.htm](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/comments.htm)

The International Play Association has campaigned for this general comment, Visit its website:  
[www.ipaworld.org](http://www.ipaworld.org).  
Its president is the Scottish-based play consultant Theresa Casey: [www.theresacaseyconsultancy.co.uk](http://www.theresacaseyconsultancy.co.uk)

### Play – the indoor impact of outdoor playspace

In October, the Forestry Commission published the results of a longitudinal study that examined a 'before and after' picture of a school playground in Glasgow's Merrylee Primary School. The report, *Natural Play: Making a difference to children's learning and wellbeing*, compared how children used their existing 'tarmac and turf' playspace in 2008 to how they used their new natural playspace, which included 'hills, valleys, steps, meadow area, hollows, shrubs and trees, willow tunnels, dead wood, a rope bridge and seating', in 2011.

The study was participatory and included the perspectives of children, parents, and teachers at the school. A key finding was that indicators of emotional wellbeing improved. There were, for example, fewer reports of bullying and enhanced interactions between social groups such as boys and girls, and between age groups. The new playspace also saw increased levels of physical activity and a positive impact on learning indoors.

Perhaps most significantly for cash-strapped schools, the study also established that natural playspaces such as the one at Merrylee Primary are of comparable cost to more traditional 'tarmac and turf' playgrounds, and

therefore are excellent value for money. This research can serve as inspiration for early years centres who wish to enhance their outdoor provision, particularly when considered in combination with Education Scotland's new guidance on outdoor learning (see below), which focuses on practical, economical advice for practitioners.

Read the report here:

[http://edubuzz.org/equallywell/files/2011/11/Natural-Play-Study\\_Forestry-Commission\\_1008111.pdf](http://edubuzz.org/equallywell/files/2011/11/Natural-Play-Study_Forestry-Commission_1008111.pdf)

### Why and how to play?

Children's play depends on a whole host of physical, societal or attitudinal barriers, many of which are set by adults. Inspiring Scotland, which managed the Go Play fund to encourage more play experiences for children aged 5-13, has published a guide for adults to make sense of why they should be promoting play and what the impacts of doing it well would be.

Read the report online:

<http://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/UserFiles/Documents/GoPlayOEF.pdf>

### Getting help to get outdoors

Education Scotland has launched new guidance on outdoor learning, *Outdoor Learning: Practical guidance, ideas and support for teachers and practitioners in Scotland*, which was developed by Creative STAR Learning and sits alongside other outdoor learning resources available here:

[www.ltsotland.org.uk/learningteachingandassessment/approaches/outdoorlearning/index.asp](http://www.ltsotland.org.uk/learningteachingandassessment/approaches/outdoorlearning/index.asp)

The new guidance offers an accessible review of research on outdoor learning but its main focus, as the title suggests, is on practical suggestions and support for teachers and practitioners. There is a dedicated section on outdoor learning in the early years that features tips about small steps that may help enhance outdoor learning: holding circle time outside, or allowing parents to drop children off outdoors rather than inside.

The authors emphasise that outdoor learning need not be particularly expensive and there is a focus on using local and community resources, which is supplemented by Education Scotland's online resource, *Where to Go In Scotland*, an interactive map that helps teachers and practitioners find resources for outdoor learning in their local area.

[www.ltsotland.org.uk/learningteachingandassessment/approaches/outdoorlearning/placestolearnoutdoors/wheretogomap/index.asp](http://www.ltsotland.org.uk/learningteachingandassessment/approaches/outdoorlearning/placestolearnoutdoors/wheretogomap/index.asp)

A self-evaluation tool, *Building Your Curriculum*, supports the new resource, *Outside and In*. This tool helps schools and learning centres evaluate how well outdoor learning is embedded into learning programmes and to identify areas for future development. Keep up to date with developing ideas on outdoor learning through this blog:

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/glowblogs/OutdoorLearningNetwork>

### **The job's a game! Play@home findings**

New publications, and a research report are available from play@home, the national programme to encourage mums and dads to play with their babies. The programme is mentioned in the core parenting education antenatal parenting programme and is part of Health Scotland's efforts to encourage more physical play and activity in young children and their families. Whether play involves physical rough and tumble, or splashing in the bath, the findings suggest the materials are having an impact, with more physical activity taking place. One of the findings suggests that adults find the approach makes getting chores done more easy: "Higher scores were found on the Pleasure in Parenting Scale for the Toddler Intervention group with parents scoring significantly higher on three specific questions relating to 'mealtime activity' 'tidying away toys', and 'parent-child errand activity'."

[www.healthscotland.com/documents/5440.aspx](http://www.healthscotland.com/documents/5440.aspx)

## **Take it Further**

### **Observing, assessing, planning**

In issue 2 of this newsletter we raised the challenge of documenting and describing the intentions and benefits of outdoor experiences in the early years. Observation and documentation were suggested as being key and are an integral part of the birth to three guidance and early stages of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Making time for meaningful observation and in depth reflection that informs practice and aids discussion with parents is the subject of further training offered by former nursery teacher and local authority manager Chris Miles MBE: 'The Cycle of Observation, Assessment and Planning', 29 May, Edinburgh  
[www.childreninscotland.org.uk/observation](http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk/observation)

Chris Miles is also running her popular half-day early years course; 'Nature Kindergartens: making a start', on 30 March.

Those working with primary school children can book the one-day course, 'Taking the Curriculum for Excellence Outdoors' on 27 April, delivered by Grounds for Learning.

Book now at [www.childreninscotland.org.uk/events](http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk/events) or contact us on 0131 222 2446.

### **Early years and additional support for learning**

Very often early years staff are the first to notice that a child may need some extra support with their learning but may be unclear about how best to advise families about additional support before school or when the child moves to primary. Enquire, the Scottish Advice Service for Additional Support for Learning can help. A helpline and online information is available, including a factsheet on early years and ASL. Call the helpline on 0845 123 23 03, email [info@enquire.org.uk](mailto:info@enquire.org.uk) or visit [enquire.org.uk/what-is-additional-support-for-learning/questions/are-children-under-3-entitled-to-](http://enquire.org.uk/what-is-additional-support-for-learning/questions/are-children-under-3-entitled-to-)

additional-support

Children in Scotland has published a briefing paper on additional support for learning and the early years. Read it here:  
[www.childreninscotland.org.uk/members/docs/EYFASL.pdf](http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk/members/docs/EYFASL.pdf)

## Supporting parents

### Case study

#### Parent to parent

Lorna has two teenage sons and just over a year ago moved from being a parent attending a parenting course, to training and facilitating sessions herself. Parent Network Scotland's system of parent facilitators is based upon the belief that parents who have experienced the challenges of bringing up children are best placed to help others reflect on their relationships with their children.

Knowing that a facilitator has undergone a similar learning experience can make parents feel more at ease with sharing their difficulties and frustrations. Parent facilitators are also local sources of support who can encourage others to bring about change in their families, but who are still present in the community after a course has finished.

Lorna's experience of completing the course helped her reflect on the way communication with her sons had become reactive and counter-productive. She used the reflective tools learned on the course to change her reactions and ultimately bring about changes in her son's behaviour. Lorna has undertaken training and receives ongoing support to encourage her to reflect and self-evaluate her work as a facilitator, a personal learning journey that is benefitting other parents too.

Irene attended the Parent Network Course primarily as it was done through afterschool care. Irene says "As a parent, you sometimes feel as though you are in your own "bubble of trouble" with regard to your offspring. It is good to share the load and get ideas bouncing around to try and resolve some of the issues that parenthood brings up at all ages throughout your child's life."

Parent Network Scotland runs a range of parenting support courses and trains and provides ongoing support for facilitators, and offers courses for new parents and families with new babies.  
Visit: [www.parentnetworkscotland.org.uk](http://www.parentnetworkscotland.org.uk)

Parent to parent, peer support varies from coffee mornings and informal chats at toddler groups and school gates, to more formalised environments with trained facilitators. Listed here are a few of the more formally organised groups providing support. For an insight into fathers' groups visit:  
[www.makinggenderequalityreal.org.uk/case-studies](http://www.makinggenderequalityreal.org.uk/case-studies)

**Community Mothers** is a breastfeeding support network set up by NHS Lanarkshire where local mothers who have breastfed for three months are trained to provide support to other local mums who are planning to breastfeed their baby.  
[www.nhslanarkshire.org.uk/Services/Breastfeeding/LBI/Pages/CommunityMothers.aspx](http://www.nhslanarkshire.org.uk/Services/Breastfeeding/LBI/Pages/CommunityMothers.aspx)

**NCT volunteers** run 'bump and baby' weekly drop-in groups for expectant mums, dads, and grandparents, and members arrange for local 'self-help' post-natal groups to get set up.  
[www.nct.org.uk/branches/events/bumps-babies](http://www.nct.org.uk/branches/events/bumps-babies)

Caroline, 35, from Haddington in East Lothian attends her local Bumps & Babies group with her 19 month old son, Oscar: "The group is somewhere you can go and have a cup of tea and a chat, or a bit of a cry and a hug; something I really appreciated after the first night I spent alone with Oscar. It gives some structure to my week and I've made some very good friends."

## Policy matters

### Childcare debate continues

The potential for investment in early childhood education and care, its benefits for young children and families, and its currently prohibitively high cost has been the subject of a series of reports across the UK.

New reports looking at parents take up of maternity, paternity and parental leave and the way work is balanced with employment provide a different angle.

Arguments around Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), and out-of-school childcare can be made from a range of different perspectives: child poverty, women's employment, growing the national economy, workforce equality issues, and outcomes for children's education and wellbeing. Capturing all of these issues is difficult, yet vital, because they are all interrelated.

The debate is also a reminder of the way policy is divided between Westminster and Holyrood. For example, the Chancellor's announcement of extra funding for disadvantaged 2-year-olds affects children in England only.

The Scottish Government's recent announcement of free 'early learning and childcare provision' for looked after children from age 2 is a welcome step towards a universal, subsidised, entitlement, but Children in Scotland's believes the Children's Services Bill promised by the Scottish Government should establish a universal entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care facilitated in the first instance by a charging policy similar to that operating in Nordic countries which does not distinguish between education and care.

Read Children in Scotland's recent media releases on this issue here:

[www.childreninscotland.org.uk/html/med\\_p\\_pr.htm](http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk/html/med_p_pr.htm)



## The reports:

### The financial benefits of investment in childcare

*Childcare support and the hours trap: the universal credit* – the universal credit will extend help with childcare costs for those working below 16 hours. However, parents are already paying more for childcare than previously with reduction in eligible childcare being cut from 80% to 70%. For many single parents or second earners in couples on low incomes the financial incentive for working at least two days at least week will be worse.

[www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/childcare-support-and-hours-trap-universal-credit/](http://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/childcare-support-and-hours-trap-universal-credit/)

Children in Scotland provided oral evidence on the welfare reform bill to the Health and Sport Committee [http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4\\_HealthandSportCommittee/Reports/heR11-04.pdf](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_HealthandSportCommittee/Reports/heR11-04.pdf) and is working in partnership with organisations such as One Parent Family Scotland on the welfare reform and its impact on children and families [www.opfs.org.uk/files/policy/briefing\\_20111007\\_welfare-reform-bill\\_impacts-on-lps-and-children.pdf](http://www.opfs.org.uk/files/policy/briefing_20111007_welfare-reform-bill_impacts-on-lps-and-children.pdf)

### *The missing million: the potential for female employment to raise living standards in low to middle income Britain*

Growth in women's employment in the last 40 years is linked to higher living standards. Even taking account of the impacts of the economic downturn, employment rates for women are static and without growth, and it is uncertain how living standards for those on low and middle incomes will improve in future. This report considers, among other factors, how investment in childcare could be an important influence on women's ability to take up paid employment.

[www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/missing-million-potential-female-employment-raise-/](http://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/missing-million-potential-female-employment-raise-/)

### *Making the case for universal childcare*

This short report calculates how the increased investment in free or subsidised childcare frees more women to take up employment, benefitting both household income and government income through tax receipts. The issue for Scotland is that the income generated and calculated by the IPPR is in terms of tax receipts that go to Westminster. For Scotland to reap these economic benefits the UK Treasury should return a proportion of this increased income to a devolved Scotland.

[www.ippr.org/publications/55/8382/making-the-case-for-universal-childcare](http://www.ippr.org/publications/55/8382/making-the-case-for-universal-childcare)

### *10 ways to promote growth*

Number 9 on the list is, 'expand free childcare to make it easier for parents to return to work'

[www.ippr.org/publications/55/8266/10-ways-to-promote-growth](http://www.ippr.org/publications/55/8266/10-ways-to-promote-growth)

### **Balancing work and family life**

#### ***Maternity and paternity rights and women returners survey 2009/10***

Some of the key findings:

- Three out of four mothers had returned to work 12-

18 months after childbirth. The return to work rate did not change between 2006 and 2008.

- Mothers who increased their leave by the longest period were those with lower salaries and those whose partner had a low salary.
- 12% of mothers who returned to work reported no access to flexible working arrangements, 18% had no access to childcare support and other arrangements, and 20% had no access to family leave arrangements.
- 44% of fathers made some changes to their working arrangements after the birth of their baby.

The research reports on data up to 2008, so the impact of the economic situation in the UK has perhaps yet to have an effect.

The full report is online:

[http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/report\\_abstracts/rr\\_abstracts/rra\\_777.asp](http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/report_abstracts/rr_abstracts/rra_777.asp)

### **European research on reconciling work and care for parents with dependent children**

This review of literature and data on how mothers and fathers reconcile work and care has produced a list of findings and policy recommendations.

The research briefing is available here:

[www.abdn.ac.uk/socsci/research/nec/projects.php](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/socsci/research/nec/projects.php)

Researchers Peter Moss and John Bennett also explored this topic in their report for the European research project *Working for Inclusion*.

[www.childrenscotland.org.uk/wfi](http://www.childrenscotland.org.uk/wfi)

### **Pregnancy and birth**

NHS Scotland's HEAT performance management system sets out the targets and measures against which NHS Boards are publicly monitored and evaluated. A new HEAT target is being introduced in 2012 to increase the percentage of women who have their first appointment with a midwife by the 12th week of their pregnancy.

This 'booking' appointment is the first step in establishing a relationship between health professionals and the pregnant woman and her partner to support the health and wellbeing of the developing fetus and the mother to be.

This target is intended to improve access to antenatal care for all women, but particularly those at higher risk of poor pregnancy outcomes.

Early access to antenatal care is designed to support and enable women to have as healthy a pregnancy and birth as possible, including encouraging and supporting access to the pregnancy screening programme and prevention of harm to babies prior to birth from poor maternal nutrition, smoking, alcohol and drug use.

For more information contact Christine Duncan, Change Manager for Maternity Services, Child and Maternal Health Division at the Scottish Government, [christine.duncan@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:christine.duncan@scotland.gsi.gov.uk).

Version 6 of the Scottish Woman-Held Maternity Record (SWHMR) is now available for download. This record, held by pregnant women throughout their pregnancy includes a detailed checklist intended to promote an asset-based discussion at women's booking appointment. The time made available for these initial discussions are determined by local health board policy.

This version includes a question about daily alcohol intake as well as weekly amounts, and includes advice from the chief medical officer about avoiding alcohol completely during pregnancy.

Data collected in this record makes up the national data for pregnancy and childbirth across Scotland, and the new HEAT target for antenatal care will be gathered from this data source.

Visit [www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org](http://www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org) so you can see the kind information and topics for

conversation between midwives and pregnant women.

For further information on this project please contact Joanne McDonald, Programme Co-ordinator, [Joanne.McDonald@nhs.net](mailto:Joanne.McDonald@nhs.net), or on 0131 623 4350.

### **Asset-based approaches and health**

NHS Health Scotland's briefing paper explains 'asset-based approaches' and their potential for improving health.

[www.healthscotland.com/uploads/documents/17101-assetBasedApproachestoHealthImprovementBriefing.pdf](http://www.healthscotland.com/uploads/documents/17101-assetBasedApproachestoHealthImprovementBriefing.pdf)

### **Smoking and pregnancy**

Smoking during pregnancy is known to result in poorer outcomes at birth and to have lifelong implications for children's health. Encouraging and supporting women, and their partners, to give up smoking before, during or after pregnancy and birth can change children's lives for the better. A small report examining a community pharmacy-led approach to providing help for those looking to give up suggests that low-cost, flexible support, if done well, can contribute to turning good intentions into better health.

Read the report, *Review of the Community Pharmacy Public Health Service for Smoking Cessation and Emergency Hormonal Contraception*, here: [www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/11/25084749/0](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/11/25084749/0)

Remind yourself of the reasons for promoting better preconception health here: [www.childreninscotland.org.uk/docs/EYFbriefingpreconceptionv3.pdf](http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk/docs/EYFbriefingpreconceptionv3.pdf)

### **Breastfeeding – how to make the difference**

In October 2011 Scottish statistics on breastfeeding rates were published, revealing little significant change in the rates of women breastfeeding. The benefits of breastfeeding are well documented and it is often taken as a proxy measure of wellbeing for women and babies. Rates have increased slightly in the most

deprived areas of Scotland but have remained static overall during the last decade. The target was 32.7% of babies being exclusively breastfeeding at the 6-8 week review, while what was reached in 2010/11 was 26.5%.

<http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Child-Health/Infant-Feeding/Research>

By contrast, women's intention to breastfeed remains high, as research by Growing up in Scotland suggests. It notes an average of 60% of women initiating breastfeeding, which suggest more than half of women stop before reaching the 6-week target. Reviews and research summaries by Growing up in Scotland suggest more support during the postnatal period would ensure women's intentions could be better realised. [www.crfr.ac.uk/gus/publicopic.html#11](http://www.crfr.ac.uk/gus/publicopic.html#11)

Evidence from a review of the Family Nurse Partnership in NHS Lothian suggests other issues affect women's decisions about infant feeding. Being able to be in charge of finding out information and making decisions, rather than simply being told what was best is more appealing to pregnant teenagers. It is possible that other age groups react similarly to how they find out about infant feeding, the decisions they make, and the way they are supported in those decisions.

The relationship between the Family Nurse and the client is based on the nurse as a trusted source of information. The nurse would not, for example, advise a client that the best choice would be to breastfeed their child, but would provide information and allow the client to discuss and weigh up the decision based on their circumstances and perception of what is best for them. The programme's research suggests this type of approach leads to increased breastfeeding rates, which are accepted as being generally more beneficial to the infant and mother in the long-term.

Given that breastfeeding rates are not really rising, the more in depth insights into experiences in Scotland

provided by the Growing up in Scotland research and the Family Nurse Partnership data should be influential in decisions on what would make the difference.

The Family Nurse Partnership currently in NHS Lothian and NHS Tayside will be expanding to five more health boards by 2013, including Glasgow.

Read the Family Nurse Partnership research report:  
[www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/07/28142203/0](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/07/28142203/0)

NHS Scotland's breastfeeding website:  
[www.feedgoodfactor.org.uk/](http://www.feedgoodfactor.org.uk/)

Read too research from England: The effects of breastfeeding on children, mothers and employers, a two year ESRC funded research report is online here – it reviews data from two longitudinal England-based research studies:  
<http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/projects/breastfeeding>

## Take it further

### Supporting fathers

Two new publications are available to help midwives involve fathers more positively in the preparation, birth and early days of fatherhood. The Royal College of Midwives has published *Reaching out: involving fathers in maternity care*, which includes a summary of research into the benefits of paternal involvement, barriers to their involvement, information available for fathers, how to engage them in the process, the transition to fatherhood and examples of good practice. *Top tips for involving fathers in maternity care* is also online, covering similar issues including how to change maternity services to engage better with fathers.  
<http://www.rcm.org.uk/midwives/news/new-guidance-urges-fathers-to-be-to-get-involved/>

### Supporting Fathers from the Start - a FREE seminar

14 March 2012, Edinburgh

A forum for practitioners from different backgrounds to share their experiences of working with fathers and male carers, and learn about new and developing approaches being used when providing support to families.

Book your place now at  
[www.childreninScotland.org.uk/fathers](http://www.childreninScotland.org.uk/fathers)

### Children in Europe

Look out for Children in Europe's September 2012 issue (free to all Children in Scotland members), which focuses on boys, fathers and male workers in early childhood education and care.

[www.childrenineurope.org](http://www.childrenineurope.org)

### Scottish Book Trust and early years

The Scottish Book Trust has extra Government funding to work in more disadvantaged areas and 'to pilot a new book gifting pack to expectant mothers'.

[www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2011/12/12112247](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2011/12/12112247)

### Managed Clinical Network – children with exceptional healthcare needs

Parents and professionals have agreed that the next priority of the MCN CEN will be Early (Years) Support for families. The network will develop an educational resource for professionals to help them provide early support for families and discuss parental expectations. Contact Dr Marit Boot, [marit.boot@nhs.net](mailto:marit.boot@nhs.net) for more details.  
[www.cen.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.cen.scot.nhs.uk)

### Children in Scotland upcoming training

Kitbag for Families – 27 March 2012  
Working with Parents – 10 May 2012

For further information and to book visit:  
[www.childreninScotland.org.uk/events](http://www.childreninScotland.org.uk/events)



## Working together

### Case Study

#### Healthier wealthier children

Research shows that children under 3 are at higher risk of poverty than children at any other age. The birth of a child is a time of potentially dramatic changes to family finances, as well as family relationships. There are concerns that the introduction of a new welfare reform system, the universal credit, will result in increased anxiety among adults, and reduced income for some families with young children. A Glasgow City Council report has estimated that more than 65,000 child benefit claimants will experience reductions in their income under the new system being put through Westminster.

A Scottish Government-funded partnership project, *Healthier, Wealthier Children* (HWC) has been working through a range of health professionals, such as midwives and health visitors, to increase the uptake of benefits to which families are entitled. This means Scottish Government money is being used to increase benefit funds paid by the Westminster government.

Key to the NHS approach within the HWC project involves routine discussion of money and debt worries as part of a holistic assessment of health issues and the appropriate onward referral to HWC-commissioned Money and Welfare Advice Services.

Since the project launch in October 2010, most of the referrals to the Advice Services across NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde have been from midwives and health visitors. With more than 70% of referrals coming from the midwives and health visitors, this is seen as a big change as their previous links to Advice Services were less developed. In addition to these NHS workforce changes, significant financial gain for

clients has been recorded.

The latest HWC evaluation data from Money and Welfare Advice Services shows that 1538 appointments were offered which resulted in 830 cases being opened and financial gain for 316 clients. The total annual amount gained was £1,120,000 with one-off lump sums amounting to £96,000. Onward referrals from Advice Services have also been made to address related issues such as kinship care, fuel poverty, homelessness and immigration advice.

The HWC project is looking at ways to ensure understanding and support for financial advice and information is embedded within the midwifery and health-visiting workforce.

More general information is available on the HWC website and a presentation on the evaluation progress to date can be accessed on the Glasgow Centre for Population Health website. The final evaluation report is due by the end of March 2012. For further information on the HWC project please contact James Egan at the Glasgow Centre for Population Health, james.egan2@glasgow.gov.uk, 0141 287 6888.

The high risk of poverty for children under 3 is reported in the CPAG publication *Poverty in Scotland, 2011* [www.cpag.org.uk/scotland/](http://www.cpag.org.uk/scotland/)

Research suggests that the stress of poverty is linked to having a negative impact on parenting. See *The relationship between parenting and poverty*: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/parenting-poverty.pdf>

### Policy matters

#### New early years briefing

Read Children in Scotland's latest briefing paper, no. 8: *Universal entitlements – how investment in the early*

*years should be informed by research evidence about universal approaches, which sets out how and why support for young children needs to be a comprehensive universal and integrated system where care and education are combined.*

#### Health of a nation

Chief medical officer Sir Harry Burns has presented his annual report on the nation's health, flagging up slight improvements but noting that overall the health of the nation is not shifting significantly. Chapter 5 is devoted to the subject of asset-based approaches to working with people on improving their health, an idea which stems from the approach that identifying illness and disease is not enough to encourage good health. Instead, we should be noting the positive environments and factors that enable and encourage people to live more healthy lives. If you read only one part of the report, read chapter five and think about how the services you experience or help shape fit or don't fit into an asset-based way of thinking. [www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/12/13153419/0](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/12/13153419/0)

#### Do we need more health visitors or child and family centres (or both)?

It shouldn't be an either/or debate, but different positions are advocated and the issues have been debated in the past few months in both Westminster and Holyrood. Increasing numbers of health visitors and family nurses head in the direction of increased surveillance, whereas providing more early childhood education and care increases services and opportunities for parents to support each other and work in partnership with professionals. Of course it is not a simple dilemma and a combination of the two approaches is probably what is required. To get a sense of the different debates read these two recent discussions:

The Scottish Parliament Health and Sport Committee Official Report, 25 October 2011, where the chief

medical officer argues for increasing health visitor numbers:

[www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=6476&mode=html](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=6476&mode=html)

The House of Commons Education Committee met to take evidence and discuss the health visitors and their role in school 'readiness'. Here, an English local authority describes how it moved health visitors and community midwives out of GP surgeries and into children's centres:

[www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmeduc/1170/11062203.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmeduc/1170/11062203.htm)

## Birthweights and child poverty – new national indicators

The introduction of a national indicator that looks at birthweights is a sign that preventative spending is becoming the focus of government attention. The changes to the National Performance Framework take into account the points made in the Christie Commission report, *The Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services*:

<http://scotland.gov.uk/About/publicservicescommission> and *More than GDP: Measuring what matters*: [www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/2011/more-than-gdp—measuring-what-matters](http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/2011/more-than-gdp—measuring-what-matters)

"Low birthweight babies are twice as common in deprived areas than in areas of affluence and the percentage in the most deprived areas was 6.9 compared to 3.3 in the most affluent," states the chief medical officer's annual report. A higher birthweight suggests better health during preconception and pregnancy, so if fewer lower birthweights are recorded then it is a sign of improving health for young children.

Another new indicator focusing on child poverty:

'Reduce children's deprivation', follows a national commitment to reducing child poverty in line with the 2010 Child Poverty Act.

Read about the new indicators here:

[www.scotland.gov.uk/About/scotPerforms/NIchanges/Q/forceupdate/on](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/scotPerforms/NIchanges/Q/forceupdate/on)

## European Focus

Children's health and wellbeing is becoming a growing focus for European policy. Sometimes there is a direct reference; at other times the focus is families and the workforce. Three recent high level reports offer a good example of policy crossover.

First is the European Commission's Communication on Early Childhood Education and Care [Com (2011) 66], adopted by the UK government, (see Children in Scotland's Briefing Paper 3) which called for priority to be given to three areas:

- › Analyse and evaluate early childhood education and care services locally; regionally and nationally in terms of availability, affordability and quality.
- › Ensure measures aimed at providing generalised equitable access to early childhood education and care and reinforcing its quality.
- › Invest in early childhood education and care as a long term growth- enhancing measure.

It also called for European Structural Funds to be considered in supporting these aims.

<http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk/docs/EYFbriefingpaper3v3.pdf>

Second is the Council of the European Union's adoption of the conclusions outlined in *Managing demographic challenges through better reconciliation of work and family life* (3 October 2011). [www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/press\\_data/en/lsa/124868.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/press_data/en/lsa/124868.pdf)

Again, there was a direct call for member states to better share in the 'development of care systems for dependent persons, including childcare and long term care, which support women and men at different

stages of their lives and advancement of their careers'. The Council invites the European Commission to report on member states' performance with regard to childcare facilities as foreseen in the strategy for equality between women and men 2012-2015.

And finally, the European Commission's Communication on Corporate Social Responsibility [COM(2011) 681], which might seem more removed from children than the previous two publications, but which has indirect implications. A renewed emphasis is placed on the lead governments should take on responsible procurement decisions: 'In 2011 the Commission published a guide on Socially Responsible Public Procurement (SRPP), explaining how to integrate social considerations into public procurement while respecting the existing EU legal framework'. The publication it references raises the importance of a living wage: highly relevant to those working in the voluntary and private childcare sector in Scotland.

Read *Buying Social: a guide to taking account of social considerations in public procurement*: [ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=6457&langId=en](http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=6457&langId=en)

## Low pay in the early years workforce: out of school care

When public sector workers in the UK went on strike, they were joined by teachers from pre-school settings, but not by the many staff working in the private and voluntary childcare sector. Pay and conditions for staff here are secondary to those employed in local authorities and there is little unionisation or representation on pay or employment conditions, and little information about the nature of the workforce. That is why insights provided by the Scottish Out of School Care Network survey are so unique. The survey provides a profile of ages, qualifications, working times, attitudes and job satisfaction for three main types of worker: lead practitioner, practitioner and support worker. The average support worker is paid less than the Scottish living wage – £7 to the £7.20

living wage. Practitioners are just above at £7.80. Most of those who replied were women – 217 women to 25 men.

Read the full report here:

[www.soscn.org/SOSCN%20OSC%20Workforce%20Survey%202011.pdf](http://www.soscn.org/SOSCN%20OSC%20Workforce%20Survey%202011.pdf)

### The costs of childcare to parents

Children in Scotland is working with the Daycare Trust on the UK review of childcare costs: the cost to parents of childcare. The report will be out at the end of February, and will include a special Scottish briefing on the findings and analysis in a Scottish context.

### The quality debate

Part of the Starting Strong series of publications, which provide a comparative account of OECD member's provision for early childhood education and care, the new report, *Starting Strong III: A quality toolbox for early childhood education and care*, looks at different approaches and emphasizes upon defining and ensuring quality. For example noting that in Nordic countries emphasis is placed upon what is expected of professionals working with young children, whereas Anglo-Saxon countries focus more in children's outcomes.

Read the executive summary here:

[www.oecd.org/dataoecd/6/34/49325825.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/6/34/49325825.pdf)

or the full report here:

[www.oecd.org/document/0/0,3746,en\\_2649\\_3926323\\_1\\_49317504\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html#3](http://www.oecd.org/document/0/0,3746,en_2649_3926323_1_49317504_1_1_1_1,00.html#3)

### Take it further

**Children in Europe magazine**, March 2012 – free to members of Children in Scotland

Making the transition from early childhood services to school is a big event in a child's life. There is wide variation in the age at which children start school across Europe, but whether this takes place at 4 or 7 years of age, children benefit from help in making the adjustment. This issue will consider how educators and

families can support children through the transition and ask if the emphasis should be on children preparing for school, or schools adjusting to the needs of their youngest children.

The theme will also be the subject of the Children in Europe 2012 Conference '**Life changes: supporting transitions**', taking place on 20 March, in association with North Ayrshire Council.

For further information, please contact [hbingham@childreninscotland.org.uk](mailto:hbingham@childreninscotland.org.uk) or visit [www.childreninscotland.org.uk/transitions](http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk/transitions)

**This document is one in a series of Children in Scotland publications that highlight issues, research or areas of policy and practice that have a particular impact on children's early years and on the diverse workforce that provides services for this group.**

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