early years
the organisation for young children

Annual Report
2017 - 2018
Our Mission, Vision and Values

**Our Mission:**

“To promote and develop high quality, evidence-informed early childhood services for young children, their families and communities.”

**Our Vision:**

- Children are strong, competent and visible in their communities
- Children are physically and emotionally healthy
- Children are eager and able to learn
- Children are respectful of difference
- Children grow up in a peaceful, prosperous and shared region

**Our Values:**

- Childhood - in its own right
- Listening to children – and those who care for them
- A strong voice for children
- Play, fun and creativity
- Parents as first educators
- Participation of children and families
- Community involvement and development
- Partnership
- Inclusion and diversity
- Excellence and evidence-based innovation
- Effective stewardship and governance
- A professional, committed and recognised workforce
- Valuing staff, members and their commitment
Maria McDonagh

On behalf of the Early Years Board of Directors and the Senior Management Team, I am pleased to present the annual report for 2017/2018, which demonstrates yet another year of achievement for Early Years – the organisation for young children.

As you will be aware, all areas of enterprise and industry have been negatively affected by our current political uncertainty. However, I am delighted to report that your Board of Directors and Senior Management Team have worked tirelessly to ensure that Early Years – the organisation for young children continues to build up reserves and drive us towards an increasingly healthy economic position.

The delivery of the new Strategic Plan in 2017 has ensured that our organisation remains focussed on its goals and objectives. To support the plan, the Board of Directors and Senior Management Team have worked to attract funding from both existing and new partners, enabling us to provide innovative and exciting childcare initiatives. We remain an organisation focussed on the delivery of childcare excellence, and our reputation continues to grow, not only locally but on an international platform.

As this is my first year in the position of Chairperson of the Board, I would like to say that I am proud to be a member of such a dedicated organisation, and to work with such an experienced Senior Management Team. I would also like to take the opportunity to welcome our new board members, and I look forward to another exciting year of success for all our early years settings.
I am delighted to report on key delivery achievements for the year 2017/18. The year marked the first within the new Strategic Plan 2017-2020 with a renewed determination on delivery of outcomes-focused, evidence-informed early childhood services which are implemented to fidelity and robustly evaluated.

Over the past number of years the organisation has focused on growing and using evidence-informed practice, developing a system of implementation so as to ensure that our activities are implemented to fidelity, a participatory evaluation system to ensure robust and continuous monitoring and evaluation. For the first time, in this Annual Report and over the next three years of our current Strategic Plan, we will begin to use an Outcomes-Based Accountability Framework to track the improvement in outcomes and impacts which we are having on children, families, practitioners and communities. We realise that we are on a journey in terms of harnessing all our efforts, within and outside the organisation, to improve and measure outcomes and impacts. We realise that our task is complex and needs consistency and persistence. We also need to galvanise all of our inputs and resources, and so we appreciate the support which we continue to receive from the Department of Education, the NI Executive Office, the Health and Social Care Board, the Health and Social Service Trusts, Councils, the European Union, The Atlantic Philanthropies and others. We also recognise the importance of local, national and international partnerships in helping us achieve our Strategic Objectives and Goals. We are particularly delighted by the new partnership with Altram, PlayBoard and NICMA which produced a combined Workforce Sector Matters Report. We continue our involvement as a key partner with the Childcare Partnerships and the local Children’s and Young People’s Outcomes Groups. We welcome our involvement in the Early Years Forum in the Republic of Ireland and continue our international involvement in the International Network on Peacebuilding with Young Children and the Early Childhood Peace Consortia. One of the key outputs of this international partnership has been the production of the new ECPC website which brings all of the evidence from neuroscience to the practice of peacebuilding and social cohesion with young children, their families and communities.

It is unfortunate that we have had to deliver our annual programme of work in the absence of a Northern Ireland Executive and functioning Assembly. This has impacted on a further delay in the publication of a Childcare Strategy which sees Northern Ireland drift further behind the rest of the UK and Ireland in terms of childcare developments. However, in spite of this policy vacuum, we are determined to continue our focus, with commitment, dedication and determination.
Deputy Chief Executive Officer’s Report

Pauline Walmsley

Early Years was pleased to deliver on Year Two of the Pathway Fund which enabled an investment by DE (the Department of Education) of £2,661,606 awarded to 103 organisations, benefiting 5,190 children and supporting the sustainability of the sector.

The 2017/18 year also saw an investment of €4,256,007 by the EU Peace IV Programme for the implementation of shared education on a multiannual basis within the pre-school sector. The Programme is underpinned by a strong partnership between Early Years – the organisation for young children, the Fermanagh Trust and the National Childhood Network. Activity in 2017/18 focused on the establishment of the project.

Early Years continues to focus on key evidence-informed, outcomes-focused programmes including the Media Initiative for Children Respecting Difference Programme, Eager and Able to Learn and HighScope. I am particularly pleased to highlight the embedding of HighScope within the Toybox project in this report and highlight the tangible improvements for Traveller families as a result.

Early Years continues to be the market leader in the delivery of Early Years Specialist service to pre-school groups within the Pre-school Education Programme. We strive to improve and develop the service in line with developments within the pre-school sector.

Early Years is lead body for six Sure Start projects, providing services to over 8,000 children and their families. I am delighted to report on the improvement of socio-emotional development, predispositions for learning, language skills, and physical and mental health as a result of dynamic partnership working within Sure Start projects.

Finally, I am pleased to report on a number of innovations aimed at supporting workforce development within the sector. I would like to acknowledge the financial and knowledge support from our key partners and the commitment of staff and members to our work.
Achievements

To promote and develop high quality, evidence informed early childhood services for young children, their families and communities

- 5,191 children reached through the Pathway Fund, 73% of children who come from 25% most deprived areas
- Over 9,000 children avail of high quality daycare services
- 82% of PSEP groups received Level 1 and 2 grades in their ETI (Education and Training Inspectorate) inspections
How much did we do?

- £2.6m: Of funding awarded by the Pathway Fund to 103 organisations
- 104: Staff members continued their professional learning enrolling in Level 2 to 5 and completing HighScope training
- 978: Children with SEN (Special Educational Needs) were supported by the Pathway Fund
- 367: Children have participated in community relations programmes
- 7: Total of seven staff awarded a Doctorate, postgraduate Early Years qualifications or commenced a Masters degree
- 130: Staff in the sector are enrolled on RQF (Regulated Qualification Framework) Level 5, trained in the Reggio approach, in the Programme
- Star: Reggio Emilia and Northern Ireland Creative Collaboration supporting the professional development of Early Years staff and members to actively participate in society and develop a sense of European citizenship and identity
- 200: Sector representatives attend launch of the Leadership and Governance Conference
- 285: Groups received support and training in Governance and Management
Achievements

Children are strong, competent and visible in their communities

Leading local and international ECEC (Early Childhood Education and Care) evidence and practice translated into a format which is useful to policy makers, service developers, change agents, trainers and parents.

Young children’s rights promoted and evidence-based solutions offered
How much did we do?

- Engagement with key departmental officials and elected officials on the development of a NI Executive Childcare Strategy and associated workforce initiatives.

- Participation in a 'Childcare 4 All' campaign involving a number of civic society organisations (community and voluntary sector) and trade union representatives towards working for universally affordable, accessible, quality childcare provision.

- Engagement with key elected representatives around the potential development of an All-Party Group on Early Years.

- Access Europe project meetings and advocacy activity around post 2020 funding.

- Seven consultations responses with Early Years acknowledged in the analysis. Demonstrating the ability of the organisation and membership to continue to influence the further development and progression of such legislative, strategic or policy developments.

- Development of draft ‘adverse weather’ policy guidance appropriate to voluntary and community pre-school provider participants.
Achievements

Children are physically and emotionally healthy

Delivering evidence-based FHI (Family Health Initiative) aimed at preventing obesity in children aged between birth and five years, and managing obesity with children aged between eight and 11 years

8,107
Children registered in Early Years led Sure Starts projects
How much did we do?

Early Years is lead body for Clogher Valley, South Armagh, Dungannon, Rainbow, Newry and Splash Sure Starts.

- 6,538 Number of Mothers registered in Sure Start projects
- 2,552 Number of Fathers registered in Sure Start projects
- 6,663 Number of Families registered in Sure Start projects
- 5,163 Number of Home Visits
- 100% Children WELLCOMM Screened

- 100% Reported increase in moderate and/or vigorous activity, significant reduction in time spent being sedentary and a reduction in frequency of consumption of high fat/salt/sugar foods reported, eg biscuits/cakes, chocolates /biscuits and fast foods
- 46 FHI programmes and follow up sessions delivered to 58 families and children to support and help to sustain positive changes
- 80% Of Family Health Initiative participants in the management programme achieved reduction in waist circumference
- 80% Of participants increased fruit and vegetable consumption and maintained moderate physical activity levels after the programme
- 80% Family Health Initiative participants reported positive changes in feelings of attachment to food, feelings of self-worth and knowledge of recommended physical activity for children
- Incorporating a whole school based approach, involving families and tying in other PHA (Public Health Agency) related initiatives such as Food in Schools and Choose to Live Better campaigns for adults
Achievements

*Children are eager and able to learn*

- **2,847** Play sessions with children through the Toybox project, empowering Traveller parents to become involved in the education process for their children and themselves.

- **2,865** Programme sessions delivered with Sure Start programme for two year olds.
How much did we do?

- 29 Sure Start Two Year Old Development Programmes
- 1,104 Home visits completed by Sure Start
- 207 Stay and Plays and 54 workshops delivered
- 245 Children were supported through the Toybox Project to enhance their social, emotional, physical, language and cognitive development.
- 157 Families accessed the Toybox project with 320 Traveller parents have attended training courses
- 85% Of parents viewed Toybox support with transitional issues as very important
- 92.5% Of parents saw an improvement in their child’s approaches to learning
- 17 Settings with 36 practitioners trained and implementing to full fidelity, the evidence-based Eager and Able to Learn programme aimed at improving young children’s eagerness and ability to learn
- 85 Incredible Years School Readiness programme delivered to 85 participants in the North Down and Ards area
Achievements

Children are respectful of difference

100%

Of parents, staff and governors had a positive response to the Media Initiative for Children Respecting Difference Programme and felt it was highly relevant in our society.

Technical assistance to UNICEF Country Offices regarding the design development and delivery of ECD programmes.
How much did we do?

- **25**
  - Schools engaged in the Media Initiative for Children Respecting Difference Programme through the Good Relations Funding Programme

- **100%**
  - Of parents felt MIFC increased their awareness of how parental behaviour can affect children and how shared education can change this

- 🌍
  - Early Years is involved with three international partners from Italy, Spain and Cyprus to enhance the quality of ECEC (Early Childhood Education and Care) and strengthen the profile of the teaching professions through the delivery of the MEET (Metacognitive Educational Training) Disabilities for Ability project

- 🔗
  - One of nine partners amplifying youth voices on the EU Horizon 2020 WYRED (netWorked Youth Research for Empowerment in the Digital Society) project

- 🌍
  - Supporting and developing evidence-based ECD (Early Childhood Development) programmes for peace-building in countries affected by conflict through partnership with UNICEF and with the support of global research centres at Queen’s University Belfast, Yale and New York University
Achievements

Children grow up in a peaceful, prosperous and shared region

€4.2m

Of funding awarded to Early Years (lead partner), the Fermanagh Trust and the National Childhood Network for the delivery of Sharing from the Start, supported by the European Union’s Peace IV Programme, managed by the SEUPB (Special EU Programmes Body)
How much did we do?

- Staff members recruited for the delivery of Sharing from the Start: 6
- Project information sessions delivered across Northern Ireland and the Southern Border Counties – representatives from over 100 settings attended: 13
- Partnership applications received with 141 settings wishing to engage in the project: 66
- Central Good Relations funded the delivery of MIFC Respecting Difference Programme training in Western, South Eastern and Southern areas: 35
- Practitioners trained in MIFC Respecting Difference Programme: 451
- Children reached through Central Good Relations funding: 126
- Parents trained in MIFC Respecting Difference Programme: 58
- Management committee members in MIFC Respecting Difference Programme: 100%
Early Years Board of Directors 2017-2018

- Alma Loughrey, President
- Maria McDonagh, Chairperson
- Diane Koplewsky
- Ethel McIvor, Treasurer
- Agata Sobieraj

Resigned:
- Margaret Tighiouart, March 2018

End of Tenure:
- Olivia Johnston, June 2017
- Stephen Burns, June 2017
- Halina Kemper, June 2017

Early Years Council 2017-2018

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<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Members</th>
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<tr>
<td>Antrim/Ballymena</td>
<td>Florence Walker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belfast</td>
<td>Ashlea Berryman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Causeway</td>
<td>Christina McFarland &amp; Michelle Spence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cookstown &amp; Magherafelt</td>
<td>Tracey O’Kane</td>
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<tr>
<td>Craigavon/Banbridge</td>
<td>Amanda McGrath</td>
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<td>Down</td>
<td>Margaret Tighiouart</td>
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<td>Dublin</td>
<td>Laura Fernandez</td>
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<td>Dungannon</td>
<td>Ethel McIvor</td>
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<td>Fermanagh</td>
<td>Katie Murray</td>
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<td>Foyle</td>
<td>Carrie Mullen</td>
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<td>Larne/Carrickfergus/ Newtownabbey</td>
<td>Colleen Cartwright</td>
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<td>Lisburn</td>
<td>Sarah McCambley</td>
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<td>Newry and Mourne</td>
<td>Majella Caherty</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Down and Ards</td>
<td>Karen McLamon</td>
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<td>Omagh and District</td>
<td>Melanie O’Kane</td>
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<td>Sperrin</td>
<td>Caroline McCormick</td>
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<td>Day Care Forum</td>
<td>Diane Koplewsky</td>
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Treasurer’s Report 2017-18

Agata Sobieraj, Treasurer

After a number of financially testing years, the financial year 2017/2018 has seen a number of exciting developments, the main one being the long-awaited commencement of the Peace IV Sharing from the Start project, with £0.7 million of income in-year recorded.

Despite the current political impasse, ongoing management and delivery commitments were renewed for the Pathway Fund, Sure Starts, Toybox, Family Health Initiative, DE and Health and Social Care Trusts contract arrangements. This brought in funding of £7 million.

Other projects yielded net new income of £0.5 million. A number of council-led cultural integration grants valued at £73k were achieved.

The core activities of Early Years encompassing membership support, training, publications, management fees generated income of £1.5 million.

In summary, restricted funding activities generated revenues of £8.3 million and unrestricted revenues of £1.5 million.

This has resulted in a slight shift in income split between restricted and unrestricted of 81%/19% to 85%/15%, and is explained in full by the commitments made under Peace IV Sharing from the Start, a project expected to run to early 2020.

Financial planning for the year 2017/18 yielded improving returns on investment, with additional potential funding opportunities to further develop service offerings. In addition to this very local focus, the organisation is taking forward new international opportunities in Colombia and China, and an international project with Queen’s University Belfast, which will both generate income and attract funding to support access to these markets.

The organisation’s key financial focus is an increasing focus on new opportunities to increase unrestricted income sources in order to move towards a more independent sustainability and a build up of reserves for reinvestment in future development to deliver a strong and stable organisation in support of its members.
Income and Expenditure 2017-18

Restricted and Unrestricted Income

- Restricted: £8,262,842
- Unrestricted: £1,460,367
- Total: £9,723,209

Analysis of Income

- Health and Social Care Trusts funding: 32% (£3,113,541)
- Health & Social Care Board: 4% (£361,881)
- The Pathway Fund: 30% (£2,930,505)
- Project Funding: 9% (£900,906)
- Peace IV Funding: 7% (£693,649)
- Sales of Resources, Day Care, Training and Membership Services: 15% (£1,460,367)
- DE Core Grant: 3% (£262,360)

Analysis of Expenditure

- Direct Charitable Activities: £8,529,443
- Support Costs: £720,797
- Cost of Generating Funds: £108,814
- Governance Costs: £9,340
Having completed our PQA (Professional Quality Assurance) module, we have met as a small team to go through the PQA and are setting up a HighScope working group. Carrying out the PQA has allowed the identification of gaps in materials and resources ensuring that these can now be built into our development plan for the forthcoming years. The assessment has also given us the space as a working group to reflect on our own practice and the practice in each of the playzones and will ensure we are continually improving and building on our child-centred approach in the children’s centre. The staff have really embraced the PQA and can now see how the whole process from COR (Child Observation Record) assessment tool, PQA and the training are all linked to ensure continual learning for both children in the setting and staff.

(Aine, Early Years Manager, Mencap)
Sponsors and Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following organisations and individuals who have financially supported our work over the past year:

- Allianz
- The Atlantic Philanthropies
- Alzheimer’s Society NI
- Ards and North Down Borough Council
- Barnardos
- Belfast Area Childcare Partnership
- Belfast City Council Active Belfast
- Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
- Belfast Zoo
- The Big Lottery
- Blackburn Trust
- Bright Start/Department of Education
- Cavan County Childcare Committee
- Children in Need
- Clogher Valley Family Centre Ltd
- Danske Bank
- Department of Education
- Eastern Area Childcare Partnership
- Erasmus Reggio Emilia, Italy
- European Commission
- Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
- Health and Social Care Board
- Hebei Early Education Institute, Shijiazhuang, China
- Hope Early Years
- Invest NI
- Lockton Limited
- Mencap
- Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
- Northern Health and Social Care Trust
- NICVA
- Northern Childcare Partnership
- Northern Health and Social Care Trust
- The Executive Office
- Precede Balkan’s Network – European Union Instrument for Pre-accession A
- Public Health Agency
- Queen’s University Belfast
- Special EU Programmes Body
- Sisters of Mercy
- South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust
- Southern Area Childcare Partnership
- Southern Health and Social Care Trust
- Southern Regional College
- Strategic Investment Fund - Ards and Down
- Strategic Investment Fund - Downpatrick
- Strategic Investment Fund - Western Zone
- Sure Start:
  - Arke Sure Start
  - Blossom Sure Start
  - Clogher Valley Sure Start
  - Dungannon Sure Start
  - Kilkeel Sure Start
  - Newry City Sure Start
  - Rainbow Sure Start
  - South Armagh Sure Start
  - Splash/Brownlow Sure Start
  - Star (Banbridge) Sure Start
- UNICEF
- Verity Pensions
- Western Childcare Partnership
- Western Health and Social Care Trust
- Wheelock College