

# Building the Ambition

National Practice Guidance on Early Learning and Childcare  
Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014



The Scottish  
Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba



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Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014**

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## The following terminology is used throughout this guidance:

- *Practitioners* – is a single term which encompasses all staff and adults who work with children under 5 years old until they start school and includes childminders, teachers, managers, supervisors, support and out of school care workers.
- *The Act* means the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.
- *Early Learning and Childcare (ELCC)* – encompasses all previous terminology related to pre-school provision and early education. It also refers to the different types of settings, such as private providers, Gaelic medium settings, local authority settings, voluntary groups and childminding.
- *Additional Support for Learning* and issues of equality and diversity, although not specifically noted, are taken as being implicit throughout the text and are integral to the delivery of high quality early learning and childcare.

# Contents

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## Introduction: Building the Ambition

### Section 1: Why do we need this?

- 1.1 Background
- 1.2 Why the terminology early learning and childcare?
- 1.3 Who needs to take account of this change?

### Section 2: What we know from policy and research

- 2.1 Context
- 2.2 Getting it Right for Every Child
- 2.3 Growing up in Scotland
- 2.4 The Early Years Collaborative
- 2.5 Review of the workforce

### Section 3: What makes the difference for children and families?

- 3.1 The image of the child
- 3.2 Case Study: Ross
- 3.3 Involvement of the family

### Section 4: What do we mean by play and learning?

- 4.1 How are play and learning connected?

### Section 5: Understanding attachment

- 5.1 Attachment theory - a definition
- 5.2 What should a practitioner do to help?
- 5.3 Case Study: Mandy

### Section 6: Early Learning and Childcare - what do children need?

- 6.1 The question of developmental stages
- 6.2 What are the key characteristics of being a baby, toddler and young child?

- 6.3 The baby
- 6.4 Moving on to being a toddler
- 6.5 Being a young child
- 6.6 The importance of transition

### Section 7: Putting pedagogy into practice

- 7.1 What do we mean by pedagogy?
- 7.2 Essential aspects which drive early learning
- 7.3 A focus on babies - what do they need?
- 7.4 A focus on toddlers - what do they need?
- 7.5 A focus on the young child - what do they need?

### Section 8: What are the key elements of quality in a setting?

- 8.1 What do we mean by quality?
- 8.2 What does quality mean for children?
- 8.3 What does quality mean for practitioners?
- 8.4 Quality matters
- 8.5 Quality assurance and improvement
- 8.6 External quality assurance and regulation

### Section 9: Conclusion

### Acknowledgements



# Executive summary



**I welcome this *National Practice Guidance on Early Learning and Childcare: Building the Ambition*, which supports our ambitious and transformational expansion of early learning and childcare. We believe that early learning and childcare are indivisible and this document aims to enthuse, guide and support the changes we want to see in how this will be delivered and broadened to create a holistic and seamless learning journey from birth to starting school.**

Aileen Campbell

This guidance on early learning and childcare builds upon *Pre-Birth to Three*<sup>1</sup> and *Curriculum for Excellence*<sup>2</sup> early level from 3 years to 6 years. It provides detailed, practical guidance on the experiences and interactions necessary to deliver the learning journey at the most important developmental stage for babies, toddlers and young children. It describes what is good practice in creating caring and nurturing settings that allow wellbeing, communication, curiosity, inquiry and creativity to flourish.

Our expansion of early learning and childcare is ambitious – and rightly so – with quality at its heart. This guidance is designed to support practitioners in their important role to deliver high quality early learning and childcare which is accessible and affordable for all children and families. It has been developed in partnership and tested with practitioners and is intended to support the increasing knowledge and skills required through training, practice, continual personal development and reflection, alongside supporting quality assurance and improvement.

I trust you will find it valuable and look forward to working with you to deliver a positive legacy for our future generations; making good on our vision to create a country that is the best place in the world to grow up.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aileen Campbell".

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1 [www.educationscotland.gov.uk/earlyyears/prebirthtothree/index.asp](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/earlyyears/prebirthtothree/index.asp)

2 [www.educationscotland.gov.uk/thecurriculum/whatiscurriculumforexcellence/thepurposeofthecurriculum/index.asp](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/thecurriculum/whatiscurriculumforexcellence/thepurposeofthecurriculum/index.asp)



# Introduction

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**In 2013 the Scottish Government launched *A Scotland for Children: A consultation on the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill*<sup>3</sup>. The consultation proposed a Bill that would realise the Scottish Government's ambition for Scotland to be the best place to grow up in. The proposals contained within the Bill put children and young people at the centre of planning and delivering of services and strengthened approaches to ensuring children's rights were addressed.**

These proposals have become a reality in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*<sup>4</sup>. As part of the proposals there has been a renewed focus on our youngest children, particularly those from birth to starting school. This reflects the importance of early learning and childcare (ELCC) for the future of individual children and families and wider society as a whole.

This national practice guidance sets the context for high quality ELCC. It complements the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 Early Learning and Childcare Statutory Guidance<sup>5</sup> which outlines the policy changes which are necessary to implement the provisions in the Act. This national practice guidance seeks to support practitioners who are delivering ELCC in different settings and areas of Scotland to:

- Build confidence and capability for those who work with young children from birth to starting school.
- Make links between practice, theory and policy guidance to reinforce aspects of high quality provision and the critical role played by early years practitioners.
- Clarify some aspects of current practice and provide a reference which practitioners can easily use.
- Support improvement and quality by encouraging discussion and reflective questioning about practice relevant in each setting.
- Provide advice on achieving the highest quality ELCC possible to allow our youngest children to play their part in the Scottish Government's ambition of Scotland being the best place in the world to grow up.

The guidance reflects the principles and philosophy of early intervention and prevention within *The Early Years Framework*<sup>6</sup> to give children the best start in life; and bring about transformational change for Scotland's children. The guidance complements the key areas in the Act associated with ELCC and will give an overview of what young children need most and how we can best deliver this throughout Scotland.

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3 <http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/Children-and-Young-People-Bill-passed-979.aspx>

4 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2014/8/contents>

5 Statutory Guidance <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/08/2256>

6 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/01/13095148/1>





This guidance makes reference to established national guidance; including, *Pre-birth to Three National Guidance*, *Curriculum for Excellence*, *National Care Standards*, *Child at the Centre* and the *GIRFEC framework*. It is grounded within *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)*<sup>7</sup> that a child should be valued and respected and have the right to have their views heard and their needs met. It highlights what we know as good practice and issues of quality in providing for young children aged from birth to 5 years.

### Who is this practice guidance for?

The information is designed to help and support practitioners in the important role they have to play in helping to deliver the Scottish Government's ambition.

It is for use by local authority personnel, regulatory bodies, training providers and practitioners in all ELCC settings throughout Scotland.

### What will you find in this document?

This practice guidance will put into context the Scottish Government's commitment to expanding ELCC. It will take you through the reasons for this; and provide support in putting into practice important changes to ELCC. It looks at what are the key areas which make a difference to a child's ELCC and the critical role practitioners play. It looks at play and learning and how they are connected and how at times they are separate. There is a focus on the important characteristics of developmental stages and what children need at different times in terms of their learning experiences, adult interaction and the ELCC environment. In another section we look at the connections between the pedagogy and practice of high quality ELCC and *Curriculum for Excellence* and tease out three key aspects which drive early learning forward for each stage of the baby, toddler and young child. Finally, it is written in a style that is both accessible and challenging to provoke discussion and self-reflection.



7 <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/creating-a-fairer-and-more-equal-society/supporting-pages/the-uk-united-nations-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child-uncrc>

# Section 1: Why do we need this?

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## 1.1 Background

The availability of high quality, affordable ELCC for young children from birth to starting primary school is an important priority for Scotland and is also a key priority for the European Union. The European Commission Communication 2011 stated that Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is “the essential foundation for successful lifelong learning, social integration, personal development and later employability. Complementing the central role of the family, ECEC has a profound and long-lasting impact which measures taken at a later stage cannot achieve”<sup>8</sup>.

The Scottish Government’s priority for ELCC is set firmly within this context. It aspires to increase the provision of ELCC to improve outcomes for children, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds; support parents to work, provide economic security for their families and routes out of unemployment and poverty; and, to support parents with the costs of ELCC. The term “early learning and childcare” is used to reflect the continuous learning journey from birth and is further explained in this document.

This positive journey for ELCC highlights the key role that practitioners play and the changes in legislation are important developments in the on-going process of giving their work with our youngest children the recognition it deserves. This is supported by the role that key agencies are playing to raise the quality and status of the workforce<sup>9</sup>.

The main changes that the Act addresses are fully detailed in the statutory guidance<sup>10</sup>.

## 1.2 Why the terminology early learning and childcare?

One of the significant changes that the Act is introducing is a move away from the name “pre-school education” to a more inclusive definition and policy direction of “early learning and childcare”.

The Act describes early learning and childcare in policy terms as follows:

*“Early learning and childcare is defined as service, consisting of education and care, of a kind which is suitable in the ordinary case for children who are under school age, regard being had to the importance of interactions and other experiences which support learning and development in a caring and nurturing setting.”<sup>11</sup>*

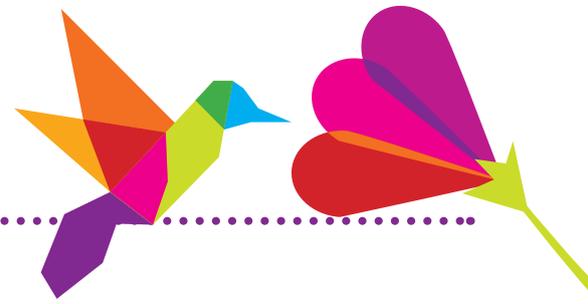
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8 Early childhood Education and Care: Providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow, European Commission, 2011.

9 Care Inspectorate, Education Scotland, Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC)

10 Statutory Guidance paragraph 9 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/08/2256>

11 <http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/Children-and-Young-People-Bill-passed-979.aspx>



*“The Act therefore introduces a new concept of early learning and childcare. The term seeks to remove an artificial divide between pre-school for 3 and 4 year olds; and, childcare for 0–3 year olds, or, pre-school and wrap around care for 3 and 4 year olds; whereby pre-school is the educational element delivered in short blocks tied to a certain number of hours in a day; topped up by childcare or wraparound which can be seen as less important to learning.”<sup>12</sup>*

At present, where children currently receive their pre-school entitlement in a nursery providing full daycare, we would not expect them to start education at some point for 2.5 hours a day, and then revert to care for the rest of the day. We would expect the same high quality interactions and experiences throughout the sessions, however long, within a caring and nurturing environment.

Most staff working with young children would not see themselves as purely offering “pre-school education” without offering “childcare” and vice versa.

There are a number of important reasons for the change in the actual terminology. The term “pre-school education” can be perceived as purely educational and “pre-school” literally has historical connotations of only being for those children in the year before they start primary school. As funded places are also being extended much further to younger children the terminology of “pre-school” is out of date.

We also have to consider the term “childcare” as this too can be open to misinterpretation. In the past, childcare has been thought of as purely dealing with physical needs such as feeding, washing, nurturing etc. This gives the wrong impression of being of less value. These two separate terms and related issues results in a division of terminology, thought and practice which is not in line with current thinking nor is helpful in moving the sector forward in the future.

The concept of “early learning and childcare” is therefore much broader and expands the idea that early learning and childcare are **indivisible and should be seamless**. Importantly it highlights the fact that learning starts from birth. Learning is seen as a continuous action, one which a new born baby does instinctively from birth and continues for each individual at their own rate and pace.

Early Education and Childcare (ECEC), is a common term used in other European countries, and the definition at first glance is similar, for example, *“learning and education do not begin with compulsory schooling – they start from birth.”*<sup>13</sup>

There is, however, a subtle difference. ECEC gives the impression of being more instructive and has an interpretation of *relying* on the intervention of others. However, within the Act, early learning and childcare takes account of the assets which a child brings themselves and also what is gained from interactions with important individuals, namely parents, carers and practitioners.

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<sup>12</sup> Statutory Guidance <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/08/2256>

<sup>13</sup> Early Childhood Education and Care: Providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow, European Commission, 2011.



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This move towards thinking about the terminology and policy direction as “early learning and childcare” is more inclusive. It better reflects what we are aspiring to in Scotland.

This is a highly significant change from education and care being considered as separate. It is important, however, to state clearly that this does not mean a dilution in quality nor status. It aims to be innovative and sector leading.

### 1.3 Who needs to take account of this change?

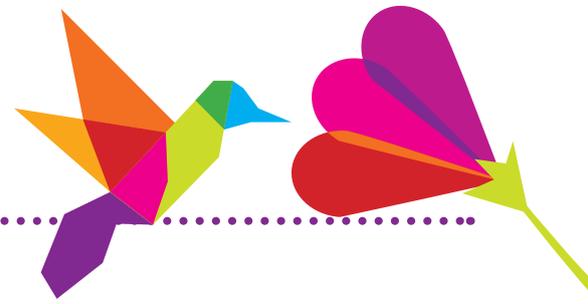
In Scotland, the current statutory entitlements to ELCC provision is only part of the wider ELCC for children aged from 0-5 years. It is delivered within a range of different settings and cultures. This range provides choice for parents but is also variable regarding the types of service and hours of ELCC available in different parts of the country. This strong foundation is delivered through nursery schools, nursery classes, private nurseries, daycare centres, playgroups, early development centres and childminders. The changes agreed in the Act affects *all* provision where ELCC funded places are required. This will mean that private nurseries, playgroups and childminders in partnerships with a local authority are still a necessary and welcome partner in delivering ELCC funded places. It is also anticipated that the childminding sector will have an important and growing role to play in helping to deliver for Scotland’s children.

The guidance will be of interest to any ELCC settings and services delivering ELCC. For example, with children not yet eligible for the entitlement to ELCC.

It also changes the emphasis from pre-school to the more inclusive concept of ELCC for policy makers, local authorities and national organisations as they seek to provide for younger children. The changes within the Act are more inclusive for parents and carers as their child continues on the journey of lifelong learning.

It is necessary that practitioners adopt this terminology and be able to describe and talk with confidence about early learning and childcare. It is for everyone who is involved with our youngest children.

It is the responsibility of us all.



### Putting the guidance into practice

In changing the terminology from pre-school education to ELCC, what changes will you need to make?

- In your policy and practice within your own setting?
- For parents within your setting and other users of the service?
- In your own thinking and practice?

Are you certain you would be able to speak confidently about the change to ELCC, as described above, if you were asked about the difference?

### Find out more:

UNCRC: <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/creating-a-fairer-and-more-equal-society/supporting-pages/the-united-nations-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child-uncrc>

Early Years Framework: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/01/13095148/>



# Section 2: What we know from policy and research

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## 2.1 Context

For many years research has helped us understand that intervening early in the lives of young children can have a positive influence on their lives as they live and grow. The rationale behind this focus is well documented and equally well accepted as the best way to proceed to enhance the lives of young children. The important difference now is that what happens to a young child, and the subsequent impact on their family, is formally being acknowledged in the Act. There is a wide range of evidence indicating the potential benefits of high quality, funded early learning and childcare. For example, we know that:

- While all social groups benefit from high quality ELCC, children from the poorest families gain most from universal provision<sup>14</sup>.
- The benefits of high quality ELCC provision continue at age 14, with particular benefit for children whose families had a poor early years home learning environment<sup>15</sup>.
- Among 5 year olds, non-parental ELCC in the early years is generally beneficial to cognitive development and a child's vocabulary<sup>16</sup>.
- Long-lasting effects from ELCC lead to better cognitive scores at age 7 and 16<sup>17</sup>.
- The more cognitive stimulation a child gets around the age of 4, the more developed the parts of their brains dedicated to language and cognition will be in the decades ahead<sup>18</sup>.

In Scotland, many innovative projects have taken root and grown into stable successful situations where the needs of young children are well met. The difficulty that has been faced is that the previous provision of funded places has been by necessity directed to 3 and 4 year olds and this is now insufficient to address a growing number of families who need to have extended hours to help support working parents or to meet the needs of younger children aged 0-3 years. The Act seeks to address these anomalies to benefit children and families in a much more cohesive way. As a first step, increasing hours and flexibility of funded places for 3 and 4 year olds; and, including some 2 year olds is a significant move forward.

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14 Mostafa, T. and Green, A., *Measuring the Impact of Universal Pre-School Education and Care on Literacy Performance Scores*. Institute of Education (2012)

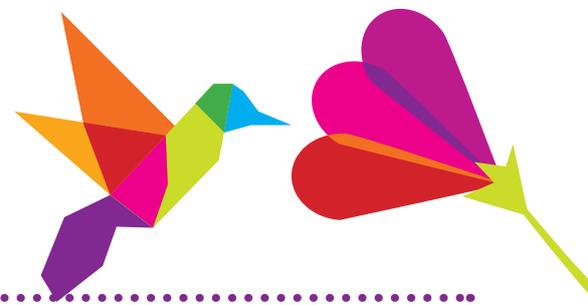
15 Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., and Taggart, B., *Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education 3-14 Project (EPPSE 3-14) Report from the Key Stage 3 Phase: Influences on Students' Development from Age 11*. Institute of Education (2012)

16 Scottish Government, *Growing Up in Scotland: The Impact of Children's Early Activities on Cognitive Development* (2009)

17 Goodman, A., and Sianesi, B., *Early Education and Children's Outcomes: How Long Do the Impacts Last?* Institute for Fiscal Studies (2005)

18 Avants, B., Betancourt, L., Gianetti, J., Lawson, G., Gee, J., Farah, M. and Hurt, H., *Early Childhood Home Environment Predicts Frontal and Temporal Cortical Thickness in the Young Adult Brain*. University of Pennsylvania (2012)





## 2.2 Getting it Right for Every Child

The delivery of ELCC is underpinned by the central elements and values of *Getting it Right for Every Child* (GIRFEC)<sup>19</sup> which is the national approach to improving the wellbeing of children and young people. Through policy and the delivery of services at both national and local level, the GIRFEC approach:

- Puts the best interests of the child at the heart of decision making.
- Takes a holistic approach to the wellbeing of a child.
- Works with children, young people and their families on ways to improve wellbeing.
- Advocates preventative work and early intervention to support children, young people and their families.
- Believes professionals must work together in the best interests of the child.

The GIRFEC approach is designed to be flexible enough to support all children and families whatever their need, whenever they need it. It is about responding in a meaningful, supportive way, working with parents wherever possible. It takes into account that everyone involved with the family has an important part to play and puts the wellbeing of children and families at the heart of any support. To do this eight indicators of wellbeing are used: safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. These are often referred to using the acronym “SHANARRI”. These indicators represent the basic requirements that all children need to grow and develop. They are used in the planning process for any child in need to ensure the best possible outcomes for children to improve their life chances and wellbeing.

The importance of the contribution that ELCC can make to this process cannot be underestimated in this context. We know that intervening early for those children and families who need it most makes a positive difference. There are strong connections and links between the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators and the principles of *Pre-Birth to Three, Rights of the Child, Relationships, Responsive Care and Respect*<sup>20</sup>. These in turn link to the four capacities of *Curriculum for Excellence: Successful Learners, Responsible Citizens, Confident Individuals and Effective Contributors*<sup>21</sup>.

### 2.2.1 What is the role of the named person?

When the GIRFEC duties within the Act are commenced (expected to be August 2016), this will include a named person for every child, from birth, until they reach 18, or later if they remain in school. In the meantime practitioners should make reference to the current GIRFEC national practice model<sup>22</sup>.

19 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright>

20 <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/earlyyears/prebirthtothree/index.asp>

21 <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/thecurriculum/whatiscurriculumforexcellence/thepurposeofthecurriculum/index.asp>

22 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright>

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For children from birth, to the point of starting primary school the named person service will be provided by the Health Board. The named person is likely to be a midwife from birth until the child is about 10 days old, and then the child's health visitor. The named person in health will provide consistent, knowledgeable and skilled contact for families, working alongside staff in early years settings and other practitioners who work with young children.

The GIRFEC approach makes it clear that most children get all the support they need from their parents or carers. So, in most cases, the named person will not have to do anything more than they normally do in the course of their day to day work. The major difference will be that they use the National Practice Model as a starting point for considering and recording information about a child or young person's wellbeing and also for when they have particular concerns.

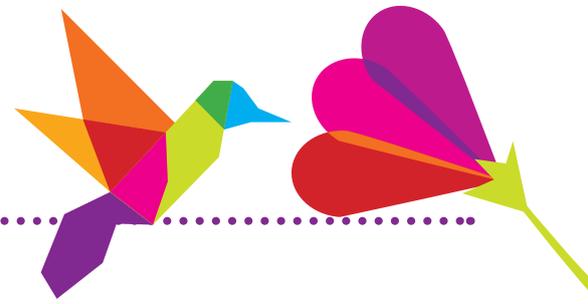
Once the named person has identified a concern, or a concern has been brought to their attention, the named person - who will be the first point of contact for the child and their family - needs to consider how they can best promote, support and safeguard the child's wellbeing. In some cases that will mean taking action, offering help, or arranging for the right help from others.

The named person will plan for the child who needs extra help from within universal services, or through seeking assistance from more specialist services. They will ensure there is effective and proportionate sharing of information about the child's wellbeing, within the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the duties within the Act, when so required to support the child. For example, this is likely to happen when the named person responsibility transfers to another service, such as when a child is starting primary school, when the new named person is most likely to be the headteacher.

When two or more agencies need to work together to help a child or young person and family, there will be a lead professional to coordinate that help and manage the child's plan.

### **2.2.2 What is the role of a lead professional?**

There are some circumstances where a child's needs require two or more agencies to work together to deliver services (targeted interventions) to the child and family. Where this happens, a lead professional will be identified. The lead professional becomes the person within the network of practitioners who are supporting the child and family who will make sure that the different agencies act as a team and the help they are all offering fits together to provide appropriate support for the child and family. The lead professional will have a significant role in working with other agencies to coordinate a multi-agency child's plan. The lead professional will not do all the work with the child and family; neither does he or she replace other practitioners who have specific roles or who are carrying out direct work or specialist assessments. The lead professional's primary task is to make sure that all the support provided is working well, links with involvement of other practitioners and agencies, and is achieving the outcomes specified in the child's plan.



The lead professional will be the professional who is best placed to carry out the coordinating role and work with the family to improve outcomes for the child. The named person will work with the lead professional and will always be involved in the decision to initiate a child's plan.

### 2.2.3 What does this mean in practice in an ELCC setting?

As the child's keyworker, everything you do for young children should promote, support and safeguard their wellbeing. You will have the day to day knowledge of how a child is settling in and progressing. You may also be a first line of contact for the parent or carer. The key to success for the child and family is building professional caring relationships. Your unique role in engaging and involving the child and family is important. Where there are wellbeing concerns it will be crucial that there is a good link between the ELCC staff and the named person in health. Where these wellbeing concerns lead to the development of a child's plan, the ELCC practitioner may be a partner to the plan. In some cases, it will be appropriate for the ELCC practitioner to take on the lead professional role. It is also important that key staff in the ELCC setting understand their roles in relation to the named person and the child's plan and feel confident in contributing and talking about the child's wellbeing needs.



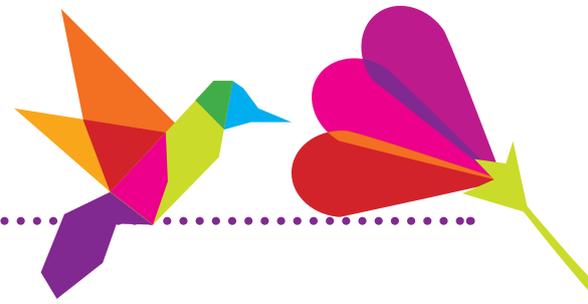
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## 2.2.4 Case Study: Baby Emma

### Illustration of duty to record alternative arrangements in a child's plan for looked after 2 year olds.

Baby Emma, born to a parent with a history of unsettled family life, health and social issues.

- Midwife noting concerns and providing support to Emma's mother pre-birth.
- Health visitor alerted and engaged pre-birth.
- Health visitor becomes named person within few days of birth and Emma is categorised as having additional needs in terms of the health visitor's engagement. As a result Emma and her family have additional contact and support offered by the health visitor.
- Parent engages well with the health visitor and due to on-going concerns about wellbeing, the health visitor arranges for specialist assessment/support from paediatric services and targeted parenting support. With the parent's agreement these targeted interventions are coordinated within a single agency child's plan, managed by the health visitor.
- When Emma is 18 months old concerns are heightened by community events involving the family and reports of domestic abuse, so Social Work services become involved on a voluntary basis. The child's plan is reviewed and updated as a multi-agency plan in partnership with the parent, and the social worker becomes the lead professional. One of the concerns highlighted is the lack of appropriate stimulation at home for Emma so the plan includes three sessions per week in the local family centre for Emma and the parent, where Emma can receive input through play, and the parent can be supported by staff.
- The lead professional is made aware that the parent is finding the sessions very stressful and has started to miss sessions, blaming Emma's health. Emma can also be distressed and shows behavioural issues during the sessions.
- A review of the plan leads to a referral to the Children's Reporter and a decision by the Children's Panel that Emma should be on a Home Supervision Order. The sessions at the family centre are put on hold and Emma instead receives time with a childminder, and one session per week at home with the childminder and parent. The parent is more engaged with this arrangement.



- When Emma is 2 years old, the child's plan is reviewed to consider progress and whether taking up her entitlement to 600 hours of early learning and childcare would meet her wellbeing needs. Multi-agency assessment, taking account of the views of the parent, indicates that a standard placement at the family centre would not be the most appropriate support for Emma at that point. However, due to some progress in achieving the outcomes in the plan, including the parent's confidence to play and interact with Emma, as well as Emma's engagement in play and an improvement in Emma's general health, it is agreed that a mixed package of support, including continued input from the childminder and short sessions in the family centre, should be put in place. The family centre becomes a partner to the plan, and the sessions in the centre are recorded as a targeted intervention within the plan.
- The lead professional continues to monitor the effectiveness of the child's plan and set review dates as appropriate to Emma's needs and the requirement to review the supervision order.

### Putting the guidance into practice

- What do you see are the benefits in working in this way for the child and family?
- When Emma is being cared for by the childminder, what impact do you think there may be in relation to wellbeing indicators for Emma?
- What type of support is there or could be developed in your own setting, for you to play your part in a situation as described above?
- What are the areas in which you could contribute really well and which are the ones where you and your team needs a bit of support?

### Find out more:

Getting it Right for Every Child: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright/background>

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## 2.3 Growing up in Scotland (GUS)

*Growing Up in Scotland* (GUS) is a large-scale longitudinal research project aimed at tracking the lives of several cohorts of Scottish children from the early years, through childhood and beyond. GUS is a holistic study, concerned with all aspects of the child's life, including health, development, family circumstances, neighbourhood, education, friends and leisure activities.

The GUS information is helpful to us as practitioners to have a better understanding of the lives of young children and what we can do to help. For example, the GUS paper *Changes in child cognitive ability in the pre-school years* it highlights potential factors to how young children achieve in specific areas such as communication and language and problem solving<sup>23</sup>.

### Find out more:

Growing Up in Scotland: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/02/8789>

## 2.4 The Early Years Collaborative

In recent years, the Scottish Government has reflected and supported the commitment to developing a universal approach to prevention and early intervention in tackling the significant inequalities in Scottish society<sup>24</sup>.

Research describes well how the early years' experience can make a significant difference to life chances. Shonkoff<sup>25</sup> describes how exposure to multiple risk factors (such as poverty, neglect, abuse, drug and alcohol misuse, domestic violence etc.) in early life gives children a 90-100% chance of developmental delays. We also know that this can impact physiologically on conditions such as heart disease in adulthood.

*The Early Years Collaborative* (EYC) attempts to address these social challenges by developing a quality improvement partnership of Community Planning Partners (CPPs), including social services, health, education, police and third sector professionals.

It is the world's first national multi-agency quality improvement programme delivered across the country through each of the 32 CPPs.

A CPP comprises all relevant public, private, voluntary and community bodies in its area and sets out a joint vision with agreed objectives for the area in the form of a Community Plan, through setting out challenging outcomes, identifying resources, monitoring and evaluating.

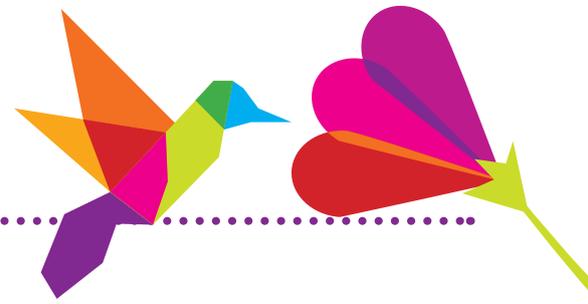
All CPPs are committed to making Scotland the best place in the world to grow up.

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23 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/05/31085122/0>

24 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/01/13095148/0>

25 <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/> accessed 19 July 2013



The EYC uses the Institute of Healthcare Improvement (IHI) model for improvement which asks:

- What are we trying to accomplish? – What is our aim?
- How will we know that a change is an improvement? – How will we measure this? – where is the data?
- What change can we make that will result in an improvement? – How will we implement this?

Crucially, the model works on a cycle of small scale tests of change using the Plan, Do, Study, Act, cycle.

The GIRFEC<sup>26</sup> framework ensures that anyone providing support puts the child or young person – and their family – at the centre. What has been missing until now is a method to implement these ideas reliably for every child every time. The EYC provides a single improvement method to do just that.

The Collaborative has been established with four workstreams:

- Conception to 1 year.
- 1 year to 30 months.
- 30 months to primary school.
- Primary school to age 8 years.

With an ambition to make Scotland the best place in the world to grow up, by improving outcomes and reducing inequalities for all babies, children, mothers, fathers and families across Scotland, each workstream of the EYC is underpinned by a stretch aim (i.e. an aim which cannot be reached by just working harder and doing more of the same):

- To ensure that women experience positive pregnancies which result in the birth of more healthy babies as evidenced by a reduction of 15% in the rates of stillbirths (from 4.9 per 1,000 births in 2010 to 4.3 per 1,000 births in 2015) and infant mortality (from 3.7 per 1,000 live births in 2010 to 3.1 per 1,000 live births in 2015).
- To ensure that 85% of all children within each Community Planning Partnership have reached all of the expected developmental milestones at the time of the child's 27-30 month child health review, by end 2016.
- To ensure that 90% of all children within each Community Planning Partnership have reached all of the expected developmental milestones at the time the child starts primary school, by end 2017.
- To ensure that 90% of all children within each Community Planning Partnership area will have reached all of the expected developmental milestones and learning outcomes by the end of Primary 4, by end 2021.

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26 Getting It Right For Every Child <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0042/00423979.pdf> accessed 19 July 2013

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In addition to the above there is a leadership strand to the EYC.

Following the Learning Sessions, where teams from each CPP area have been introduced to the methodological approach and taught the Model for Improvement<sup>27</sup>, teams return to their local working environment and start to undertake small scale tests of change to services for children and families that they know need to be improved. Teams have engaged with families and others to build on the positive community assets that exist and are seeking to implement agreed improvements using the methodology in their own areas.

Within the EYC approach there are many examples of ways that practitioners in ELCC settings are trying out and testing approaches to engage parents and improve, for example, children's communication and language.

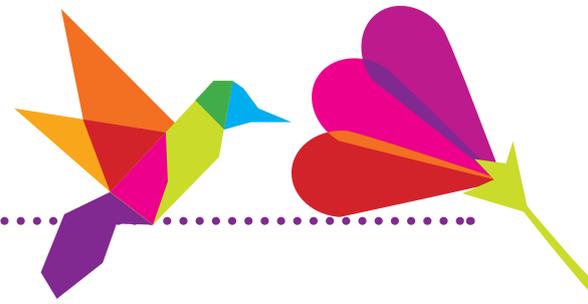
#### **2.4.2 Case Study: "Our Literacy Journeys"**

In 2014 two South Lanarkshire nurseries agreed to run a project that encouraged their children to learn about literacy, within their own immediate area. In the second year this will be extended to meeting people from different areas. The nurseries knew that the approach had helped the children's literacy skills - but they wanted to see if their hunch that it also had wider benefits for the children was correct. To do this they used the improvement approach promoted by the EYC to test how they might measure how being involved in the *our literacy journeys* programme benefited the children.

The programme had a bear as its central character, and involved the children thinking about journeys - the bear went on a journey between the two nurseries, and the children also visited each other. *Facetime* was used for the first time to great effect in helping the children to feel at ease with each other before they actually met. The programme ended with a trip to the Build a Bear Workshop in Glasgow where the children chose a new outfit for their bear.

The aim of this test of change was: To track improvements in the overall wellbeing for the 32 children who were involved in the eight week Our Literacy Journeys programme. The SHANARRI wellbeing web was used, and a scale of 0 (low) - 6 (high) was used to place the children on the wheel - with existing resources from the GIRFEC programme being used to guide staff use of the tool.

27 Model for Improvement <http://www.ihl.org/knowledge/Pages/HowtoImprove/ScienceofImprovementHowtoImprove.aspx>



### There was a lot of valuable learning from this test:

- The programme leads were able to track impact on the children who took part in the programme. The way the information on each child's progress was presented on a web was very visual and gave staff an instant overview of each child. This was very valuable in initiating conversations about the children.
- *Facetime* was a useful way of making contact across the different establishments and would definitely be used again.
- This was the first time the staff had used the EYC improvement method and the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators in this way. Staff set out to test whether the programme had an impact on the children beyond that around improved literacy. Both used the GIRFEC wellbeing web and looked at the data that came back. Using the data and graphs will enable staff to further test this tool to enhance their understanding and ability to support the children in the participating nurseries more generally.

### Putting the guidance into practice

- Is there something that you feel could be improved in your setting? Can you see a natural link to the four workstreams described in the text?
- How could you use improvement methodology to make a difference?
- Is there an area you would like to improve to help children meet their developmental milestones? If so, what changes as a team could you consider?

### Find out more:

About the above case study and the Early Years Collaborative: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/early-years/early-years-collaborative>

The Scottish Child Health Programme: Guidance on the 27-30 month child health review: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/12/1478/downloads#res410922>

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## 2.5 Review of the workforce

The ELCC sector in Scotland is unique in many ways. ELCC is delivered by an enthusiastic and dedicated workforce in a variety of settings ranging from local authority, private and voluntary provision and childminders. The range and variety of different qualifications are complex and at times difficult to unravel.

There has never been a time where the policy commitments to increasing and improving ELCC have been greater. The Act will deliver an increase in the funded entitlement to a minimum of 600 hours per year for 3 and 4 year olds, and introducing the entitlement to 15% of 2 year olds from August 2014 and 27% from August 2015. The Act is also setting the stage for further expansion to meet the Scottish Government's wider ambitions to develop a high quality, flexible system of early learning and childcare that meets the needs of all children, parents and families.

In order to ensure that Scotland builds on its capabilities within the ELCC workforce, an independent review of the ELCC workforce was established in February 2014, by the Scottish Government under Professor Iram Siraj.

The Minister for Children and Young People in announcing the review stated:

*"I'm delighted that Professor Iram Siraj has agreed to lead an expert review to ensure the development of the workforce matches the scale of our ambition. By boosting skills, ensuring high quality and recognising the value of those we entrust to give our children the best start in life, we will attract the brightest and best to deliver the transformation in childcare. And by pursuing a shared vision we can secure the foundations for Scotland's future as the best place to grow up."*<sup>28</sup>

The workforce review will examine a range of issues including skills and qualifications, career progression, recruitment and retention, and workforce planning to ensure that all those working in ELCC settings have the right skills and experience to deliver high quality ELCC across the country.

The review will consider and collate views from a wide range of stakeholders, and include visits to establishments and draw on the expertise of a Core Reference Group who represent the range of interests on the ELCC workforce in Scotland.

A final report setting out recommendations on all aspects of the review will be published in Spring 2015.

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<sup>28</sup> <http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/Transforming-childcare-95d.aspx>



# Section 3: What makes the difference for children and families?



## 3.1 The image of the child

The term “image of the child” is often used by practitioners and a high level of value is placed on taking account of the interests of the child, but what does this actually mean in practice?

The European Commission ECEC describes the image of the child as:

*“Each child is unique and a competent and active learner whose potential needs to be encouraged and supported. Each child is a curious, capable and intelligent individual. The child is a co-creator of knowledge who needs and wants interaction with other children and adults. As citizens of Europe children have their own rights which include early education and care.”<sup>29</sup>*

Services for young children need to:

- Be child-centred, acknowledge children’s views and actively involve children in meaningful ways in everyday decisions in the ECEC setting.
- Offer a nurturing and caring environment.
- Provide appropriate spaces to play and learn with a range of possibilities for children to develop their present and future potential.
- Be responsive to children’s changeable interests and demands.

We know that most young children already come to ELCC settings as active, experienced learners with a natural curiosity. From the beginning, they are a person and a unique individual. At the earliest stage they are interested in themselves and their immediate environment. At times, some other children come to settings upset, vulnerable, from a difficult home environment, or have specific learning needs.

When young children come to an ELCC setting they need a happy environment where children and adults are actively engaged with frequent smiles and laughter. The environment should be rich in opportunities to acquire language and encourage communication, inquiry learning and be involved in exciting experiences which at the same time are calm, comforting and responsive. They need the warmth of positive adult to child interaction. This includes adults who provide appropriate physical affection and who comfort children when they are upset.

<sup>29</sup> Early childhood Education and Care: providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow, European Commission, 2011

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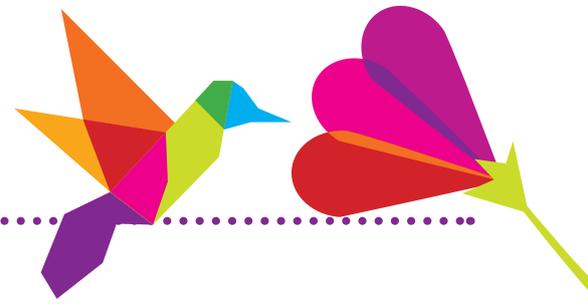
### 3.2 Case Study: Ross

Ross, aged 4½, lives with his mum, younger brother aged 3 and new born sister. He last saw his biological dad when he was a baby. Ross has recently started at the local primary school nursery after many false starts at other nurseries in the area. His attendance is giving cause for concern as is the fact that lots of adults, unknown to staff are dropping him off in the morning, because it is alleged that mum spends a lot of the day in bed. Observing the interaction between Ross and some of the adults who bring him to nursery, staff note that he very rarely acknowledges their departure.

When in nursery Ross presents as a lonely child, who is often observed rocking back and forth, incessantly hitting the side of his leg. It has been noticed by staff that there is one particular member of staff who he follows around when she enters the playroom and constantly seeks her time and reassurance. Unfortunately the member of staff is not always able to give Ross the attention he wants from her. When other children approach him he tends to become aggressive and lash out at them. He seems to prefer his own company and can often be found moving from area to area and away from the other children.

Mum, who occasionally collects him in the afternoon, never asks staff how his day has been and generally seems uninterested in him. The staff watch as he runs to keep up with mum when she leaves the building. Mum does not look back to ensure that he is safe and close by.

- What do you think are the main concerns with Ross' situation?
- Which of his needs are not currently being met?
- What could the staff do in the short term to alleviate some of these concerns?
- What help do you think mum herself needs and how can this be supported?



### Putting the guidance into practice

- What do you see as the characteristics of high quality ELCC in your own particular setting? To what extent does it vary for children 0-3 and children aged 3 to starting school?
- What changes can you make tomorrow, next week and next month to improve the quality of children's experiences in your setting?
- How will you know that the changes you have made will have had a positive impact?
- How well does your setting allow children to make choices and provide them with well thought out experiences and opportunities through play to develop their learning? How could this be improved?
- Have you been in a situation where children seem disengaged with learning, appear unhappy or are more careless than you would expect? Why do you think this happens?

### 3.3 Involvement of the family

The role of parents and carers remain central to their children's learning journey and must therefore be valued and involved in all aspects of ELCC. The home is the first and most important place for children to grow and develop, and parents and carers are responsible for their child's wellbeing, health and development. We know that the outcomes for children are much better if the family is involved in all aspects of ELCC. To make this involvement a reality, the Act encourages services to be developed in partnership with families to offer flexibility. In particular, initial prioritisation of two year olds with a parent on certain qualifying benefits provides an opportunity for the local authority to identify opportunities for work related activity and family support.

Family learning is one example and a powerful method of engagement and learning. This process helps some families to challenge educational disadvantage, promote socio-economic resilience and foster positive attitudes towards life-long learning. This contributes directly to the *National Parenting Strategy's*<sup>30</sup> purpose to value, equip, and support parents to be the best they can be so that they in turn can give their children the best start in life. For many adults, a family learning course can be the first step to taking up further adult learning and training opportunities or employment. For children, this can have an impact on attainment and their own individual learning journey.

30 National Parenting Strategy, Scottish Government, October 2012

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### 3.3.1 Case Study: Family Learning

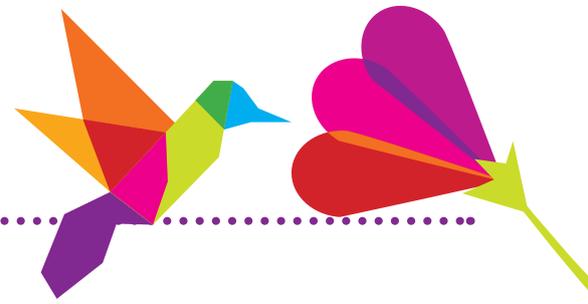
Partnership working was fundamental to the success of the *Lighthouse Keeper*, a joint nursery to primary transition project in east Edinburgh. A key element of the project was to encourage genuine partnership that respects parents' knowledge of their children. The project aimed to create a high quality interactive and creative learning experience for families and in doing so, raise attainment by supporting families to become more fully engaged in their children's learning.

Families engaged in a series of enjoyable challenges developed around the children's book, *The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch*, by Ronda and David Armitage. The project offered different learning possibilities and was used both in nursery and primary 1.

The project was fully supported by the Family Learning Worker for the area. As a result the project has shown the following benefits.

- There was an increase in parental engagement in both library attendance and school activities.
- Parents' confidence has increased to read with their children.
- Families were more aware of positive health and wellbeing through healthy eating experiences.
- Children further developed their listening skills and understanding of the storyline which encouraged them to read more.

The success of this particular approach to partnership working and engaging parents led to a positive impact on children's learning and a better understanding of the benefits of a family learning together.



### Putting the guidance into practice

- What do you do in your setting to ensure that families are involved in ELCC for their child? Is it good enough? What needs to change?
- What opportunities are there to really support families and create better partnerships?
- What do you do to support parents who don't always respond to groups or don't seem to want to be involved?
- How can you further engage parents, and in particular, fathers, in your particular situation?
- Have you thought about using help from colleagues in the community? If so, what are the possibilities?
- What would you like to see happen in your setting that would make a difference to families and children?
- How could you involve families who do not have English as their first language?

### Find out more:

Family learning: [http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/earlyyearsmatters/t/genericcontent\\_tcm4754207.asp?id=presentationcategory\|Early%20Years%20Matters\|ES%20EY%20Matters%20Issues\|Issue%204](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/earlyyearsmatters/t/genericcontent_tcm4754207.asp?id=presentationcategory\|Early%20Years%20Matters\|ES%20EY%20Matters%20Issues\|Issue%204)

Learning at home: <http://playtalkread.org>



# Section 4: What do we mean by play and learning?

## 4.1 How are play and learning connected?

In June 2013 the Scottish Government published the first *National Strategy for Play*<sup>31</sup>. This is defined as follows: “*play encompasses children’s behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development which seeks to improve play experiences for all children.*”

Early years practitioners value how young children play and, if asked, almost always link play and learning together. Some theorists emphasise that when playing, children try out ideas and come to a better understanding of thoughts and concepts as they play; others see play as a means of children coping with reality through using their imagination; and, others see play as a means to practise new skills. All of which are valid.

The challenge for us when we think about *play* is that it can be misinterpreted as being “just play” and the intrinsic value of what a child is actually doing, can be missed or ignored and therefore seen as less valued. It is both a tricky word and complicated concept to define.

Additionally, when children are engaged in what practitioners would say as *free-flow* play this too can be perceived as less meaningful than a planned activity. The challenge that practitioners face is that at times they feel uncomfortable about letting natural play evolve and tend to want to over-direct play. Tina Bruce describes 12 features of free-flow play to help staff understand the level of deep engagement in learning which children show while they play. For example, in their play children use the first hand experiences they have had in life. Children rehearse their future in their play<sup>32</sup>. But there is a balance where we need to raise the profile of play and also to deepen an understanding for practitioners in supporting play experiences with children.



31 Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision, Scottish Government, June 2013.

32 Developing Learning in Early childhood – T Bruce 2004



In a recent paper *Pedagogy: The Silent Partner in Early Years Learning*<sup>33</sup> Christine Stephen, University of Stirling, discusses a number of challenges surrounding play and importantly strengthens the arguments that play is an essential aspect of early years learning. She highlights the role of the practitioner as being of critical importance if young children are going to extend their thinking, widen their skills and consolidate their learning in play.

### So what should a practitioner do?

- Be aware of the immediate environment; be flexible in offering choices and carefully select resources which capture interest to create moments which spark children's play.
- Have in mind what individual children's current interest may be and provide props and spaces both inside and outside where children can play.
- Step in to conversations and play situations to ask a probing question, such as: *What would happen if...* and then know the moment to stand back to allow children to find out for themselves.
- Give children unspoken acknowledgement by smiling, nodding in approval to provide children with quiet unassuming support.
- Be aware of what children are doing to encourage deeper levels of engagement and help create other options through asking questions such as *I wonder if...* which in turn help children to work out their own theories.

#### 4.1.2 Case Study: Jamie's Nest

Jamie excitedly arrives in nursery carefully holding a shoebox which he is reluctant to put down. His enthusiasm spills over to a group of others and soon there is a cluster of children eager to see what is inside. His practitioner realises that Jamie needs time and space to share his "find" with others so suggests a quieter area of the playroom for Jamie and his friends to sit down and talk about what is in the box. The children are eager to do this. Jamie controls the group by saying they need to sit back and be careful as he opens the box and takes out a blackbird's nest. There are exclamations from all the children and a rich and deep conversation begins about the nest. Where did he find it? How did it fall from a tree? How did he know it was a blackbird's nest? Where is the blackbird now? Jamie is able to tell his friends what a blackbird looks like because he looked at pictures in a book. The keyworker keeps a note of what children are asking but does not control the situation. The children discuss where birds build nests and want to investigate outside for themselves.

33 <http://academic.research.microsoft.com/Paper/5054704.aspx>

### Putting the guidance into practice

- In the case study what learning is taking place for the children? What might you do to move this learning forward? What does this scenario tell you about how children learn in this setting?
- In the case study what skills does this practitioner show?
- What possibilities does this situation offer for further development? What would you do? Have a look at what you are providing in terms of areas and resources? Do they encourage children to play freely?
- How would you go about recording children's learning, what use do you make of this information and who would you share this with?
- How can you best make record keeping manageable at the same time as making sure it is focused on supporting children's progress?

#### 4.1.3 Case Study: Ella's Story

Ella is 4 years old and has a lifelong condition which means she will always be in a wheelchair. She is a bright lively little girl interested in the world around her and enjoys the company of other children. Ella's condition will probably mean that communication, language and literacy may be a problem as she gets older.

Ella has recently started nursery which she really enjoys – most of the time. The nursery has recently created a new outdoor area and have engaged parents and carers in the whole process from design to completion. Everyone is really proud of this achievement. Children are using the space every day and it is clear there are many benefits for their learning. The pathways in the garden are made of small stones which unfortunately mean Ella's wheelchair cannot move – she gets upset as she cannot move freely around. This is becoming a daily issue for Ella and she is beginning not to want to come to nursery.

- What are the key issues here for this little girl and her family?
- What possibilities does this situation offer for further development?
- What would you immediately do to help Ella? What could you plan to do next week? How would you involve the family?
- What other support or advice would you access?

# Section 5: Understanding attachment



## 5.1 Attachment theory – a definition

Attachment – the early parent/child relationship – is viewed as one of the most important factors in child development, especially with regard to how the brain develops and the development of emotional and social skills.

Although the terms “bonding” and “attachment” are sometimes used interchangeably to describe love and affection from parents or a caregiver, attachment theory describes “attachment” as the quality of the relationship from the child’s perspective i.e. the enduring relationship which develops between a child and their caregiver pre-natally and during the first two years of life.

“Bonding” tends to be used to describe the parent’s relationship to the child.

Although attachment is significant throughout a child’s life-span, the early attachment process can form the template for future relationships. We are all born with attachment seeking behaviours such as crying and clinging. These behaviours ensure the survival of infants and young children by keeping their caregivers close and available for protection and comfort during stressful times. This attachment relationship provides the context not only for how children develop emotionally but also socially and cognitively. Children who experience sensitive and responsive caregiving are likely to develop a secure attachment to their caregiver which in turn helps to build up self-confidence, a sense of trust in the world, a curiosity to explore and learn and the ability to understand the minds of others. Children whose experiences are significantly negative are significantly more likely to have disorganised attachments which negatively affect life chances. These children will potentially be more vulnerable with respect to coping with future relationships and life events.

There is a strong argument that the most powerful experience in stimulating brain development is the positive emotional context the child experiences with their parent/carer. Secure attachment arising from a parent/carer who is sensitive to the infant’s needs and fears, creates neurological pathways in the brain which help the child to regulate their stress and emotions. However, early insecurity and prolonged stress can lead to an unhealthy emotional and behavioural pattern where children develop an internal working model or view of the world, based on their experiences of adults. Children can “learn” the world is an unsafe place to be and has high risks.

This affects how they predict the behaviour of others and organise their response to them. When this happens, insecure attachment behaviours can develop such as hyper-vigilance, being easily destabilised by changes in routine, and an obsessive need for reassurance. These are all obvious disadvantages in an ELCC setting where inattention is a significant barrier to learning.

It is not the role of early years practitioners or their managers to “diagnose” insecure attachment, but it is helpful to have an understanding of why insecure behaviours develop, and also to be able to notice the general patterns of insecure attachment behaviour and support children appropriately.

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## 5.2 What should a practitioner do to help?

Building relationships are where positive steps forward can begin for children. Just as it was in the adverse relationships in those crucial early years where things started to go wrong, it is through positive relationships that the developmental journey can improve. Care, interest and sensitivity shown by practitioners can help shape and reshape the child's learning journey.

When supporting children with a disorganised attachment style, it is important to keep safe and predictable routines. However, care must be given to making sure these routines are not overly long or set at a low level or stop children from being engrossed in extended or deep learning. It is also important to make sure changes to routine are well planned and that the child is alerted, in particular to beginnings and endings. These children need to be prepared as much as possible for any key transitions.

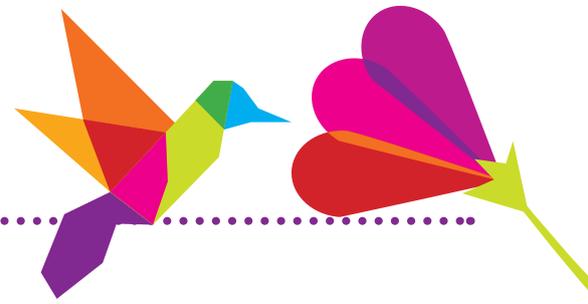
Practitioners need to clearly explain to children why they are making a decision which affects them and it is important not to assume children understand the reasons for the decision. Children with insecure attachment are inclined to always assume adults are untrustworthy and unpredictable or don't care what happens to them, or even worse for the child's sense of self, that the adult has forgotten all about them.

For children who cannot handle being close to another it is helpful for practitioners to try working with them on a joint task. Many children with insecure attachment can find creative thinking difficult and a concrete task may be better. Tasks or games are best when they are factual and have precise rules. This does not mean these children can't be creative, artistic or musical etc.

When a child with insecure attachment is distressed, practitioners should try to respond to the level at which a child is operating emotionally rather than their actual age.

It is important to accept how the child sees himself in his world. Practitioners need to be aware of minimising the strength of the child's feelings about a current situation and, for example, use phrases like "you seem to feel really angry about this?" and avoid comments such as "come on now, that doesn't really matter". This reassures the child that the practitioner is listening, even although there may not seem to be any outward sign that the child appreciates this.

For children who are looked after, it is very important for practitioners to liaise with those adults who look after the child or who knows them best in relation to what strategies work most effectively when that particular child is under stress.



### Putting the guidance into practice

- What are the positive aspects of attachment you may already work towards in your setting? What would you change to make these even better?
- How aware are you of the feelings that a young child and parent may have when dropped off at the nursery? What changes could you make to your own practice in terms of offering reassurance or support?
- How could you make the moments of separation easier for both child and parent? For example, could you provide a quiet area with a few favourite toys or books?
- How would you improve the relationship you have with children and parents you are responsible for?



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### 5.3 Case Study: Mandy, aged 4 years

You have found out through your head of establishment that Mandy will be coming to your establishment in August and she will be part of your group.

Mandy was placed in an experienced foster placement in the area where your setting is situated since moving there in June. She was placed there after a four-week period in a short term foster placement in her 'home' authority.

Prior to this short term foster placement, Mandy lived with her mother and 1-year-old sister, Laura. Mandy's mother has had a long standing drug addiction and does accept help and support from relevant agencies periodically. Mandy's birth father also has a drug addiction and has had no contact with Mandy for over two years.

Up until recently Mandy was cared for, intermittently, by her grandmother in a neighbouring town when Mandy's mother was not able to keep Mandy safe and provide the necessary attention and nurture for her young daughter. Mandy's mother would also report that she could not cope with Mandy's demanding behaviour and her temper tantrums. However, Mandy's grandmother reported no particular difficulties with Mandy's behaviour but did notice that Mandy liked to be in control when playing with other young children and that she could not cope with disappointment when something did not work out the way she expected. Mandy's grandmother reported that one task which would help settle her when she was distressed was drawing. Mandy seemed to have a particular strength in drawing and had a love of using colours.

Mandy had attended an early years establishment since aged 3 and social work resources had provided transport for her to attend in the periods where she lived with her grandmother. However, her grandmother passed away after a short illness 3 months ago and there are no family members able to undertake a kinship carer role.

- What does attachment theory teach us which would explain why Mandy likes to be in control and finds it hard to handle disappointment?
- From what you know of Mandy's behaviour, and from the information you have read on attachment theory, are there any general patterns which would help you and your establishment prepare for how you would support her? What additional information would you seek?
- Who would you expect your key partners to be in the planning process for Mandy?
- What are the range of options which you could consider to help make this a successful transition for Mandy and to promote her wellbeing?
- What could you do to promote a good connection between your early years setting and Mandy's new foster parent?

# Section 6: Early learning and childcare – what do children need?



*“Development takes place through interactions with others, being active and involved and learning through exploration and discovery.”<sup>34</sup>*

## 6.1 The question of developmental stages

The crucial role practitioners play in supporting children’s ELCC and in recognising the impact practice can have cannot be underestimated. In order to do this effectively practitioners need to have some understanding of the pattern of development of young children from birth to 5. It is important to know how children develop and learn from the beginning, how they are developing at any point in time, and how they might develop and learn in the future.

The following section acts as both a reminder and as a point of reflection for practitioners who feel confident in their knowledge about child development but also introduces information for those who are less familiar.

There are certain characteristics that are likely to be shared by children of similar ages. However, age alone is not the predetermining factor in children’s development.

Each child will progress in their own way and at their own rate as there are no set rules for when a child stops being a baby and starts being a toddler or a slightly older child. You can usually see this more obviously in areas like walking and talking but it is equally valid for all areas of development.

Sometimes this can be puzzling for the practitioner working with very young children. Progression is often uneven across different aspects of development. This is to be expected and is quite natural. Understanding this helps to provide experiences, opportunities and interactions which are more developmentally appropriate.

Accepting and appreciating that this uneven pattern of development is how children develop and learn will give practitioners the confidence to make changes that will provide the best ELCC experiences.

- Understanding how children learn and develops is critically important for staff to appreciate as we increasingly have more children under 3 with funded places.
- It is also true in whichever setting they attend.
- This has implications in that it is necessary for a practitioner to be able to respond to the child’s actual development in order to adapt and provide what is best at that time for the child rather than expect a child to fit into a fixed and pre-determined group programme or plan.

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/earlyyears/prebirthtothree/index.asp>

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Understanding this will help the practitioner in providing the right type of interactions and experiences within a positive caring and learning environment. Responding to the needs of a child in this way is welcomed by external quality assurance bodies such as Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland.

There are also circumstances where the practitioner will need to draw on their knowledge of child development in order to identify when a child is not making the developmental progress they should. This in turn, with parental agreement, may require additional support or specialist assessment.

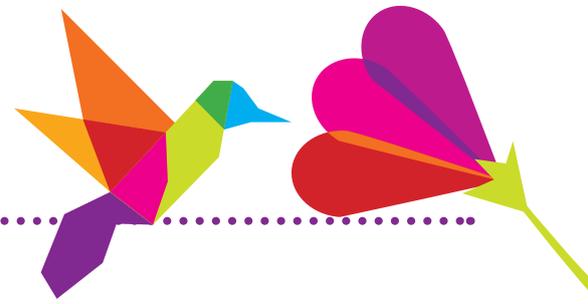
## 6.2 What are the key characteristics of being a baby, toddler and young child?

There are certain aspects of ELCC which are typically more appropriate for different ages and stages of children's development. This is broadly explained below. It is written to provoke thinking and allow staff to reflect on their own practice. For ease of reading it is divided into what a baby, toddler and, older child may need.

### 6.3 The baby

From birth, babies know how they like to be held, be comforted and who they like to be with. They have already gained a range of skills learned in the womb. These skills help a new-born baby make a secure attachment and reciprocal relationship with their caregiver. They are making active choices, even at this early age, and deciding how they prefer their world to be. They want and need to make relationships with the people around them. They thrive best when they experience relationships which are warm, secure, consistent, loving and responsive. Learning while being carefully nurtured suggests an emotional response and commitment to the child. They are eager and keen to make sense of their world around them. They have an innate power or drive to develop and revise their thinking processes.

Advances in neuroscience and the use of technology now give us an insight into how the baby's brain develops and the potential of the baby's ability to learn and grow. The more practice a baby gets in recognising similarities and patterns in the world around them, the more competent they will become as brain connections increase quickly as they begin to make sense of their world. They learn through being active and mobile, through inquiry, communicating in a variety of ways, discovering new things and interacting with others. They do this by practicing their skills over and over again, returning to previous connections in order to make sense of their world.



### Putting the guidance into practice

- What are your thoughts about your role as an early years practitioner, room supervisor or manager in making sure this happens for the youngest children in your setting?
- How does the environment promote attachment for babies in your setting? How do you ensure continuity of relationships for babies in your setting?
- How do you as staff meet the needs of every child, taking into account that children learn and develop at different rates?
- If you feel practice is already good, what would you consider to improve the situation for young children even more?
- How would you improve the environment for the youngest children? Make a list of what happens now and what changes you would like to implement.

Think about what you do to make sure that a baby feels safe and secure in your care.

- Do you have a good relationship with the babies in your care? How could you make it even better?
- How do you use information from home to ensure individual babies and their parents feel they matter? What could you do differently?
- How do you provide a warm, affectionate atmosphere where very young children feel valued and eager to try things out for themselves?

Babies tell us what they need by looking, touching, smiling and making sounds which can show they are happy or upset. The skilled practitioner is someone who can interpret these and understand what the baby is trying to communicate, what they want to touch and what they are trying to understand about the people around them.

## 6.3.1 A focus on babies – what do they need?

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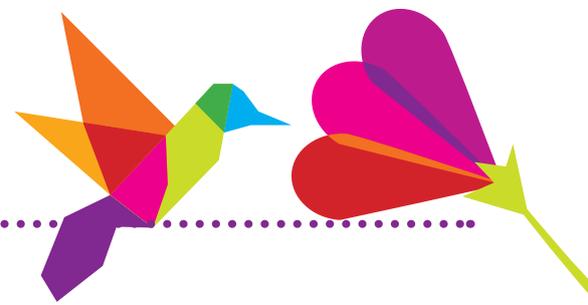
### Experiences which:

-  Allow a baby to be calm, feel safe and secure.
-  Give individual time with a familiar adult; being lifted and shown different objects, walking around, going outside, being involved in conversations about what the baby has achieved at the end of the day with their key person and parent as they are collected to go home.
-  Offer frequent opportunities to engage in conversations with an adult, listening to favourite stories and playing with favourite objects that they like at home and which helps the baby settle.
-  Encourage regular opportunities to listen to and join in with music, songs, dance and being moved about.
-  Provide sensory and tactile experiences with natural objects to touch, listen to, taste and smell.
-  Encourage playing enquiry games such as peek-a-boo, dropping and hiding objects.
-  Allow a baby to be out of doors and able to interact with the world around them as described by the adult.

### Adults who:

-  Promote relationships to become well known to the baby and parent.
-  Provide a regular but flexible pattern to the day which takes account of the baby's individual preferences of eating, sleeping and playing.
-  Encourage people who notice and value the baby's interests.
-  Identify and praise the baby's achievements and develop a method of keeping track of the baby's achievements which can be shared with the baby and parents.
-  Know the baby's developing competence and encourage the baby to try things out for themselves.





-  Are alert to the baby's needs to find things out and explore, and who can respond by interpreting this with the baby.
-  Encourage the baby to play games, to understand words and actions like; big, small, up, down.
-  Understand and work with the baby to practice developing skills such as learning to crawl, turning around, keeping their balance, reaching out and handing a toy to another.

#### **An environment which:**

-  Is safe, clean, comforting and predictable.
-  Is emotionally welcoming, secure and respectful.
-  Is home-like, with areas which the baby can recognise and relate to – photos of the baby's family and mirrors to see themselves.
-  Is arranged well for the baby to be beside other babies comfortably or sit up well supported to see all around.
-  Offers a personalised space with preferred toys and favourite things to cuddle.
-  Allows opportunities for play inside and for outdoor experiences.
-  Is a calm and comfortable place where the baby and adult can be together, talking and sharing experiences.
-  Offers opportunities for the baby to touch, hear, see and look at new things.
-  Provides time and space to explore what catches the baby's attention.
-  Gives space for the baby to move freely to explore different experiences without too much furniture to hinder movement.

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## 6.4 Moving on to being a toddler

When the baby starts to be mobile their world changes and the struggle for independence increases. They become more involved in doing things for themselves, learning through their actions, engaging in schematic play. Schemas are “patterns of repeated behaviour which can often be noticed in young children’s play”<sup>35</sup>. The skilled practitioner is able to recognise that these distinct patterns of behaviour are meaningful and accommodate opportunities for individual children. For example, children carrying all the bricks from one place to another in a bag; or the sand from the tray to the home corner or pushing a doll around in a pram. This repeated behaviour could be described as *Transporting* – one of the examples of schematic play. “It is important to be aware that occasional actions and fleeting interests are not schemas.”<sup>36</sup> A child’s schema will be evident across a range of different situations. It is important for a practitioner to understand that a child is not being disruptive when engaged in schematic play but be able to recognise this as early learning and help to support the child by offering opportunities to test out their thinking.

The toddler still enjoys familiar routines and experiences. Having this gives them the confidence to explore further and take risks. They are still dependent on having a familiar person nearby who gives them support, encouragement and care. It is a testing time for the child and the adult as life is full of frustrations and contradictions, making things at times unpredictable. Toddlers will often become frustrated where they have problems vocalising their feelings and this may lead to difficult phases. Caring for children at this stage requires a great sensitivity to the child’s conflicting needs for the balance of independence, risk, reassurance and support.

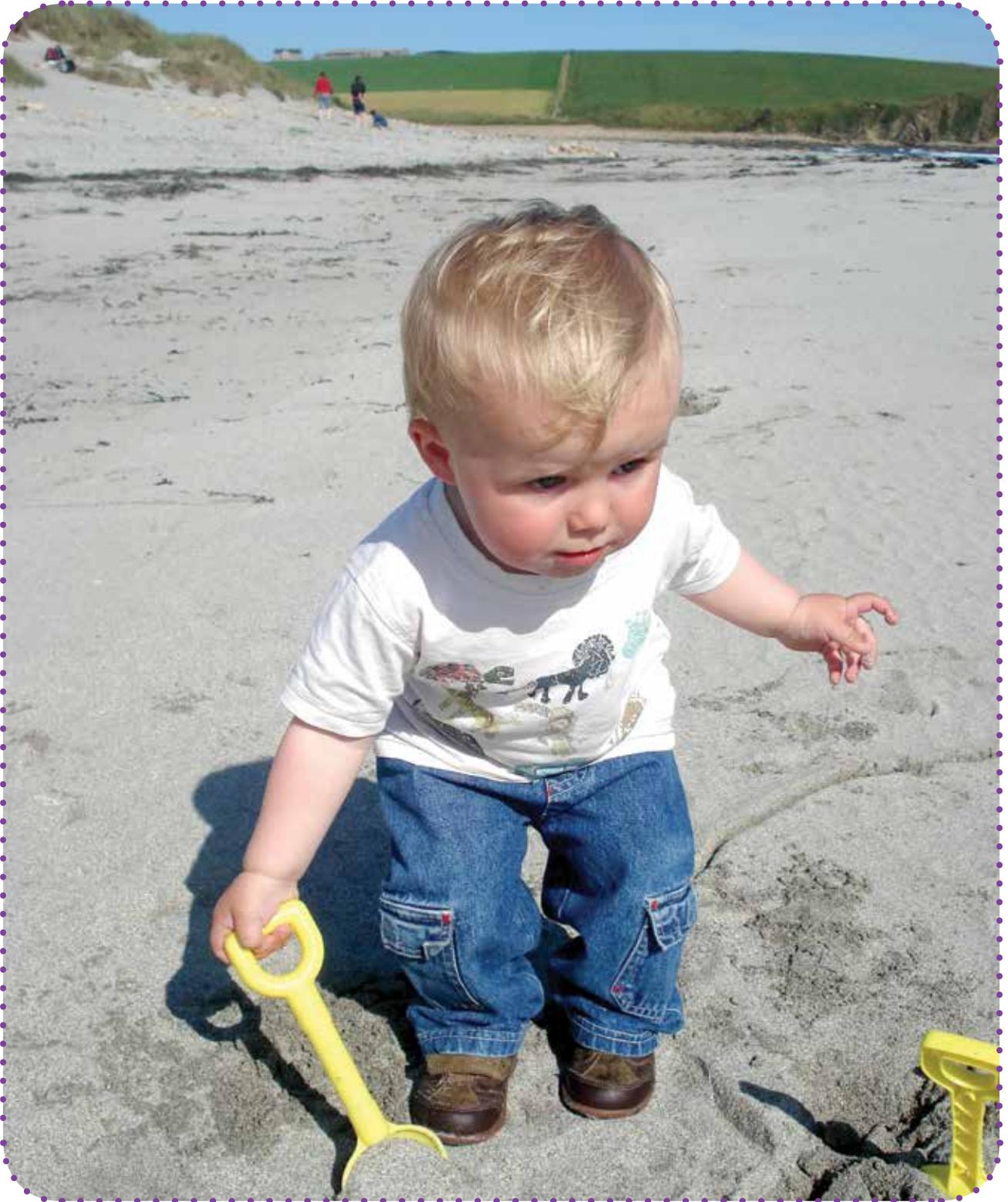
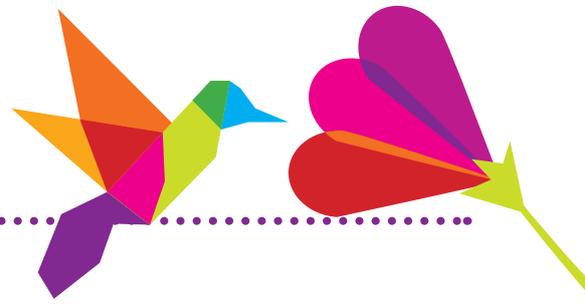
### Putting the guidance into practice

- Do you recognise the description above for some of the young children in your care?
- Think of a situation where a child was showing frustration and presented as unhappy. What could you do to help him resolve the situation?
- What changes would you make to your environment to keep some familiarity for the child?
- How would you now consider organising the space and experiences differently to better support the toddler’s stage of development?

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35 Patterns in Play; Motivation, autonomy, resilience, K Hudson and J Santer

36 <https://www.dorsetforyou.com/357248>



## 6.4.1 A focus on toddlers – what do they need?

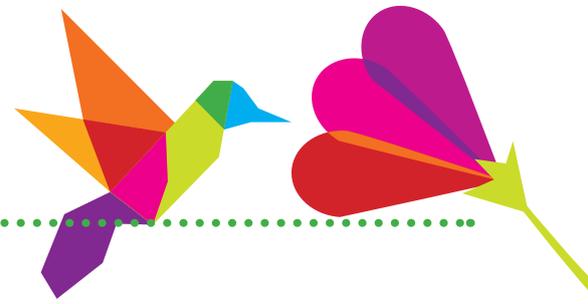
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### Experiences which:

-  Allow the continuation of the familiar which enable the child to revisit, practise and refine their understanding.
-  Offer new experiences to help a child try new skills and to test and challenge themselves.
-  Allow the child to find out how things work, take things apart and put together and provides a range of boxes, bags, trays, containers so that objects can be put in, taken out, collected together, transported from one place to another, sorted and emptied to move things.
-  Provide interesting things to do, people to talk with, in play, when outside through real life experiences.
-  Promote fun with words, songs and rhymes in a small group and access to a widening range of books and stories.
-  Encourage an interest in early writing skills and opportunities to mark-make in real life contexts with clear mark-making tools, paint, pens and brushes.
-  Develop numeracy skills in play situations, number rhymes, and a growing awareness of early mathematical concepts such as heavy/light, big/small.
-  Encourage the child to express their feelings through music and dance.
-  Encourage creativity through making models, learning to stick using paper, textiles, boxes, tubes trying out glue, sellotape, fasteners etc. free painting and using clay.

### Adults who:

-  Nurture friendships, supporting children in learning to be together and enjoying the company of other young children; and adults who patiently help children to reconcile differences, conflicts and understand the frustrations of this stage.
-  Appreciate the child's efforts, recognising their intentions rather than how well they achieve them, and encourage them to share these with others.
-  Model new words and phrases with just enough challenge to take the child forward.



-  Encourage the child to start conversations and ask questions, and give time for the child to find the words and gestures to explain their meaning.
-  Recognise that experiences which are everyday are new and exciting for children, and support their exploration without over direction or interfering.
-  Describe to the child what they are thinking and doing and encourage the child to do the same, asking questions such as: *I wonder if, what do you think would happen*, questioning, explaining what is happening.
-  Give time for prolonged projects which can be left for children to revisit without feeling the need to constantly tidy away work which the children may need to revisit the next day.
-  Encourage sensitive observation, standing back to allow children to explore and test out their theories and know the moment when the children will welcome support and not before.

#### **An environment which:**

-  Gives a place for personally important items from home.
-  Has a thoughtful arrangement of space and furniture to allow the child some control over what they do and how they play.
-  Has resources arranged so that they can see and make choices for themselves.
-  Has a flexible arrangement in terms of times and space to allow some control over quiet and active times.
-  Is a place to share what is important; a space to be comfortably together with others; and, an inviting space to be quiet and alone.
-  Gives regular access to the outdoors to encourage the growing understanding of the world around them.
-  Provides natural resources which help to stimulate all of the senses.
-  Provides time to talk in a supportive, unhurried way with a key adult.
-  Provides resources for pretend play, allows exploration of paint, sand and water. Objects to take apart and build together, interesting items to touch and examine.



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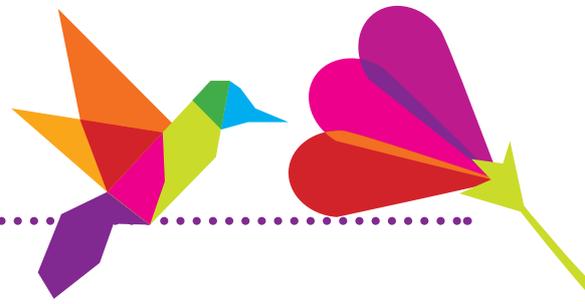
## 6.5 Being a young child

As children get older they become more independent and sociable. They need to be active both physically and mentally as they have a growing capacity to think, inquire and communicate. They enjoy conversations and have a rapidly growing vocabulary. They often show more perseverance in their play and concentrate on experiences which are interesting and personally meaningful. They often have a good sense of fun but can also be serious and purposeful.

The defining feature of being a young active learner is the need to widen experiences and learning in all areas of development. The balance for staff is the urge to determine what the young child could learn through their own interests, balancing areas of the curriculum, and in creating a supportive learning environment to help the child progress.

### Putting the guidance into practice

- How do you organise time and space for children to revisit something they are working on over more than a day? Does the daily programme allow flexibility for children to spend more time if needed on something which is interesting and absorbing?
- Are you tied by time and tasks and focused on, for example, tidy up time or storytime at certain points during the session? Can this be changed if necessary to better meet the needs of children?
- Can you recognise when they are highly focused on a learning activity or understand why they are upset? Are you tempted to intervene? How could you improve your skills in these areas? What would support your own learning?
- How can you use conversations and observations with children to implement support and plan effectively for their needs?



## 6.5.1 A focus on the young child – what do they need?

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### Experiences which:

-  Are new and stimulate enthusiasm, new learning and curiosity, balanced with more familiar experiences which can be revisited and tested out in different ways. Develop a sense of risk.
-  Encourage the young child to talk with each other and adults, and the growing awareness of the part each plays in a conversation.
-  Help the young child remember how they have used materials and solved problems in the past and how they can relate this learning to the task in hand.
-  Allow children to determine what they want to learn, form their own plans and gives ownership in discussion with an adult when they want to stop.
-  Give children a sense of wonder and stimulate questioning and ability to reason and test conclusions.
-  Allow children to play outside, fresh air and physical exercise.

### Adults who:

-  Help children make sensible choices about their learning by involving them in making decisions about what could be provided and evaluating their own experiences.
-  Understand children will start at different points and encourage them to try activities at the appropriate level.
-  Make time to talk and listen to what a young child is saying and try to build on their meaning and reply in a way that children will understand but also models new language and descriptions.
-  Help children express ideas by singing, making music and role play.
-  Encourage children to try out new things, using children's interest as a starting point.



### An environment which:

-  Gives a balance of being in and out of doors so that children are confident in different environments.
-  Encourages children's own sense of self by using their names, both oral and written, and those of friends and family frequently.
-  Organises resources which enable children to make choices, and share in others choices. Resources which are clearly labelled and where children know to find and replace them.
-  Has comfortable places to relax, be quiet and be with friends.
-  Has plenty for the young child to talk about, imagining and creating, reasoning and testing out, sharing and negotiating, talking about the past, present and the future.
-  Reflects the world of print, literacy and numeracy and the increasing use of technologies to support learning.
-  Gives time to persevere with inquiry learning and time to start a project and continue it over several days.

### Find out more:

About developmental progress: "From Birth to Five Years: Children's Developmental Progress" fourth edition – Ajay Sharma and Helen Cockerill.

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## 6.6 The importance of transitions

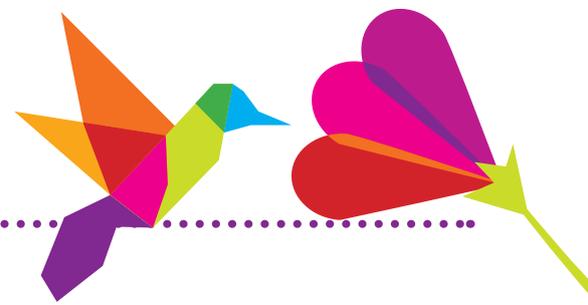
Transitions are a time or process of change and it is natural that change almost always brings uncertainty. In an ELCC setting there are several transitions we expect a child to manage, initially from home to the setting, from playroom to playroom, from person to person. It can be a frequent time of change. Transitions can also be exciting and challenging but it is still essential that these are handled sensitively, inclusively and positively. Dunlop and Fabian (2007) shows that “the way in which the first transitions are handled could potentially have a significant impact on the child’s capacity to cope with change in the short and long term”<sup>37</sup>.

### 6.6.1 The question of 2 year olds

The changes in the Act to provide for eligible 2 year olds needs to be carefully considered in terms of transition and an appropriate plan put in place. For example, it is common practice that children are divided into age groups to organise playrooms and staffing within a setting. In many ways this is understandable but this has wider implications for a child’s development and how best to meet their learning and care needs as discussed in section 6.4 “Moving on to being a toddler”.

We should not expect some younger children, for example a 2 year old, to immediately manage the transition of suddenly being with a larger group of older children without careful preparation. In this instance, it may be helpful to relax often more formal regimes of moving a child from room to room in a setting just because they are a year older, rather than making the decision as to what is actually best for him. We know that, depending on the child’s stage of development, they still need the encouragement and confidence of being able to hold on to the familiar things they know as they increasingly let go to enjoy new experiences. On the other hand some younger children are more adept and confident and can make their transition with ease. As we already know, children have an uneven pattern of development. This is nothing new and to be expected.

Therefore you may find that a playroom has an age range of 2, 3 and 4 year old children. This is acceptable provided that the setting has considered the individual care and support needs of each child and that the setting has assessed what is in the best interests of that child and the other children in the room, so that they are all appropriately supported. This means that the skilful practitioner will, in planning for children’s learning, give due care to providing developmentally appropriate and meaningful play experiences for all children.



The required staffing levels and space standards must continue to be met where these arrangements have been put in place. This could be seen as a challenge in terms of organisation of numbers of children at any one time but if we are truly committed to providing the best possible ELCC experiences it cannot be ignored. Practitioners need to take time to discuss any transition with parents, building on what the child can do and giving a well thought out rationale based on what is best for the child. There also needs to be an equally well thought out agreed plan for how to make the transition positive for the child and with other staff members. The idea of keeping some of the familiar aspects the child knows and carefully introducing this to the new setting will give the child the security and confidence to move forward.

Transitions need careful planning, effective partnerships and communication between all concerned.

### Putting the guidance into practice

- Think of a child you have known who you recognise from the text above. What would you do differently to help him?
- Do you focus on finding what helps the child to be most calm and open to learning? What could this be?
- Do you recognise the situation when adults try to control children to do what they think is correct rather than putting the needs of the child first? If so, what could you do differently?
- How would you improve consultation with parents and other partners to ensure that transitions are understood and handled, with the needs of the child as the first priority?



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### 6.6.2 Case Study: Community Childminding

Mary, aged 3, and brother Tommy, aged 14 months, were referred to the Community Childminding Service as their mum needed time to recover from an accident and hospital stay. With no extended family living in Scotland, dad had been able to take a week off work but as he had only just started a new job he didn't feel he could take any more time off. His new employers were supportive and offered reduced hours to allow him to take their oldest child to school and back.

The placement with a community childminder for six weeks allowed mum the time she needed to recover, knowing that her two youngest children were being well cared for. They had never been looked after by anyone else and the increased confidence for Mary was very apparent when she had her first nursery visit in preparation for starting after Christmas.

The community childminder went along too and was very pleased to see mum cope with confidence when speaking to the nursery staff as she had been suffering from very low self-esteem. Mary was full of confidence and settled in to nursery without any difficulty, much to the amazement of her mum. The time that Mary and Tommy spent with the community childminder was very positive and extremely good socially for them both.

*“The family are over the difficulties they had and have now settled back down into their regular routine. Mary is making wonderful progress at nursery and is a very contented, busy and sociable girl, very confident and capable. Tommy is also making progress consistent with his stage of development.”* (Family Support Worker)

- In what ways did Mary benefit from the approach described above?
- What could have affected this effective transition arrangement?
- Why is it important to develop effective transition arrangements for children?
- What could you do to improve on your current practice?
- Why is it important to ensure parents are part of the transition process?

# Section 7: Putting pedagogy into practice

## 7.1 What do we mean by pedagogy?

By identifying more closely what we want children to learn and how best children learn we can enhance the range of learning opportunities and try to ensure that whatever ELCC setting children attend they have an equal access to broad and balanced learning activities.

For example, we know that children learn best when they are active, busy learners. They also learn and develop at different rates personal to themselves. The society in which we live expects our children to be competent, capable individuals who achieve well.

If we accept that in order for young children to take part in and enjoy their world they need to acquire a wide range of knowledge, understanding and skills. If we believe that a young child's concern is to an active busy learner, trying to make sense of the world around them in order to take part and enjoy it, we can say they are learning all of the time from all of their experiences.

In essence this is their curriculum.

However, on the other hand, the curriculum is also about what the practitioner wants children to learn within a caring, nurturing environment – the **intentional promotion** of experiences and interactions which are important for young children to learn. These intentions must be supported by the environment, the experiences and the interactions which are developed and these descriptors are used as a common framework throughout this guidance.

In the book *Children's Rights and Early Education*<sup>38</sup>, Nutbrown talks about the curriculum in this way: "What makes working with young children so exciting is the way the anticipated possibilities planned and provided for by the educator are used by individual and groups of children in spontaneous and dynamic ways. The people, children, parents and educators, who share the experiences, construct the curriculum".

This explanation helps us appreciate that pedagogy **is about the interactions and experiences which support the curriculum** and **the process of how children learn**. This is inseparable from what young children should learn – **the content of the curriculum**.

The current *Pre-Birth to Three National Guidance*<sup>39</sup> does not formally suggest curricular areas, nor was the intention to do so, but rather it concentrates on four key principles:

- Rights of the child.
- Relationships.
- Respect.
- Responsive care.

38 *Children's Rights and Early education*, Nutbrown

39 [www.educationscotland.gov.uk/earlyyears/prebirthtothree/index.asp](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/earlyyears/prebirthtothree/index.asp)



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These principles are enshrined in the descriptions and approaches to ELCC as written in this document. ELCC must also take account of *Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE)<sup>40</sup> as it is designed for children aged 3-18. It is helpful for us to do so as it offers more closely what we anticipate children to learn, through experiences and outcomes and how best they learn as they get a little older and develop. In ELCC settings we can adapt, broaden and deepen the learning opportunities available. In doing so we must always keep in mind young children's experience of learning must be:

- Integrated.
- In meaningful contexts.
- Developmentally appropriate.

Where uncertainties for the practitioner can arise is where there are well-meaning intentions to conform by providing activities which are not necessarily developmentally appropriate or actually relevant to the child's context or world around them.

### **Why does this happen?**

As we are primarily working with very young children, our understanding of how young children learn needs to be better understood and practised by all, including practitioners, parents, the wider education community and adapted to supporting young children's learning more effectively.

There is no need to formalise the curriculum; or implement a list of experiences to reflect the early stages of primary school. If this happens it is likely to narrow the young child's experiences.

The principles of *Curriculum for Excellence* sit comfortably alongside the pedagogy and practice as described in this document. In the planning for children's learning there should be:

- Challenge and enjoyment.
- Breadth.
- Progression.
- Depth.
- Personalisation and choice.
- Coherence.
- Relevance.

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40 [www.education.scot.nhs.uk/the-curriculum/what-is-curriculum-for-excellence/the-purpose-of-the-curriculum/index.asp](http://www.education.scot.nhs.uk/the-curriculum/what-is-curriculum-for-excellence/the-purpose-of-the-curriculum/index.asp)



*Curriculum for Excellence* provides a framework of what may be possible and the areas of learning which are considered to be of highest importance. We could not for example say that health and wellbeing is not important for young children as it is integral to their development. Nor could we say that literacy and language are any less important. The journey or continuum of learning is highlighted over the next few pages. It builds on the principles of CfE and *Pre-Birth to Three*; looks at essential areas of importance which can be linked to CfE; and is designed to make connections across all three stages of the baby, toddler and young child.

### Find out more:

About Curriculum for Excellence: [www.educationscotland.gov.uk/thecurriculum/whatiscurriculumforexcellence/thepurposeofthecurriculum/index.asp](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/thecurriculum/whatiscurriculumforexcellence/thepurposeofthecurriculum/index.asp)

## 7.2 Essential aspects which drive early learning

In the following three sections we take a closer look at wellbeing; communication; and, creativity, inquiry and curiosity in terms of the baby, the toddler and the young child. These three areas have been chosen as the principal drivers of early development and learning, for the purposes of this guidance.

### Wellbeing

No matter what the age of the child from babyhood onwards, health and wellbeing is the principal driving force behind children growing up and learning. The wellbeing indicators of GIRFEC, for children to be safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included are implicit throughout this section. It is also well known that a healthy diet and regular physical exercise are fundamental for a healthy childhood. Babies and young children need a healthy balanced diet to support brain development and physical development.

It is important to appreciate what young children need in terms of their emotional, social and physical wellbeing to grow and learn; and, how young children develop their own self-control and understanding of what this means in practice. This is sometimes described as managing their emotions and self-regulation.

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In *From Birth to Five Years*<sup>41</sup>, Sharma and Cockerill describe the concept of self-regulation as:

*“When children develop their language, social and cognitive skills they also get better at paying attention to what is relevant, managing their emotions appropriately for the situation and thinking and planning events and problems. Regulating emotions does not mean suppressing emotions but expressing emotions effectively and appropriately for safety, getting one’s needs met and socialising.”*

As babies and young children develop so too does their ability to self-regulate their emotions and need for attention. Parents and practitioners have an important role to support young children through these testing times and, as with other areas of development children, will develop at their own rate. What is known is that providing predictable routines, modelling behaviour, helping children take turns, being aware of the emotions of others and helping children become more independent are all necessary in developing the child’s concept of self-regulation.

CfE highlights the purposes of health and wellbeing as: *“to ensure that all children and young people develop the knowledge and understanding, skills and capabilities and attributes which they need for mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing now and in the future.”*<sup>42</sup>

## Communication

Language, learning and living go hand in hand and being able to communicate influences everything we do. It is dependent on being with others. Young children need real opportunities to express their own ideas and feelings and to understand and respond to other people. It is more than having a wide vocabulary but also about having the confidence and drive to share their ideas with others. We also know that the first five years of life is the optimum time for children to acquire their language skills.

Children learn by asking questions, talking about their ideas, describing what they see and wondering out loud. They also live in a world full of print and they see others using print to communicate in many different ways. They see this as being interesting and powerful and the rise of technologies adds to the excitement of learning.

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41 “From Birth to Five Years Children’s Developmental Progress” fourth edition – Ajay Sharma and Helen Cockerill

42 [www.educationscotland.gov.uk/thecurriculum/whatiscurriculumforexcellence/thepurposeofthecurriculum/index.asp](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/thecurriculum/whatiscurriculumforexcellence/thepurposeofthecurriculum/index.asp)



## Promoting curiosity, inquiry and creativity

Children are born curious and with an inquiring nature. All children need access to well thought out experiences which will help them develop their inquiry skills to be successful and competent learners. We know from the *GUS* research<sup>43</sup> that children who do not have enough problem solving types of activities from the very start are at a significant disadvantage to those children who do.

Inquiry is about being curious and persistent. For young children it is about finding out things for yourself and being able to come to a self-satisfying answer often with the gentle support from a key person. It allows a child to appreciate when something actually has been learned and to know this for themselves. The sense of achievement in inquiry learning is a key motivator to learn more.

Creativity sits alongside inquiry and problem solving. Being creative is not just about painting and model making or making music, although these are highly important for children, but also includes reasoning out, testing and solving problems, putting things together and taking them apart and figuring out how things work. Early mathematics and numeracy are closely interlinked with inquiry and creativity and is best achieved in practical meaningful contexts for children where they make sense of the world about them.

The following sections are again written in terms of some suggestions of what the baby, toddler and young child need to be able to develop aspects of these essential aspects which drive early learning. They should also be read and understood to show progression through each developmental stage in wellbeing, communication, and promoting curiosity, inquiry and creativity.



43 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/05/31085122/0>

## 7.3 A focus on babies – what do they need?

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### 7.3.1 Wellbeing

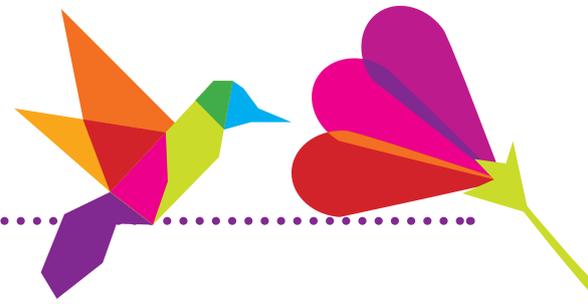
#### Experiences which:

-  Allow the baby to respond to voices and expressions where the baby can smile or is soothed and comforted by the practitioner's voice or being held appropriately.
-  Allow the baby to relax by touching soft cuddly toys, and/or by listening to a reassuring voice telling a story.
-  Allow the baby to respond by showing happiness by gurgling or smiling and is beginning to understand routines of the day.
-  Involve playing games which are fun, stretching out and touching hands or toes.
-  Enable the baby to sit supported to watch others, play with toys or roll over to reach items placed just out of reach to encourage movement.
-  Support how the baby likes to be fed, go to sleep and be changed.

#### Adults who:

-  Notice how the baby shows their feelings and appreciates the challenges babies have when separating from their main caregiver and can respond to the baby's uncertainties.
-  Encourage the baby quietly and sensitively at feeding times in a calm, unhurried way.
-  Include the baby in conversations about what is happening and encourage the baby to reach out and move to get favourite toys, books or objects.
-  Give physical support to help the baby stand up and respond to the baby's efforts in moving around.





 Encourage physical movement to strengthen the baby's muscles by helping initial attempts at walking or standing by kneeling in front of the baby giving physical help, encouragement and praise.

 Give reassurance to the baby by talking quietly, never raising their voice as babies are very susceptible to mood, and are quick to pick up on negative actions, but who smile, give reassurance to help the baby manage better when they feel upset or uncertain.

#### **An environment which is:**

 Designed so that the baby feels safe, happy, content and cosy which gives a sense of care and wellbeing.

 Open in terms of access for the keyworker to see the baby, and respond to the baby's smiles, tears, gestures or for example, the baby's preferred way to be laid down to sleep.

 Arranged so that the baby can be with others in a small group.

 Organised so that the baby can see and learn about others in the group and be socially comfortable. For example, reaching out and sharing a toy, an uncluttered space where the baby has room to roll over and crawl.

 Spacious and attractive with mobiles and toys for the baby to reach, touch and hold, and when the baby is more mobile, a sensible arrangement of equipment so they can move easily from one area to another.



## A focus on babies – what do they need?

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### 7.3.2 Communication

#### Experiences which:

-  Provide opportunities to talk with the baby, during play, being included in normal conversations, hearing about daily routines.
-  Give sensory and tactile experiences which allows the baby to reach out, laugh, and make happy sounds.
-  Allow playing with toys which make sounds or books which make noises when pressed. Access to personal stories created with the family, with familiar photos and words.
-  Encourage peek-a-boo and give and take games, songs and rhymes with simple and repetitive words, phrases and actions.
-  Provide picture books with favourite objects and themes and opportunities to revisit these as often as necessary.

#### Adults who:

-  Recognise how babies communicate their needs through facial expression, gestures, touch and by giving and receiving objects.
-  Engage in “conversations” with babies, pausing to allow the baby to “say” non-verbally what they want and the adult verbally interpreting this and taking turns, e.g. *I see you would like me to pass you your bear, here you are.*
-  Talk with the baby in a conversation, interpreting meanings from clues the baby gives out, for example, touching, looking intently at something or someone but giving time for the baby to contribute in their own ways.
-  Organise opportunities for babies to communicate with one another.
-  Take account of a child’s home language and who makes every effort to incorporate this into daily conversations.
-  Help develop vocabulary, repeating, modelling and practising words and phrases.



-  Create a daily routine of joint picture book reading, sharing and talking about the pictures rather than asking *what's that* questions.

**An environment which is:**

-  Arranged sensitively where a keyperson can hold or sit beside the baby sharing and talk about everyday experiences or share a book.
-  A comfortable place to sit which encourages babies to see, touch, look at and play with one another.
-  Supportive of a keyperson being given time to get to know the baby who is trying to communicate through different sounds which tell them they are needed.
-  Quiet and calm with no distracting background noise or constant radio so that babies can listen to speech.

## A focus on babies – what do they need?

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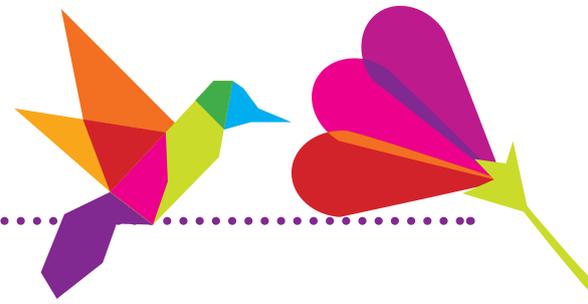
### 7.3.3 Promoting curiosity, inquiry and creativity

#### Experiences which:

-  Encourage freedom of movement to kick, bounce and roll about.
-  Are visual and tactile objects to touch and a variety of materials and colours with different properties, e.g. soft, hard, natural, rough or smooth to encourage inquiry and curiosity.
-  Provide toys which stack, roll, rattle that the baby can grasp and hold.
-  Allow the baby to explore paint using their fingers, or explore different textures.
-  Include exploring how things move in the breeze and how things drop and fall.
-  Give opportunities to be outside and explore the natural environment.
-  Enable participation in musical experiences by swaying, clapping, bouncing and singing.
-  Provide treasure baskets filled with sensory, real and natural materials to touch and explore.

#### Adults who:

-  Sensitively support the baby's efforts to be curious and inquiring without doing it for them.
-  Understand, and can tune in to, what the baby is exploring and can appreciate and respond to what the baby is learning.
-  Respond to the baby's efforts by understanding how a baby expresses interests; for example, facial expression, gazing intently, movement, noises and sounds.



 Interpret the baby's interests by talking gently; for example, *I see what you would like, let me help you reach it*, by lifting the baby up to see higher.

 Provide a range of visual, tactile experiences and talk to the baby about sensations and how they are responding.

### **An environment which is:**

 A safe, constant space to explore for themselves and develop their movements. A calm, peaceful room without constant background music.

 Clean and comfortable floor spaces where the baby can be propped up to balance, to hold on and crawl.

 Not rushed and allows time to concentrate on whatever catches their attention without being rushed around.

 Has interesting objects which catch their attention to touch, hear, explore, mirrors to see themselves, mobiles to lie back and watch when tired.

 Has a focus on natural objects to touch and explore.

 Has access to windows and good light to be able to see outside.

 Has daily access to the outdoor environment, to be in the garden being held up and shown trees and leaves and the natural world.

## 7.4 A focus on toddlers – what do they need?

### 7.4.1 Wellbeing

#### Experiences which:

-  Give daily access to the outside to look at and investigate the immediate environment which helps the toddler to feel settled, happy and promotes a response from the toddler to show others how they feel.
-  Encourage the toddler to wait their turn with their friends in short games, for example, being outside and having the patience to wait for a turn on a bike, or dig in the garden.
-  Encourage the toddler to walk, jump and run with support if necessary.
-  Support the toddler to understand their emotions of feeling happy, sad, frustrated, calmly and reasonably.
-  Encourage toddlers to be socially comfortable with others by “reading” the messages a friend may give, for example, being unhappy, sad or upset and trying to resolve this perhaps by sharing a special toy or book or giving a hug.
-  Develop physical skills by building with blocks, strengthening muscles by moving in and around objects inside and outside.

#### Adults who:

-  Understand the toddler’s own needs and preferences; for example, when the toddler is in a bigger group and how they may react, or when there are too many people around or it is too noisy.
-  Know what helps the toddler feel secure and settled or when they need to be on their own for a short time.
-  Help the toddler’s growing awareness of their emotions.
-  Give confidence and encouragement to the toddler at snack time or lunchtime by sitting with them at the toddler’s level and not standing apart.
-  Understand the toddler’s emotional outbursts and don’t get annoyed or angry.





-  Help the toddler cope with change; for example, if they are separated from their usual friends or are moving to another room.

**An environment which is:**

-  Clean, comfortable and has floorcoverings which do not get in the way of the toddler standing up and walking.
-  Suitable for quiet restful times and sleep, ensures privacy and dignity for personal care.
-  Spacious and a layout with clear pathways and not cluttered with tables, to encourage the toddler to move from area to area safely.
-  Set up with care so toddlers can play together in different areas but has the security of the familiar and favourite places to be, such as the home corner.
-  Aware of providing materials and toys for toddlers to use to find out how they move or what they are used for.
-  Helpful for the toddler to understand the needs of other toddlers in their group and encourages a growing awareness of playing alongside and together with friends.

# A focus on toddlers – what do they need?

## 7.4.2 Communication

### Experiences which:

-  Provide interesting objects to touch which encourage questions and language.
-  Encourage verbal games, learning rhymes and an abundance of stories.
-  Provide a well-resourced home corner and/or other role play areas which combine familiar items with new objects to widen experiences for the toddler for example, pictorial stories or cards.
-  Give opportunities for the toddler to listen both to adults and other children using gestures, visual clues and active involvement to encourage the toddler to participate and explore language.
-  Introduce a widening range of items to make marks, draw, paint, and dress up.

### Adults who:

-  Engage the toddler in conversations with interesting things to say and do.
-  Take account of a child's home language and who make every effort to incorporate this into daily conversations.
-  Encourage toddlers to initiate conversations and who extend these by asking well thought out questions.
-  Appreciate that toddlers have a limited capacity to sit in formal groups for prolonged periods of time.
-  Explain and model new words with the correct level of challenge to extend the toddler's grasp of language.
-  Share writing for everyday purposes, explaining why and pointing out signs and symbols and what they mean.
-  Talk about and show interest in what is happening at the child's home and in their life outwith the setting.



### An environment which:

-  Encourages and values conversations through play and real life contexts inside and out of doors.
-  Gives opportunities to talk and to listen in a calm and unhurried way.
-  Provides resources which are interesting and stimulate questions and encourage children to communicate with each other.
-  Gives space to play together, a layout which encourages children to move around with attractive book areas, opportunities to draw and mark make.
-  Is rich in environmental print.
-  Provides a range of good quality storybooks, both fiction and non-fiction, magazines and cards.
-  Offers a range of play and real life experiences which encourages children to describe, explain and ask questions.

## A focus on toddlers – what do they need?

### 7.4.3 Promoting curiosity, inquiry and creativity

#### Experiences which:

-  Help the toddler to see how things work, how objects can be moved and transported around; how similar things can be grouped together; how things balance.
-  Give the toddler time and space to be involved in their own schematic play and adults who support this.
-  Provide resources that toddlers enjoy, such as bags, boxes and containers to put smaller items in, to move, empty out, and scatter about.
-  Give opportunities to mix and combine messy materials.
-  Provide appropriate resources for the toddler to make clear marks with the correct tools and equipment, paint and appropriate sizes of brush; and a selection of paper which is neatly arranged and used appropriately with care and attention which value the child's efforts.
-  Give the toddler experience of everyday activities, splashing in puddles, being blown by the wind, digging holes, making collections of stones or natural objects or items that a child may feel are special.

#### Adults who:

-  Encourage the toddler's curiosity and ensure the environment is interesting enough and safe.
-  Are aware that the simplest of activities to an adult are often full of potential for a toddler.
-  Observe sensitively and intervene when necessary to extend the toddler's thinking without over-direction and who do not interrupt moments of intense concentration.
-  Use techniques such as wondering aloud, explaining what is happening but all the time allowing the toddler to find out for them what will happen next.



-  Know when to stand back and allow the toddler to try things out, and the moment when a toddler will be receptive to support.
-  Use their skills by reminding, sharing and keeping previous accomplishments of the toddler as a basis for new learning.

**An environment which:**

-  Is interesting and filled with opportunities which help the toddler to explore and inquire; for example, the properties of sand and water, clay, paint.
-  Has furniture which is sensitively organised to give space for the toddler to move around safely. Objects placed within the reach of the toddler.
-  Gives frequent access to resources with which a toddler shows interest until they come to a self-satisfying conclusion for themselves.
-  Allows access to outside areas, walks and visits to extend the toddler's curiosity and interest in their immediate world.
-  Gives space to build, construct and take things apart and time to practise these skills over and over again.

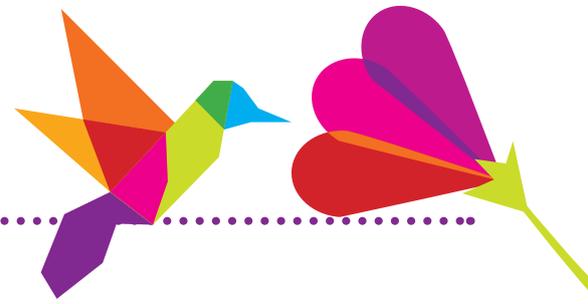
## 7.5 A focus on the young child – what do they need?

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### 7.5.1 Wellbeing

#### Experiences which:

-  Encourage an understanding of others' emotions; for example, talking about why a child is upset perhaps because others have excluded them from playing in the house corner.
-  Help young children become independent in managing conflict.
-  Highlight a growing awareness of the need for some rules and why this is important and being able to respond to basic structures. For example, why is it important to use your own box or tray to keep important items, or why is it necessary to take care of things on display.
-  Allow opportunities to play and learn together, to share ideas and interests, to reconcile differences and to begin to develop a sense of fairness.
-  Encourage children to contribute their own ideas and be involved in decision making about their day.
-  Engage children in daily energetic play, which supports and extends their developing physical skills, stamina and strength.
-  Use real tools and equipment to help coordination of fine movements; for example, combining items together using different fasteners, preparing snack, using a camera or keyboard.
-  Encourage physical skills, such as finding out about distance and speed by throwing, chasing, running.



### Adults who:

-  Involve children in making sensible choices about their own learning by helping them to plan and evaluate their own experience.
-  Encourage the young child to think, helping them to solve problems and giving the child time to come to a satisfying conclusion from the child's view and then taking time to discuss this together.
-  Recognise differences in starting points of the individual child and encourage them at the appropriate level.
-  Encourage children to see another's point of view through joint projects and cooperation in play.
-  Praise the child's growing physical capabilities and challenge them to take the next step.

### An environment which:

-  Is thoughtfully arranged to give access which enables the young child to make choices and share in other people's choices.
-  Is easily accessible to the practitioner to observe the young child and support them to express their feelings.
-  Provides a balance of both being inside and outside experiences to increase children's confidence in a variety of environments.
-  Promotes the young child as an individual within their community where their own names and those of their friends and family are used frequently.
-  Creates opportunities to be with others and empathising with them, encouraging opportunities for new friendships.
-  Is organised to promote physical development, movement and spatial awareness inside and outside.



# A focus on the young child – what do they need?

## 7.5.2 Communication

### Experiences which:

- Provide a range of events and exciting experiences which encourage children to share their thinking, talk about their interests and help them imagine their theories.
- Encourage children to listen carefully to each other and gives space and time to allow others to talk.
- Allow children to use their imagination in role play, making models, painting and drawing.
- Encourage children to play with rhyme and rhythm, songs and silly words to have fun and enjoy.
- Draw children's attention of words, both verbal and in print, and helps them realise print has meaning; for example, labelling their own pictures, writing during shop or home play, writing cards and letters and signs or labels on resources.
- Provide opportunities for small groups of children to listen to a story together, where they can see the illustrations in a book but not in a large setting where engaging with the story is physically too difficult.

### Adults who:

- Give time for children to explain their interests in a calm unhurried manner but also elaborate on what the child has said by asking probing questions to further extend the child's use of language.
- Offer different ways and words to children to extend their vocabulary.
- Create opportunities for children to "write" in different play situations and for different purposes without this being conducted in a formal way.
- Encourage children to talk together with their friends and create situations where children take turns and listen in small groups.



-  Take account of a child's home language and who makes every effort to incorporate this into daily conversations.

### **An environment which:**

-  Provides areas for children to engage in conversations, small cosy spaces, occasional large groups to talk, listen and share their ideas.
-  Is rich in opportunities for children to engage in conversations, imagine and create, find out and reason answers.
-  Encourages conversation about the here and now, the past and future and discussions about the world around them.
-  Has appropriate resources; for example, dark coloured felt-tip pens which make a clear mark on paper, a selection of paper organised in different sizes, shapes and colours, cards and stickers which are relevant for children to use.
-  Has a library rich in books, favourite stories, fiction and non-fiction books, books children have made themselves, recordings of experiences and stories they want to share and tell.
-  Provides for oral storytelling and books with more limited illustrations when a child is ready to enjoy these.
-  Uses environmental print recognisable to children to help a growing understanding that print has meaning.
-  Uses technologies to widen children's experiences of different methods of communication.

## A focus on the young child – what do they need?

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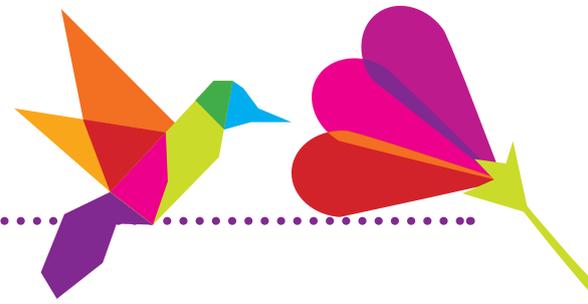
### 7.5.3 Promoting curiosity, inquiry and creativity

#### Experiences which:

-  Help children remember how they have solved a problem in the past and how this learning links to a current challenge.
-  Give time for children to find out similarities and differences in simple problem solving activities.
-  Create a wealth of interesting situations, both inside and out of doors, questions for a child to ask and consider possibilities.
-  Give opportunities to incorporate different technologies and use this in their learning.
-  Provide opportunities which encourage children's understanding of living things and the local and natural environment.
-  Give the young child experience of how materials change, by heating, dissolving, freezing, mixing etc.
-  Provide opportunities to express their thoughts and feelings in pictures, paintings, using an increasing variety of art techniques and media.
-  Provide opportunities to find out how artists and musicians express their ideas and for children to try out their own.
-  Give opportunities to learn about tunes, rhythm, timing and patterns of music.

#### Adults who:

-  Encourage a young child's learning by suggesting they try things out, inspire curiosity and see that this is essential to how children learn.
-  Are not afraid to change their own plans and take the lead from the child and who are able to act as a support to the young child when needed.
-  Will admit when they don't know but offer to help to find out together and see this as valuable both for the child and themselves.



- Encourage children's ideas, allow them to make mistakes, can offer a further suggestion and praise their attempts.
- Pose questions which encourage inquiry such as, *I wonder if, why do you think that*, to extend the young child's ability to verbalise their thoughts and actions.
- Ask children *I wonder what happens if...* to help children make sense of what happens when you try things out.
- Provide a range of resources to talk about which encourages children to be creative.
- Help model techniques and strategies with children and encourage this new learning in the child's new challenges or suggest a new context.

#### **An environment which:**

- Encourages inquiry and invites discussion and exploration with interesting objects to talk about and explore, stimulating curiosity.
- Is supportive of giving time for the young child to persevere with their thinking and inquiries, to test their own theories out over several days or re-examine the same experience again over time in a variety of ways. For example, how to build a bridge across an area of the playroom using different materials without being constrained by overly formal routines of the day.
- Offers daily access outside to the wider environment which is rich in opportunities for inquiry learning.
- Uses internal spaces flexibly as children test out their possibilities. For example what they could use to measure distance to the front door from the playroom or respond to changes of interest in children, such as extending an area for large construction as an immediate response to children's play and learning.
- Is well organised to allow young children the freedom to select equipment and materials that they wish and also appreciate they need to accommodate the choices of others.



# Section 8: What are the key elements of quality in a setting?

## 8.1 What do we mean by quality?

Research has shown that high quality ELCC services are crucial in promoting children's development and learning and, in the long term, enhancing their educational chances. *"High quality is paramount to achieving positive outcomes for children, and increasing the amount, range and flexibility of early learning and childcare will not be at the expense of quality."*<sup>44</sup> Therefore while the Act increases the amount and flexibility of ELCC, this will not be at the expense of quality, which remains paramount. Throughout this document we have consistently put the experiences of children first. We have to remember that children are the people who have most to gain from a high quality setting.

## 8.2 What does quality mean for children?

Young children are a discriminating group of learners. They are able to choose what they want to do, are keen and eager to learn, particularly when their own interests are being acknowledged. They are able to choose who they play with and take enjoyment from everyday experiences. We know from research that the level of involvement a child shows in their play and learning can be a key sign of the quality and effectiveness of what is being provided and tells us a great deal. *"This level of involvement is linked to their intrinsic need to explore, and shows in their motivation and concentration."*<sup>45</sup>

### Putting the guidance into practice

- How do you make sure children are settled and enthusiastic on arrival at your setting?
- How well do children talk about and discuss their learning?
- How do you plan your day to know and understand what children are in the process of learning?
- How could you adapt experiences to help the child more?

<sup>44</sup> Statutory Guidance <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/08/2256>

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/documents-ldtoolkit/leuven.pdf>



### 8.3 What does quality mean for practitioners?

What a practitioner actually does is a key element in what makes a difference to children. Practitioners often find it easier to talk about children's actual experiences and sometimes have difficulty in talking about how to describe and evaluate how children have been engaged in learning. Research helps us to get a wider understanding of what constitutes good practice in quality. We know from case studies from *The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) project research*<sup>46</sup> that the following areas have a particular beneficial effect on quality for young children:

- **The quality of adult-child verbal interactions** – This is also called shared sustained thinking. It is when the adult and child work together to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate an activity. It is when the practitioner asks the *I wonder if we...* type of question.
- **Initiation of activities** – The extent to which staff members extend child-initiated interactions is important and includes interventions to extend the child's thinking. It is allowing children to take the lead and not providing adult directed activities which have little meaning for children.
- **Knowledge and understanding of the curriculum** – Practitioners' knowledge of the curriculum is vital. It is about taking on board the relevance and breadth of the curriculum and providing experiences which are developmentally appropriate.
- **Knowledge about how young children learn** – The knowledge of child development underpins sound practice. The most effective pedagogy combines both "teaching" (in its widest sense) and providing freely chosen yet potentially instructive play activities.
- **Adult skills to support children** – Qualified staff in the most effective settings provide children with curriculum related activities and they encourage children to engage in challenging play.
- **There were more intellectual gains for children in centres that encouraged high levels of parent engagement in their children's learning** – The most effective settings share child-related information between parents and staff. Parents are often involved in decision making about their child's learning programme.

These characteristics of quality are endorsed in the recent paper from *GUS*. They particularly comment on how quality is related to outcomes for children. One of the key messages for their research is that *"the most important components of quality that support positive outcomes are: the processes of relationships and interactions, and care and support and the structural aspects of staff/qualifications and training"*<sup>47</sup>. In relation to working with children under 3 they note that *"the nature of relationships with adults providing care is particularly important"*<sup>48</sup>.

46 <http://eppe.ioe.ac.uk/eppe/eppepdfs/TP10%20Research%20Brief.pdf>

47 Quality in childcare: Evidence Briefing, Children and Families Analysis, Scottish Government June 2014.

48 Quality in childcare: Evidence Briefing, Children and Families Analysis, Scottish Government June 2014.



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### Putting the guidance into practice

- Do you recognise the areas above? Take a moment to reflect on your own situation?
- How do you know if you are delivering a high quality service?
- Are there areas where you feel positive? Try to describe why. And conversely, are there areas where you would welcome some discussion and support to make changes?
- What changes do you think you could make tomorrow or next week to bring about some improvements?

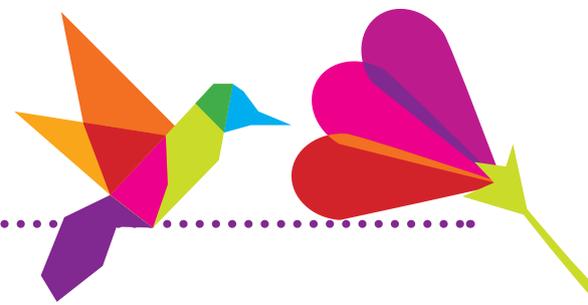
## 8.4 Quality matters

Education Scotland in conjunction with the University of Stirling held a seminar in February 2013 to discuss the relationship of the quality of provision for children and their outcomes and what makes the difference for children. This was based on the recent publication from Education Scotland, *Making the Difference: The impact of staff qualifications on children's learning in early years*<sup>49</sup>. There was agreement that what early years practitioners need to know included:

- Professional knowledge and putting this in to practice makes a difference to the experiences for children from birth to early primary school. Practitioners need to be self-aware, know what they don't know but be willing to find out, experiment and evaluate.
- Establishing a safe, secure and inspiring physical environment for learning indoors and out of doors, with spaces for children to play together and to be alone or with a few others, and materials and resources that supports creativity and learning.
- Ensuring high quality learning experiences for children where staff must have an understanding of early years methodology.
- Those in leadership roles in early years establishments need to create a culture which values staff and supports practitioners in improving their skills and knowledge.

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49 [http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/Images/Making%20the%20Difference\\_tcm4-735922.pdf](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/Images/Making%20the%20Difference_tcm4-735922.pdf)



### Putting the guidance into practice

- From your own experience to what extent would you agree with the above statements?
- What areas do you feel are most important? Is there anything you could do to affect changes in practice in your setting?
- Discuss the opportunities you have to improve your knowledge and skills with a colleague. What would you really see as a priority for you?

## 8.5 Quality assurance and improvement

The current national frameworks for early learning and childcare are *Pre-birth to three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families*<sup>50</sup>; *Curriculum for Excellence*<sup>51</sup>; the *National Care Standards*<sup>52</sup>; and *Child at the Centre*<sup>53</sup>.

There has in recent years been a change in emphasis to self-evaluation, quality assurance and improvement to ensure that high quality provision meets the needs of individual children in a wide range of settings.

Self-evaluation is a key aspect of improvement and is best when it is a continuous process with all staff in the setting involved. When the perceptions and views of all participants are given status and acknowledgement this leads to better reflection and honest, open debate about what needs to improve, how to improve and the benefits of actions taken. A skilled leader or manager is key to engaging not only staff but parents and children in the improvement agenda. It is helpful to look inwards, outwards and forward to make sustained improvement.

Local authorities have a duty to secure improvement in all their settings, including those in the private and third sector with whom they have entered into partnership to deliver funded places. Support for improvement is also available through third sector organisations such as National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA), CALA Childcare Solutions, Scottish Pre-school Playgroups Association (SPPA) for third and private sector providers, and Scottish Child-minding Association (SCMA) who particularly support and provide training for childminders.

50 <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/earlyyears/prebirthtothree/index.asp>

51 <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/thecurriculum/whatiscurriculumforexcellence/thepurposeofthecurriculum/index.asp>

52 <http://www.bing.com/search?q=national+Care+standards&src=ie9tr>

53 [http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/TheChildattheCentreSelfevaluationintheEarlyYears\\_tcm4-684267.pdf](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/TheChildattheCentreSelfevaluationintheEarlyYears_tcm4-684267.pdf)

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## 8.6 External quality assurance and regulation

Early learning and childcare in Scotland is currently underpinned by a dual quality assurance system, with Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland focusing on different aspects of provision using, in the case of Care Inspectorate, *National Care Standards* and for Education Scotland, *National Quality Indicators from Child at the Centre*<sup>54</sup>.

The Care Inspectorate regulates and inspects childminders and daycare of children services that require to be registered under the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 and its associated Regulations. Any service that cares for children for more than 2 hours per day and 5 days per year is regulated by the Care Inspectorate, whether it is run by a private business, local authority or voluntary organisation, including:

- Nurseries.
- Playgroups.
- Children and family centres.
- Crèches.
- Out of school clubs.

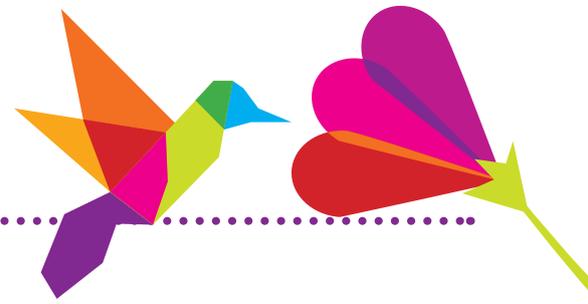
Since August 2013, in response to providing a more coordinated approach to inspection activity, Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate now often visit early learning and childcare centres together and complete a shared inspection. The aim is to provide a more coherent set of messages for the service and service users. This approach is being developed to minimise unnecessary scrutiny and provide external assurance to stakeholders about the quality of provision and information about what they need to do to improve. In May 2014, a shared statement was issued nationally by both organisations to support the development and expansion of early learning and childcare related to the Act. This statement has a focus on building capacity and ensuring that the increased provision of ELCC will still be of a high quality<sup>55</sup>.

ELCC practitioners who have a teaching qualification are required to register with the General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS). All other ELCC practitioners are required to register with the Scottish Social Service Council (SSSC). The SSSC is responsible for registering people who work in social services and regulating their education and training. This includes workers in daycare of children services for whom registration is a requirement as legislated for within the Regulation of Care Act (Scotland) (2001).

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54 [http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/resources/c/genericresource\\_tcm4684384.asp](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/resources/c/genericresource_tcm4684384.asp)

55 Shared Statement Education Scotland and Care Inspectorate May 2014.  
[http://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=8274&Itemid=594](http://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=8274&Itemid=594)



Childminders and foster carers are not required to register with the SSSC.

The SSSC also undertakes the functions of the sector skills council, Skills for Care and Development, which includes workforce planning and development with employers for other groups of workers, including childminders and foster carers.

This national body is responsible for registering staff who work in daycare of children and social services and for regulating their education and training. It has an important role in ensuring the regulation, training and education of the early years workforce and seeks to promote continued education and training.



**Find out more:**

Information on the regulatory functions of Care inspectorate can be found at: <http://www.careinspectorate.com/>

Education Scotland at: <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/index.asp>

SSSC at: <http://www.sssc.uk.com>

General Teaching Council of Scotland at: <http://www.gtcs.org.uk/home/home.aspx>

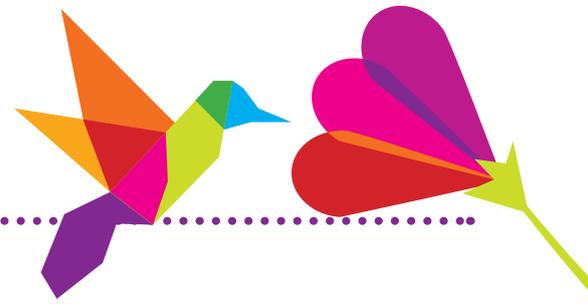
## Section 9: Conclusion

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*Building the Ambition* aspires to support all practitioners who are delivering early learning and childcare in Scotland. The collective investment in seeking to improve children's futures has never been greater and with this investment brings responsibilities. The consistent factor is that ELCC is delivered by a workforce who are dedicated to the care and development of our youngest children.

The content of this guidance is designed to be taken forward in different ways in different settings. It has been designed as a proportionate response to draw together and support the key areas of ELCC policy, guidance and good practice that practitioners need to know to do their best for children. It is also an opportunity to reaffirm what is good practice and what we can achieve to make a difference for our young children. These are the challenges and opportunities that all working in this sector will have to meet. For some, it will bring reassurance to recognise their practice in these pages and reflect on previous knowledge. The challenge here is to share this more widely with others to raise quality. For others, some aspects will be new and the guidance gives opportunities for self-reflection and a mandate to attempt new things and consider different aspects of ELCC. Everyone has a part to play.

It is now for establishments, individuals and local authorities at all levels to consider and reflect on the guidance and to consider how, individually and in partnership, they can help build the ambition for Scotland to be the best place to grow up.



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Scottish Pre-school Playgroup Association  
National Day Nurseries Association  
Care and Learning Alliance  
Scottish Out of School Care Network  
Scottish Childminding Association  
Experiential Learning  
Education Scotland  
Care Inspectorate  
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Marion Burns - Education Scotland







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