Dear Readers

“To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the heaven” Ecclesiastes 3:1

I want to inform you that I have decided to retire in June 2019.

I have worked with Early Years for the past 36 years and have had the honour of leading the organisation for the past 30 years. Now it is time to have some rest, play and fulfilment in other areas of my life. I do not intend to retire completely and will continue with a number of international projects and also hope to see the building in Clogher through to completion.

I want to thank all of you for making my working life such an enjoyable and worthwhile experience. Thank you for the fun and friendship. Above all else, thank you for your commitment to making this part of the world a better place for children, families and communities.

When I look back over the past 36 years, we can proudly say that together, we have achieved a great deal. However, there are many new frontiers in the field of early years services that still need to be tackled. I am excited to pass on the baton to a new generation of leaders in the field of early childhood care, education and family support.

In terms of process, the post of Chief Executive Officer will be advertised on Friday 1 February 2019, with interviews the week of 4 March 2019.

Once again, many thanks for all your support.

I wish all of you every success for the future and I will delight in hearing about your many accomplishments, achievements and successes over the coming years.

Siobhán Fitzpatrick CBE
Chief Executive Officer
Early Years – the organisation for young children

Alma Loughry awarded MBE in the New Year’s Honours list

The Early Years Board, staff and members offer our congratulations to Alma. The award rightly reflects a life time of inspirational leadership to improve outcomes for Northern Ireland’s youngest children as a teacher, as a lecturer and since retirement as a volunteer on a range of Boards. Alma is now serving as President of Early Years - the organisation for young children.
We live in a data-driven world. Almost every transaction and interaction you have with organisations involves you sharing personal data, such as your name, address and birth date. You share data online too, every time you visit a website, search for or buy something, use social media or send an email.

Sharing data helps make life easier, more convenient and connected. As an individual, you have a right to expect that your data is handled properly by organisations because your data belongs to you. As an organisation, you must respect the rights of individuals with regard to their personal data and you must handle data in a way which complies with regulation and law.

The manual is designed for early years settings. It contains practical advice and examples of how to make sure data protection policies and procedures are in keeping with best practice. It contains templates which you can adapt for your needs.

In addition, Early Years – the organisation for young children provides training in the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and data management (please check with your local Early Years office for further information).

Get your copy today

Members £20.00
Non-Members £22.00
The Pathway Fund supports providers of services and activities for pre-school children aged nought to four years across Northern Ireland with an emphasis on the provision of quality Early Education and Learning, and priority where disadvantage and need are greatest. DE (the Department of Education) finances the Fund. Early Years – the organisation for young children administers the Fund and supports all recipient organisations.

**Bloomfield Community Association**

Previously funded by Pathway - yes
Community profile - top 25% disadvantaged area, High unemployment, High number of one parent families.
Children’s profile - two to four years old
Organisation profile - a playgroup, based in local community centre.
Project overview - provide pre-pre-school service for 24 children.

In its third Pathway Year, Bloomfield Community Association playgroup is the only pre-pre-school operating within the Bloomfield ward of East Belfast. The group runs a morning session for the children creating an environment where children learn through play.

Through their high quality service, the Playgroup provides support for children and parents through parent programmes, lifetime opportunities programmes, inter-generational projects and healthy eating programmes. The Playgroup has enthusiastic staff who are continuously taking part in new training courses including Level 5 training, Autism Awareness, Family Connects and Solihull training.

The Playgroup is hoping to break the cycle of inter-generational deprivation by giving children opportunities to learn about the world around us and the diversity in society implementing the Early Years Media Initiative for Children Respecting Difference into practice.

Working with many other community groups including East Belfast Early Years Network, Inner East Belfast Sure Start, Connswater Community Greenway, Eastside Partnership, East Belfast Community Development Agency, Eastside Learning and Elmgrove Manor, the Playgroup continuously lobbies and campaigns for the voice of the child to be heard within the community.

**Jack Horner Pre-School and Mother Goose Community Playgroup**

Jack Horner Pre-School and Mother Goose Community Playgroup are based in Ballycastle and are run by the community. They serve both the town of Ballycastle and the large rural area surrounding the town. In the 2018-19 financial year they were funded by the Pathway Fund to run a summer scheme for children aged between three and four. The summer scheme came about after a consultation with parents of children attending the Playgroup. When asked what else the Playgroup could provide, a summer scheme came top of the list. There were many reasons why a summer scheme was so important to the children and their families. The Playgroup serves a large mostly rural area which does not have a lot of services particularly during the summer holidays. The local Council ran a summer scheme for older children but there was nothing on offer for children under five. This meant for working parents that it was extremely difficult to arrange childcare during the summer months and that children were often spending most of the summer stuck in front of screens.

61 children took part in the summer scheme though not all children attended all days. The two week programme was a varied mix of activities with a strong emphasis on the outdoors and physical activity. The scheme was lucky enough to take place in a period of very good weather and they made use of the many beaches and beautiful countryside of the North Coast of Antrim. As well as staff led input, the scheme benefited from voluntary help provided by parents and other members of the community.

A highlight of the programme was a visit from Casey’s Creatures, a ‘travelling zoo’ which introduced a range of exotic animals to the children. The children had a fantastic time learning about and handling the animals, though I am not sure the racoon was impressed that the children thought he was a werewolf! On a serious note, the visit was excellent and highlighted several key learning points. The
children learned about the importance of the careful handling of animals, their connection with the natural world and facts about the animal kingdom. Children with autism in the group were particularly engaged as the non-verbal contact and sensation of touching the animals were particularly powerful.

The scheme provided for children from a wide variety of backgrounds including children from newcomer families and children with disabilities. The routines and activities were adjusted to take account of the different needs of the children for example a ‘quiet space’ was created for a child who was undergoing cancer treatment.

St Vincent de Paul Pre-School Playgroup

Community profile - Ligoniel Road, Belfast.
Area of Social Deprivation – high numbers of children with English not as a first language.
Children's profile – two to four year olds, minority ethnic, English not a first language.
Organisation profile – a playgroup, based in the local community centre.
Project overview – provide a summer scheme for pre/pre-school children, extended pre-school service and a pre pre-school service.

St Vincent De Paul Pre-school Playgroup is in its First Pathway year offering a wide range of services for pre pre- and pre-school children. The Playgroup identified many needs in the area and tailored its summer scheme programme around these needs. SVP Playgroup encourages one on one time for children with additional needs in a relaxed environment with fewer time constraints than in the school year. They have many children for whom English is not their first language, so they engage with children and parents to improve their language and communication skills. This is a huge benefit to parents in the area who suffered with isolation due to language barriers. The Playgroup encourages parents to learn how to play with their children. Pauline, the Playgroup Leader, expressed the need for the summer scheme in the area to encourage children to engage with others during the summer months and to spend less time on tablets and games consoles. The Playgroup has its roots within the community with most of the members of staff being from the area.

The implementation of the summer scheme means employees have an invaluable income through the summer months.

Harpurs Hill Children and Family Centre

Community profile – across Glebe Ward, Coleraine, an area of social disadvantage. 31% of work aged adults in Harpurs Hill estate are unemployed.
Children's profile – one to year olds.
Organisation profile – community group.
Project overview – pre pre-school service for 12 children; crèche service for 50 children aged between one and three; pre-school summer scheme for 34 children.

Harpurs Hill Children and Family Centre is in its third Pathway year and thriving. Under the guidance of Project Manager, Sharon, the Centre offers a wide range of services both for children and the wider community. The Sunshine Pre-preschool Playgroup and Crèche offer a variety of opportunities not only for the education of children but social development for the whole family. Home visits, Stay and Play and parent workshops are conducted regularly and are changing the mindset of the community. Harpurs Hill introduced an additional needs support group for parents which has extended relationships with parents and the wider community. A summer scheme was held for pre-school aged children in the area in July. It was in a natural unstructured environment where children develop social skills and establish relationships. Smaller group numbers helped create a relaxed, informal environment which has eased separation anxiety and improved the children’s social and emotional well-being. The highlight of the Centre is outside space and gardens. Each garden is maintained by a different age group including the children and parents involved in the Sunshine Pre-preschool Playgroup and Crèche.

For further information, please visit www.early-years.org/pathway-fund
Members Leading the Way in Outdoor Learning with Forest School

Una Dougherty, Owner and Operations Manager, Aisling Day Care and After-School

The concept of Forest School originates from Scandinavia and involves learning in an outdoor environment with a play-based approach. Research shows that children and young people are stimulated by the outdoors and typically over time experience an increase in their self-belief, confidence, learning capacity, enthusiasm, communication and problem-solving skills as well as emotional well-being.

Being at a Forest School gives children space to take part in a ‘wild’ yet entirely safe environment. Here they can learn more independently and are encouraged to assess and take supervised risks and deal with unfamiliar, unpredictable situations and boundaries such as climbing trees or building a den, and testing their own abilities in these situations.

Aisling Day Care and After-School has been working in partnership with Colin Glen Forest Park since October 2017 to embark on our Forest School and have seen huge benefits to the children. The children, aged between two years and twelve years, participate in den building, tree rubbing, woodland skills, orienteering, building bug hotels, making bird feeders and making s’mores by the camp fire.

Our after-school children have exceeded all our expectations with the Forest School, and have loved every minute. They are so enthusiastic exploring, investigating, taking risks, collaborating together and just being in nature. We wanted to share this experience with our parents and families and held a Family Forest Day on Saturday 8 September 2018. The aim was to get parents exploring with their children and to experience the wonders of the Forest Park, right on our doorstep. The Forest Day was a huge success with parents who asked for more events to be organised.

Quotations from parents:

“I would like to say a big thank you to Bronagh, Una and the staff of Aisling Day Care for organising a great family fun day in the forest. My girls talk about the forest school non-stop, so it was great to see all the hard work the kids and staff did in the summer. It was a brilliant day, the kids loved every minute of it especially making s’mores by the fire. We really can’t wait for the next one. Great memories made today thanks to Aisling Day Care.”

“Absolutely amazing team of girls, and a massive credit to the nursery. You all did an amazing job. Everyone who was there enjoyed it so much. You had the forest looking so inviting not only for the children to play in but also for the parents to get stuck in. Please don’t stop doing things like this, you do it so well. Jessica told everyone about ‘painting the trees’, ‘cooking marshmallows on fire’ and ‘making bird seeds’. She spoke about it the rest of the weekend. Thank you so much for the memories made. Keep up the good work.”

“Words don’t do this day justice, my two girls have talked about forest school all summer, when I saw it today, I actually saw the hard work of the kids but also that of the staff to make this all possible. Was a great day, think I enjoyed it more lol.”

Early Years – the organisation for young children would like to thank Aisling Day Care for sharing this best practice with us. You can see their fantastic showcase on the Aisling Day Care Facebook page. Well done, team Aisling!
Study Reflection

By Donna McMahon, Leader at Glen Parent Day Care

Donna McMahon, Leader from Glen Parent Day Care, has recently completed her degree in Early Childhood Studies. Here she tells us about her journey to complete her qualification.

The Early Childhood Studies degree was extremely beneficial for me, both on a personal and professional level. It enabled me to explore a subject of personal interest, which helped me develop key communication skills which are essential for my leadership role within Glen Parent Day Care. It developed my skills and knowledge around how children learn and develop, the history and culture of childhood, as well as the major theories of social, emotional and cognitive development.

The theoretical training within the degree equipped me with the skills necessary to cope with the demands and challenges of supporting, caring for and educating young children in a professional environment.

Within Glen Parent Day Care we aim to provide high quality care and a stimulating, safe and friendly environment. We work with families and communities enabling each child to be the best they can be, providing them with great experiences which enhance and extend their learning. As one of the most important factors affecting a child’s healthy development is the quality of the education and childcare they receive in their earliest years, our setting recognises the importance of early years and childcare qualifications, training courses and how we improve the skills, knowledge and experience of early years professionals, always encouraging and supporting staff to upskill.

I would highly recommend the Early Childhood Studies degree and will be promoting it to all the staff within my setting. “No one should teach a child who is not in love with teaching.”

Early Years – the organisation for young children would like to congratulate Donna on her fantastic achievement. Thank you for sharing your journey with us.
By Sharon Malcolm, Manager, Puddleducks Day Nursery

Puddleducks Day Nursery and Kirk House, Residential Care for Older People, are part of the Charity ‘Belfast Central Mission’. We were aware that Kirk House was doing some intergenerational work with school-aged children and were inspired by them, very much wanting the children to engage with the residents from Kirk House and enjoy some time together. The plan was originally to have a one-off visit. The ease with which the children and residents engaged was quite magical, it appeared effortless and genuine, from the children’s perspective and that of the older people in Kirk House. No way was this going to be a one-off visit.

Here in Puddleducks we are always striving to improve in everything we do, we have a hunger for being better. In March 2018, I was given the opportunity through ‘Linking Generations’ to be part of a pilot intergenerational training programme (TOY+ - Together Old and Young). The training gave me a real understanding about the importance of intergenerational work, how it can benefit everyone involved and how we could do what we are doing even better. It gave me a strong foundation, knowledge and increased enthusiasm to make intergenerational work part and parcel of what we do in Puddleducks. I began to understand how we could extend our intergenerational work in Puddleducks, the practicality of it and how we could potentially overcome any barriers we may face.

With the TOY Training under my belt, I made links with a ‘Wednesday Lunch Club’ for older people who meet in our building each week. Linking Generations kindly provided a grant through their ‘All Ages April’ programme. We used this for a gardening project for our children’s first ‘get together’ with the lunch club. It was lovely to hear comments from the members of the lunch club like “It does your heart good to spend time with the wee’uns” and “they have so much energy, it rubs off on you”. Meanwhile the children asked “Why do you have to go, can you not just stay and play?”

Still wanting to continue to develop our intergenerational work, we invited Natasha from the Alzheimer’s Society who told the children the story of ‘Lenny the lion and his forgetful grandfather’. Our pre-schoolers are now dementia friendly. In August, nearly a year after we first visited Kirk House, Kirk House came to Puddleducks! The children were proud and very excited to show off ‘Their Nursery’ and the residents have all asked to come back again.

I feel privileged to have the opportunity to be involved in the work between Puddleducks and Kirk House. Seeing the children and residents together has given me insight and renewed enthusiasm as to how we can use intergenerational work to not only enhance play and learning opportunities for our children, but more so to strengthen and support their emotional well-being. In Puddleducks we pride ourselves in ‘Caring for the heart while we care for the mind’, intergenerational work makes that easy!

One of Puddleducks visits to Kirk House featured on the UTV Life programme on Friday 23 November 2018 (available on catch up).

Early Years – the organisation for young children is so pleased to see this wonderful intergenerational initiative go viral for our member group, Puddleducks, and with it the well-deserved recognition of an innovative learning opportunity for both the children and residents of Kirk House. We wish you continued success and thank you for sharing your story with us.
The ‘Sharing from the Start’ Project is supported by the European Union’s Peace IV Programme, managed by SEUPB (the Special EU Programmes Body). It involves early years settings throughout Northern Ireland and the border counties in the Republic of Ireland forming cross-community and/or cross-border partnerships, and the children taking part in joint curricular classes, improving educational outcomes and promoting good relations.

‘Sharing from the Start’ is administered by Early Years – the organisation for young children working in collaboration with the National Childhood Network and the Fermanagh Trust. Together these three organisations have a strong track record and over 20 years’ experience of working for the benefit of children and good relations development.

Playtime, McClintock and Denamona Pre-Schools visit An Creagán outdoor classroom, Co Tyrone

Playtime, McClintock and Denamona Pre-schools have been visiting An Creagán as part of their work together on the Shared Education project ‘Sharing from the Start’.

Children from the partnership have been enjoying outdoor play at An Creagán’s purpose-built Wild Woods outdoor classroom. The play facility features a tree house, campfire area and pond dipping platforms all set in natural woodland. This type of play provides exercise, encounters with wild animals and a connection with the environment in a way which cannot be achieved in the classroom.

Mairead McCaughey from Playtime Eskra said “It’s so important for the children to have fun and free play like this. It’s a great way for them to learn about the outdoors and they look forward to it every week.” Belinda Moffitt from McClintock Pre-school said “Coming here is really building their confidence and it’s lovely to see friendships and bonds forming. We’re fortunate to have help from parents as well.” Nicola McCormick from Denamona Pre-school added “We wouldn’t have been able to have a programme like this on our own. It’s just one of the many benefits of the three of us working together.”

Brookeborough and Maguiresbridge Playgroups visit Crom Estate, Co Fermanagh

The stunning Crom Estate on the shores of Upper Lough Erne was the setting for the latest shared session between Brookeborough Playgroup and Maguiresbridge Playgroup. The two pre-schools have become partners as part of the Shared Education project ‘Sharing from the Start’.

Children, staff and parents enjoyed the visit to the Castle and country estate. They had opportunities to interact with each other as they took part in a nature walk and educational talk about the various land and water insects. Children were able to inspect frogspawn, small perch and other creatures, all of which helped their observation and language skills to describe what they saw. Then it was off to explore woodlands looking for bugs. Children and parents had time to get to know each other in a relaxed atmosphere. During snack time children all sat around together with their peers chatting about what they enjoyed during the visit.

Audrey Rainey, Programme Manager of ‘Sharing from the Start’ at Early Years – the organisation for young children, commented “It’s great to see such fun, curriculum-based work like this visit taking place. The Brookeborough and Maguiresbridge playgroups have shown a real dedication and enthusiasm, and we wish them well for the rest of their sessions together. This is what the project is all about, creating opportunities like this for the children, parents and teachers to learn and work together.”
Mary Mallon Pre-school and Eivers Lane Pre-school, Co Leitrim

For one of their sessions, the two pre-schools came together at Mohill Library where the children enjoyed storytime and arts and crafts. The programme introduced many of the children to the library for the first time, providing them with the opportunity to achieve education in a fun, relaxed yet inclusive and respectful manner. Patrons of the library commented on how wonderful it was seeing all the children mingling and creating a great buzz in the building, utilising many areas provided by the library, especially the children’s area and sensory room.

The leaders of the two pre-schools have been commended for their progressive attitude and motivation to ensure the success of the project, implementing purposeful, direct and sustained curriculum-based contact, improving educational outcomes and community relations. The two settings also visited Lough Rynn Castle Hotel. The children were warmly greeted by the staff who told them all about the work they do at the hotel. They also got to play in the gardens, learning all about the different plants and taking part in a scavenger hunt.

Dance Performance by Tiny Tots Playgroup and Little Bridges Nursery, Co Fermanagh

Children from Tiny Tots Playgroup, Mullymesker, and Little Bridges Community Nursery, Florencecourt, have had a number of sessions together focusing on dance, facilitated by Dylan Quinn. Recently the children put on a joint dance performance, showcasing everything they have learned to parents from both playgroups.

Rachel Harron from Tiny Tots commented “We are so delighted to take part in this project. It is something we’ve always wanted to do as there has been Shared Education happening in this area for a number of years, so this is a natural fit for us. It is lovely that the children will get to carry on with Shared Education when they move on to primary school.” Tara Kingston from Little Bridges added “Children have really enjoyed the curriculum-based work, especially their sessions with Dylan Quinn. We can really see their confidence growing and friendships forming. They are always so excited to go and visit their new friends and then to have them visit us as well. It is great for communities, staff and parents to come together.”

Audrey Rainey, Programme Manager of Sharing from the Start at Early Years – the organisation for young children, said “This is a great example of the benefits of working together. The two settings have been able to share resources, resulting in an excellent performance for parents.

Well done to all the children and the staff for all their hard work embracing Shared Education so fully.”
Accreditations – members of Early Years recognised for high class service

Nine local daycares and playgroups received an All Ireland Centre of Excellence Award and Early Years accreditation at the Leadership and Governance Conference, AGM and Awards Dinner 2018.

Early Years would like to congratulate all the groups which were recipients this year – well done.

Giggles Early Years and After-School
Newry
All Ireland Centre of Excellence Award

Oaktree Private Day Nursery
Crumlin
All Ireland Centre of Excellence Award

Greenfields Day Care
Randalstown
All Ireland Centre of Excellence Award

Ballybeen Women’s Centre (Pre-School)
Belfast
Early Years Accreditation Award
Holy Trinity Pre-school
Enniskillen
Early Years Accreditation Award

Roslea Cross Community Playgroup
Fermanagh
Early Years Accreditation Award

Sugar and Spice Early Years Centre
Drumquin
Early Years Accreditation Award

Stepping Stones Pre-school
Belfast
Early Years Accreditation Award

Ardstraw Community Playgroup
Omagh
Early Years Accreditation Award
The following people were nominated for the Moyra Campbell Lifetime Achievement Award and the Early Years Volunteer awards to recognise their outstanding achievements of volunteering in an early years setting.

Early Years would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all our volunteers award recipients and extend our sincerest thanks for your service to the groups.

Name: Ita Deveney  (Collected by her behalf by Peter)
Group: Den in the Glen
Category: Moyra Campbell Lifetime Achievement Award

Name: Olivia Lavery
Group: Little Acorns Playgroup
Category: Early Years Volunteer Award

Name: Grace Digney
Group: Strawberry Tree Playgroup
Category: Early Years Volunteer Award

Name: Andrew McIvor
Group: Lollipop Playgroup
Category: Early Years Volunteer Award
GCSE results day was extra special for Annie Doherty, 17, who discovered she had obtained fantastic results of four A and four B grades, securing her progression into Business Studies at the Northern Regional College.

Annie is an Irish Traveller with a nomadic tradition and the second oldest child in a family of six. Studying for any pupil can be stressful and requires routine and revision rituals, but Annie achieved her results while travelling throughout her schooling years. She has attended Hazelwood Integrated College for the past two years working towards her GCSEs, and has attended eight different schools throughout her schooling years.

The results are testament to the focus and dedication Annie applied to her studies. In speaking on her exam preparation, she stated: “I started studying early and studied every night before exams, sometimes staying up to the early hours in the morning and making a timetable of revision. My teachers were helpful, in particular my Business Studies teacher, who provided extra support in allowing me to participate in the A Level class in my spare time as a study session. However, I feel the most backing for me was from my parents, who inspire myself and my siblings to be the best we can be.”

Annie’s transitioning into school was supported by Toybox, a rights-based outreach service for Traveller children aged 0-4 aimed at tackling inequalities in Traveller education, working in partnership with children and parents. The project is managed by Early Years – the organisation for young children and funded by the Department of Education.

Annie continued: “I feel Toybox contributed to me developing my skills and preparing me for school.”

Rita Simmonds, who has over 15 years within the Project and who is one of nine project workers with Early Years, and who worked with the Doherty family, said: “We are so proud of Annie. When I started (in Toybox), Annie’s family was one of the first we engaged with, and they contributed to our
working method, and helped change mindsets in terms of cultural respect and teaching us the way of their culture.”

Annie’s mum and dad are huge advocates for the Traveller community, involved in the running of TÔME ANOSHÁ, a voluntary organisation committed to the attainment of human rights for Travellers and Gypsies, and an inspiration to Annie for her future career. Annie commented: “I would hope to be a positive spokesperson for the Traveller community and I hope some day to write a book.”

With many societal issues facing Travellers and members of the travelling community being described as ‘the most at risk in the education system’, it was Annie’s desire to learn and achieve which helped her overcome the challenges of daily discrimination, which threatened her chance of achieving her successes. Annie said: “My message to younger Travellers is don’t be afraid to ask the teachers for help. If I can do it in the two years of going to school and studying for my GCSEs, with determination and focus, anyone can.”

Annie is proud of who she is and her culture, saying: “I tell everyone all the time I am a Traveller and I am proud of it and all I have achieved.”

Early Years would like to acknowledge the fantastic standard Annie has achieved and we wish her the very best in what will undoubtedly be a very bright future.
Early Years highly recommends that settings make use of the excellent and completely free service offered by the Labour relations Agency. Over the past year the Agency has helped settings with a diverse range of queries including developing contracts of employment, writing staff policies and advising on changes in contracts. It is also useful to know that they can also help to resolve disputes and mediate when there is conflict between staff and employers.

**What’s New at The Labour Relations Agency?**

The Labour Relations Agency has rebranded with a new logo and two new phone numbers for its main switchboard and a separate, dedicated number for its Enquiry Point. Now, anyone with an employment-related query can speak directly to the Agency’s Enquiry Point team by calling 03300 555 300 or using a new web chat facility on the Agency’s website [www.lra.org.uk](http://www.lra.org.uk). All other contact about the Agency’s dispute resolution services (conciliation, mediation, and arbitration), as well as its document vetting service and seminars team is via its new 03300 552 220 number.

Last year the Labour Relations Agency received over 38,000 individual employment rights claims and over 17,600 calls to its Enquiry Point. Staff also delivered 162 events across Northern Ireland. Labour Relations Agency Chief Executive, Tom Evans said: “The Agency has a busy programme of work this year too as we continue to support organisations, individuals and the economy by promoting best practice in employment relations. We also continue to encourage more employers and trade unions to adopt the ‘Model Workplace Policy’, created last year as part of the Joint Declaration of Protection for Dignity at Work and Inclusive Working Environment,” he said. The Labour Relations Agency was established in 1976. It has two offices: one in Belfast and one in Derry/Londonderry. It is independent and publicly funded. The Agency provides free, impartial and confidential services to employers and employees in Northern Ireland, as well as Trade Unions, HR and legal professionals. These services include advice on good employment practice and the resolution of workplace disputes.

The Labour Relations Agency promotes good employment relations as a key component in productive workplaces and a healthy, thriving economy. It also provides vital support to new and growing businesses in Northern Ireland, such as its free document vetting service, giving organisations confidence that their employment documentation is legally compliant and adheres to best practice. In addition, the Agency offers a wide range of training seminars, briefings and workshops, giving anyone with responsibilities in employment-related issues the latest information on employment legislation and practical skills in line management and handling disputes.

“Support from the Labour Relations Agency can remove a lot of stress and uncertainty for employers and employees alike, who need to check the latest employment legislation or best practice in workplace relations,” added Tom.

For more information contact the Labour Relations Agency on 03300 552 220 or visit [www.lra.org.uk](http://www.lra.org.uk).
Early Years – the organisation for young children supports the rebuild of the Palmyra community

“Genes provide the blueprint for brain development but the environment shapes”, J F Leckman, 2014.

Staff of Early Years donated £1,428 to Beit Al-Tadmor, the developmental project supporting the rebuild of the Palmyra community. The project concentrates on early childhood education and the additional development programmes for family members to provide skills for income generation and community involvement and thus help the community to be economically self-sufficient.

Beit Al-Tadmor History

The destruction of the ancient city of Palmyra in 2015 astounded the entire world. Palmyra, a universal symbol of Syria, was a crossroads of culture, dating to the first civilisation of humanity, Mesopotamia, intertwining the Orient and the Occident. Concentrating on the destruction of the ancient monuments, the world seemed to have forgotten the 75,000 inhabitants of Palmyra and their unfortunate displacement. Indeed, Syria lost numerous precious monuments of its heritage, but the people of Palmyra, similar to half the Syrian population (more than 10 million individuals), lost their homes, members of their family and friends.

Beit Al-Tadmor was launched during the League of Human Rights conference in Paris in December 2016. The objectives are to regroup the surviving people of Palmyra in order to reconstruct a future on a material and immaterial level. Beit al-Tadmor is a ‘maison citoyenne’, a ‘beacon of hope’, which inspires the people of Palmyra, wherever they may be, to return and rebuild their ancestral home.

The objectives of the reconstruction are not only material but also vital aspects of the Palmyran civilisation. This immateriality cannot be reconstituted in 3D like the archaeological heritage; richer and more profound, Beit Al-Tadmor has a special soul, a fourth dimension, the identity of the people, the immemorial culture of Palmyra. The citizens of Palmyra in their genetic structure, DNA, have roots in this great civilisation.

Current Situation

The population of Palmyra is roughly 75,000 with 15,000 participating in Beit Al-Tadmor. The original population of Palmyra endured a humanitarian crisis with numerous fatalities and transfers of population. After having experienced the indescribable treatment of various belligerents, they were displaced to different parts of Syria, Northern Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Germany and France. Beit Al-Tadmor is an incentive for the indigenous people of Palmyra to return and reconstruct their ancestral city.

Objectives of the Beit Al-Tadmor Project

1. Reconstruction – to provide an environment for displaced citizens to
re-establish their community through development of centres and training programmes specifically on a social and economic level. Education for infants and early childhood are priorities which recognise the impact of violence/conflict on the social development, health and psychological well-being of the infant from the pre-natal stage through childhood. The principles of early childhood development are guidelines which influence the future peaceful or violent behaviour of children. As cited by Rima Salah, in her statement at the International Symposium of Early Childhood and Education in Paris “Genes provide the blueprint for brain development but the environment shapes.”, J F Leckman, 2014.

In addition to focusing on children, education and special training are provided for the entire population on different levels, ie health centres, programmes to aid women and children, youth programmes and guidance, environment and agricultural development, training for income generation, civic education. Social cohesion, civic education, conflict prevention/resolution and local mediation skills especially for youth, are integrated into all levels of education and training.

Cultural Heritage – to preserve the traditional heritage through programmes related to culture, music, language, flora and fauna, the surrounding environment, archaeology, customs, traditions, etc. Programmes to encourage citizens to promote this cultural heritage must be provided. All the early childhood educational programmes include appropriate ‘hands on cultural activities’.

As cited in the recent Panel Discussion of the UN Human Rights Council on the human rights of Syrian children (A/HRC/38/29), the conflict has not only denied millions of children their fundamental rights, but has robbed them of their childhood. Nearly two thirds of the 8.35 million children require humanitarian assistance, with more than 660,000 under five years and many in hard to reach areas. The prolonged conflict in 2017 also resulted in grave violations against children. 1.5 million children are deprived of education due to destruction of schools, lack of materials and absence of teachers. Estimated child fatalities are 27,000 since 2011. While concentrating on early childhood education, the additional development programmes for family members provide skills for income generation and community involvement and thus help the community to be economically self-sufficient.

Early Years will continue to support Beit Al-Tadmor in reaching their goals to ensure a brighter, sustainability future for the children of Palmyra.
There is an old saying that charity begins at home. It is equally true that charity management also begins at home or, to put it another way, it is your setting’s responsibility to ensure that, if it is a charity, you comply with Charity Law. One of the key responsibilities on charities is that they send in their AMR (Annual Monitoring Return) accompanied by their accounts and other documents. A recent scan of the Charity Register highlighted over 400 charities which have failed to comply. This includes a number of early years settings.

This is very graphically illustrated in publicly available information. If your setting is a charity and it has not sent its return in within 10 months of the end of the financial year, in large red letters it will say IN DEFAULT against your setting’s name. This information is there for anyone to see on the Charity Commission’s website. It is possible that funders, Health and Social Care Trusts, parents or members of the public might see this information and that may affect the reputation of your setting.

In the case of funders, for example, this could lead to the withholding or cancellation of a grant. Although it may take some time, the Charity Commission will eventually step in to take action against a charity in default. Even if you send in your documents after you are in default, the entry against your name will read, again in red letters, Due Documents Received Late. This will remain on the site until the process starts again the following year.

So how do settings ensure that this does not happen? Simply make sure that you follow the process as laid out by the Charity Commission. You must submit your AMR within 10 months of the end of your financial year so, for example, if your financial year ends on 31 March, your AMR must be sent in by 31 January the following year. The Charity Commission will send three reminders (make sure you have the correct email address on their site so you see these reminders) but they are very clear that these are a courtesy. It is your responsibility to make sure the AMR is completed and submitted. The AMR must be accompanied by three documents, ie a copy of your accounts, a statement on your accounts by an auditor or independent examiner and a Trustee’s Report (Annual Report).

Early Years – the organisation for young children is a designated helper organisation for the Charity Commission so if you need support with any of the above, help is at hand. You can contact Diarmuid Moore at diarmuidm@early-years.org, on tel: (028) 9066 2825. Diarmuid will be glad to give advice and support.
Free Governance and Leadership Training

The Community Development Service within Early Years – the organisation for young children is here to support governance and leadership within early years settings. We are in the middle of our autumn programme of training, but below you will find details of the training to take place in the New Year. All settings are welcome to attend this training. If you wish to register your interest, please contact Diarmuid Moore on 028 9066 2825, or at diarmuidm@early-years.org.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Managing Your Charity</th>
<th>31/01/2019</th>
<th>6.30pm-9.00pm</th>
<th>Rainbow Sure Start Newtownstewart</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding and Fundraising</td>
<td>05/02/2019</td>
<td>2.00pm-4.30pm</td>
<td>Belfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding and Fundraising</td>
<td>12/02/2019</td>
<td>2.00pm-4.30pm</td>
<td>Rainbow Sure Start Newtownstewart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Sustainable Committees</td>
<td>26/02/2019</td>
<td>6.30pm-9.00pm</td>
<td>Rainbow Sure Start Newtownstewart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Sustainable Committees</td>
<td>12/03/2019</td>
<td>6.30pm-9.00pm</td>
<td>Newry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the training, we will be holding one to one clinics. These are short one to one meetings where you can talk in detail about governance, funding and financial sustainability for your setting. You can book a slot for an hour during the times and in the locations given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainability Clinics</th>
<th>07/02/2019</th>
<th>2.00pm-8.00pm</th>
<th>Belfast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability Clinics</td>
<td>14/02/2019</td>
<td>2.00pm-8.00pm</td>
<td>Derry/Londonderry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability Clinics</td>
<td>21/02/2019</td>
<td>2.00pm-8.00pm</td>
<td>Dungannon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability Clinics</td>
<td>28/02/2019</td>
<td>2.00pm-8.00pm</td>
<td>Newry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We have an ongoing advice and information service where members of Early Years and Pathway groups can ring or email to access advice on any Governance or Leadership issue. Contact Diarmuid Moore on 028 9066 2825, or at diarmuidm@early-years.org.
By Siobhan Wallace, Project Co-ordinator at Dungannon and Coalisland Sure Start

Ever since the first visit to Reggio Emilia, light, reflection and shadow have been used extensively as a ‘language’ to help provoke curiosity, investigation and discovery. Staff have witnessed first-hand the fascination and intrigue which light and shadow can provide for children in a wide variety of groups. So, when it came to planning our summer programmes, it seemed natural to explore this area even further.

Our staff decided to create a light and shadow puppet performance, alongside a workshop for both children and parents, which would help them understand how the performance was created and provide a magical environment where children could develop their natural curiosity.

For the performance, we decided to bring to life the Oliver Jeffers classic ‘How to Catch a Star’. Staff involved in the production, under the guidance of our Artist-in-Residence, Nina Chapman, rehearsed sound effects and perfected and animated the storyline. Every aspect of the book was crafted by Nina and the staff team to the highest standard.

On the night of the performance there was a full house with over 30 parents and their children in attendance. As the performance started, there was a collective gasp of wonder from the children. Despite the many screens which children are exposed to today, the home-made screen in our makeshift puppet theatre and the simplicity of the story captivated the entire audience.
In the workshop which followed, children and adults made up their own stories with low cost/no cost everyday materials including cardboard boxes, lamps, tracing paper and a variety of materials with which to make their own puppets.

Parents told us how ‘magical’, ‘age appropriate’ and ‘memorable’ the evening was. It demonstrated to us once again how important it is to provide opportunities which provoke awe and wonder for both children and adults.

Light, shadow and reflections will continue to be a fundamental part of our work here in Dungannon and Coalisland Sure Start, stimulating and provoking our children’s natural curiosity.

We are already looking forward to our next performance and workshop.
The Toybox project launches the second book in the Toybox book series ‘All About Me - Four Months to One Year’ on Human Rights Day in Dungannon Sure Start. Working in partnership with parents from the Traveller community and families from other communities, Toybox produced the second book on children’s development which incorporates visual aids to encourage communication with parents and children, and inform parents of children’s development milestones.

Nan McDonagh, a parent and service member of the Toybox project said: “It is a wonderful book to read, especially for first time parents. I would absolutely recommend it to all parents, it is very educational.”

Shirley Gillespie, Toybox Team Leader, said: “We involved a number of parents and children who use Toybox in the creation of Book One and Book Two, and had the opportunity to consult parents on what worked well in Book One and what we could change. What came across was the benefit to parents and carers of the illustrations of development stages provided and the guide to how we as parents can help our children grow. Parents also appreciated that the resources used for children in the book are ‘low cost, no cost’, which helps give families low cost ideas for really good play.”

The Toybox project is a rights-based outreach service for Traveller children aged 0-4 aimed at tackling inequalities in Traveller education, working in partnership with children and parents. The project is managed by Early Years – the organisation for young children and funded by the Department of Education.

To purchase a copy of ‘All About Me - Four Months to One Year’, please contact our bookstore at info@early-years.org or telephone 028 9066 2825.

Event photos are available on the Early Years Facebook page www.facebook.com/earlyyearsorg

Panel session video available on the Early Years YouTube channel www.youtube.com/earlyyearsorg
The NI Executive is responsible for Safeguarding and Child Protection in Northern Ireland. The Safeguarding Board NI co-ordinates actions to promote and protect children. As care providers, we must ensure we are aware of and understand the safeguarding legislation.

**The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007**
This Order makes provision for checking the suitability of persons seeking to work with children or vulnerable adults and for barring those considered to be unsuitable for posts either paid or voluntary.

**The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 (the Children Order)**
This Order sets out parental responsibilities, rights and duties. It also details the powers public authorities have to support children.

**The Children’s Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015**
This Act supports co-operation by children’s services to provide most efficient help.

**The Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008**
This Order brought together the laws in Northern Ireland regarding sexual offences in line with those in England and Wales, with sections specific to sexual grooming, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

**The Human Rights Act 1998**
This Act sets out the fundamental rights to which everyone in the United Kingdom is entitled. It incorporates the rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights.

**Safeguarding Board NI Act 2011**
Sets out the regulations for the new regional Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland and the establishment of the panels to support the SBNI’s work at a Health and Social Care Trust level.

**Section 75 of the NI Act 1998**
This section of the Act ensures that local and public authorities promote equality for all in their policy and decision-making procedures.

**The UN Convention for the Rights of the Child**
The UNCRC is an international human rights treaty with 41 articles explaining the rights which every child and young person is entitled to, to have a safe and healthy life.
Rainbow Community Childcare was established in 2011 and is situated in the rural village of Eglish, five miles from the nearest town, Dungannon.

Rainbow Community Childcare evolved from Rainbow Playgroup which was founded in 1981 by a group of local mothers. The playgroup originally used a small room in the local parish hall. In 1997 with Peace I Capital Funding, we were able to purchase a mobile building and for the first time we were delighted to offer our services in a neutral venue at local level for all of the community. This had a huge impact in the area, bringing both communities together.

More recently, having been able to purchase a vacant primary school, we were able to extend our services to a full day care. We currently cater for 60 children aged between 0 and three years, 44 pre-school funded places and over 50 after-school/out of school children. This means that we have over 110 families involved in our setting. We now offer a complete wraparound service to accommodate working parents and any families which wish to use the centre.

Health and Educational professionals visit our setting to train and advise our staff and offer advice and support to children and families with additional needs. We feel that the care and education of children cannot be separated and we value any additional input from professionals.

Almost 20 years ago, we introduced the HighScope approach to learning in our playgroup with funding from Peace I. The HighScope approach was delivered by NIPPA which became Early Years – the organisation for young children.

Through the HighScope programme, the children learn about respect for each other, their environment and building trusting relationships. The daily routine enables children to become much more confident, competent and independent, and equips them to cope with whatever challenges life presents.
One of the richest components of the HighScope programme is conflict resolution. From an early age the children are problem solving, skills which can be transferred to any situation.

The benefits and the learning outcomes for children using the HighScope approach to learning were commented on very favourably during our recent ETI (Education and Training Inspectorate) inspection, when they observed the children making plans, considering the resources they needed and carrying out their thoughts and ideas in a sharing and respectful manner. ETI awarded the playgroup outstanding in all three areas.

Some staff have already had training in the Media Initiative Respecting Difference Programme and delivered the programme in the setting. They are now looking forward to updating and developing their thinking with this exciting programme which is being launched today. It’s especially exciting since they now have the opportunity to share it with the older age group in the after school and in involving their parents through the workshops. Staff are eagerly awaiting the children’s thoughts and ideas which will benefit and inform the delivery of the Programme. Staff members are sure that they will have hundreds more ideas than us.

We, the parents, staff and management of Rainbow Community Childcare are looking forward to coming together with another setting and of sharing ideas and working in partnership in the future.

Without the platform of the Rainbow Community Childcare facility, local people would not have had the opportunity to come together, to share and respect our different cultures, traditions and diversity.

We welcome through the Media Initiative Respecting Difference Programme the opportunity to come together and explore our differences and so increase our awareness of diversity and differences. It is our hope to help young children understand exclusion and to promote inclusion with those who are different. We plan to take forward new ideas which will enable our families to live together in peace and harmony, being respectful of each other.

Early Years would like to thank Rainbow Community Childcare for sharing their HighScope journey with us. We wish them the very best in their next opportunity with the Media Initiative Respecting Difference Programme.

Good luck!
The Chief Inspector’s Report 2016-2018 was formally launched on Wednesday 28 November 2018 at Riddel Hall, Queen’s University Belfast.

The biennial report encompasses the findings from inspections, a range of surveys and district work across a range of sectors during the period 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2018.

The report identified that 69% of early years inspections during this period were conducted within the pre-school sector.

The findings from this inspection period identify positive aspects of pre-school education. There is a specific acknowledgement of pre-schools in the voluntary and private sectors relating to “steady improvement” for outcomes for learners and the overall capacity of settings to bring about improvement.

The report identifies both specific commendations along with development points for the pre-school sector. Themes arising from the report, both at a specific sector level and at a broader level, include:

- Child-centredness of the curriculum and curriculum approaches.
- A focus on child achievement and progress.
- The development of life skills.
- Safety and equality.

Regarding the pre-school sector specifically, it is of note to consider the judgements made around the areas for action relating to:

- Self-evaluation and action planning.
- The increase within the statutory pre-school sector of adult-directed activities.
- The consistency of quality relating to the role of the Early Years Specialist.

Other key areas for relevant providers and other stakeholders to consider going forward, as identified in the report, include:

- Transition arrangements into and from settings.
- Children’s progress – how it is evidenced, the quality of it and how it is used to inform planning.
- Under age children receiving formal learning too soon.
- The quality and frequency of physical play to support physical development and child fitness and health.
- The impact that incorporating under age children in pre-school settings is having on quality.

The theme of the quality of leadership and management in the voluntary and private sectors relating to 25% of settings is stated along with acknowledging the fact that there is a high level of change with management committees and Early Years Specialists within this particular sector.

There is a wealth of information to digest within the report, which both acknowledges the success of the voluntary and private sectors, as well as identifying the areas for improvement.

The ‘Chief Inspector’s Report 2016-2018’, can be accessed on the ETI (Education and Training Inspectorate) website as outlined below. The specific pre-school education related section commences on page 51 of the report, but there are a number of references to pre-school, Sure Start and other wider issues, such as childhood obesity, within the commentary and other sections of the report.

PlayBoard NI’s Play Awareness sessions for Parents are designed specifically for parents and carers. This half-day Play Awareness session will strengthen parents understanding of play and its importance to the growth and development of their children. They will also gain practical ideas which they can incorporate into their homes or local community to enhance opportunities for play.

The session aims to help parents:

✓ Better understand the importance of play for children and young people’s holistic health and wellbeing.

✓ Explore how play facilitates attachment and builds relationships between children and parents.

✓ Have a greater understanding of the range of play types, their importance in terms of supporting growth and development; and how children and a variety of play types can be supported within home/community settings.

✓ Explore the role of the adult parent/carer in the play process and how parents can best facilitate play in a way that meets their child’s needs.

✓ Understand the importance of risk and challenge for the development of resilience, independence and life skills.

✓ Gain practical play ideas that can be applied within the home and/or local community to enhance opportunities for play.

In addition to the areas identified above, sessions can explore a range of issues pertinent to the specific needs of each group i.e. inclusive play etc.

What are the benefits of the session?

The session covers a wide variety of topics and participants will gain practical tips and ideas for play opportunities for their children.

The Play Training sessions are delivered by a group of occupationally competent Playwork Tutors from Belfast Met and People 1st.

Play For Parents Programme

The Play for Parents programme is part of the overall ‘Play Matters’ initiative which is being facilitated by PlayBoard NI in collaboration with the Department of Education.

The programme is funded by the Early Intervention Transformation Programme (EITP).

The aim of the programme is to provide parents and the professionals who work with them, the knowledge and understanding of the many benefits of play in relation to children’s growth and development through play.

To find out more information please visit:

www.playboard.co.uk.

Should you have any queries or wish to discuss the Play for Parents programme further, please don’t hesitate to contact Karen Witherspoon at:

karen.witherspoon@playboard.co.uk.
Northern Ireland’s Messiest Monster is Back!

Meet Rufus, the handwashing hero

Northern Ireland’s messiest monster, Rufus, is back. safefood has teamed up with Early Years – the organisation for young children, to help teach children aged five and under the five steps to clean hands and show them and their parents how handwashing can be fun.

Every member of Early Years will receive their Rufus pack in January, which includes an information leaflet, a staff poster, handwashing posters for your sink and posters for parents to take home.

And why is Rufus back?

Well, he’s here to help you protect your little ones from a bug called E. coli. This bug can make children very sick. Infections can happen when children don’t wash their hands properly, especially after using the toilet.

Children aged under five are one of the groups most at risk from food poisoning bugs like E. coli because of their age and developing immune system.

Rufus can help you to teach them good handwashing habits with his five steps.

A quick ‘splash and dash’ won’t cut it

As all parents and carers know, young children will usually come up with any excuse to avoid washing their hands. A quick rinse under a tap won’t work advises safefood. And if children don’t dry their hands either, germs will breed in the moisture and spread easily onto whatever they touch next.

“Wipes and hand sanitisers are handy,” says safefood “but they don’t work the same way as soap and water.”

So in a nutshell, when it comes to hand hygiene, only soap and water will do. Check out Rufus in action by visiting www.safefood.eu/handwashing

Five Steps for Clean Hands

1. Wet their hands with water. It doesn’t have to be hot.
2. Add soap and show them how to rub their hands until a lather forms all over.
3. Rub their palms, back of hands, wrists, fingers, nails and between their fingers to help remove dirt and germs.
4. Rinse the soap off their hands completely with running water.
5. Dry – show them how to dry their hands thoroughly using a clean hand towel or hand dryer (not a tea towel or their clothes).

Take the opportunity to develop language and literacy skills by singing:

(To the tune of “Row, row, row your boat ...”)

“Wash, wash, wash your hands.
Thumbs and fingers too.
Rinse and then make sure they’re dry,
That’s the thing to do!”

Keep your little ones healthy – make teaching the five steps fun with Rufus the Messy Monster. For more information and downloads for your group, visit www.safefood.eu/handwashing

Remember good handwashing is the best way to keep E.coli at bay.

Look out for Rufus this month, he’s everywhere. Follow him on twitter #handwashing

If you would like to order more Rufus handwashing packs, please contact Lillian Murphy at info@safefood.eu
Get a clean start to the new year with Rufus

Watch out for your childcare pack in January.

safefood.eu/handwashing
Family Focus Project Supports Family Resilience
Project Interim Report

Family Focus is a five year project which is led by Guide Dogs Northern Ireland in partnership with Angel Eyes NI and Sense Northern Ireland and funded by the Big Lottery Fund. It offers support and activities to improve children’s development, strengthen family resilience, reduce isolation and help children with a visual impairment reach their full potential.

“Research found that the ages of 0-4 were the most stressful and challenging time for parents of children with impaired vision. This research identified a huge unmet need and led to the Family Focus project,” Fiona Brown, Head of Mobility Services, Guide Dogs Northern Ireland.

The project provides specialist mobility and independence support, parent to parent and complex needs support, and events such as Time to Play groups and family fun days to support child and family outcomes. The project’s Interim Report has been published and the results show that families are significantly benefiting from the service.

As a result of the Family Focus project, 94% of parents agree or strongly agree that they are more confident in supporting their child to develop and achieve, including using tools such as toys and sensory play, at home with other children. Including siblings in Time to Play groups was a key feature of the project’s identified success.

“Victoria’s sister was able to join in with the sensory play and engage with her sister through play,” parent and participant in Family Focus.

At venues in Belfast, Banbridge, Ballynahinch, Jordanstown, Broughshane and Derry/Londonderry, services have been delivered to 29 children and families accessed through 114 interventions. This has been in partnership with specialist providers including Mini Explorers, Shine Baby Yoga, Sensory Kids and Music Therapy.

“Just to see those kids, individually, at their own pace, achieving those developmental goals is a sheer delight,” Joyce Rainey, Developing MSI Consultant, Sense Northern Ireland.

Over the next three years, the project aims to build on the tools and confidence of the partnership to deliver a sound early years programme of structured play events. The outcome will be to establish evidence of impact and outcome to develop and support the needs in early years of blind and partially sighted children and their families.

The full findings can be read in the Interim Report published here:
http://www.cypsp.org/family-focus-interim-evaluation-2018/
Woodland Adventure Playgroup (Augher), Clogher Valley Playgroup (Clogher) and Tru Beginnings Community Playgroup (Emyvale, Co Monaghan) are working together on their second year of the €4.2 million ‘Sharing from the Start’ project.

The Sharing from the Start project, which involves over 2,400 children and 82 settings, is supported by the European Union’s Peace IV Programme, managed by the SEUPB (Special EU Programmes Body). It involves early years settings throughout Northern Ireland and the border counties in the Republic of Ireland forming cross-community partnerships. The children take part in joint curricular classes, improving educational outcomes and promoting good relations.

During a recent presentation to a meeting of the SEUPB project management committee, one cross border partnership had the chance to showcase its work. Sinead Donaghey, leader at Clogher Valley Playgroup, said “Our key educational focus last year was physical development including gymnastics which was led by a parent volunteer. Our focus this term is music and drama and we plan to extend the children’s experiences within the arts whilst encouraging local individuals with different musical talents to become involved within sessions. Another positive and unexpected outcome is that it has helped children in their progression to primary school.”

Dympna McKenna, leader at Tru Beginnings Playgroup said “Through this project, we are really encouraged by the support of our parents. It has also strengthened our professional practice. We have learnt a lot from each other and have developed our skills and knowledge, values and attitudes. Participating in this project has supported us to connect and integrate with the local community more. We are actively supporting children’s citizenship and we will continue to grow and build on this going forward.”

Roisin McGovern, leader of Woodland Adventure Playgroup, added “Having three different settings, which follow a variety of different guidelines, gives us all the opportunity to learn from each other. This is something that we have never been gifted to do until now. I feel this is a brilliant programme as it gives all children the opportunity to engage with each other and this helps to promote their confidence, communication and social skills. I would like to hope that this will be continuing for many years to come and that we can continue to work together through Shared Education for a more peaceful community.”

Sharing from the Start is administered by Early Years – the organisation for young children working in collaboration with the National Childhood Network and the Fermanagh Trust. Together these three organisations have a track record of working for the benefit of children and good relations development. Siobhán Fitzpatrick, CEO of Early Years, said “It was terrific that these local playgroups had the opportunity to present to representatives from the European Commission and officials from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to share their valuable work and the benefits the project is making within their communities.” Match-funding for Sharing from the Start has been provided by the Department of Education in Northern Ireland and the Department of Education and Skills in the Republic of Ireland. For more information visit www.sharingfromthestart.org
Wishing Well Family Centre has recently secured funding from the Social Investment Fund which has permitted a new extension to develop high quality facilities which are neutral and accessible to all communities.

Wishing Well Family Centre was founded in the Alliance Crescent area of North Belfast in 1989 by a local resident, Linda Mooney, during the period of the Troubles and amidst one of the most fractious interfaces across not only Belfast but Northern Ireland. Over the past 29 years the organisation has gone from strength to strength, becoming a thriving social enterprise, which offers genuine opportunities for cross community interaction and development through the provision of high quality
services for children, young people, families, senior citizens and the wider community within Upper Ardoyne/Ardoyne and North Belfast.

With the successful funding, the centre has grown to include 24 pre-school places, 24 out of school places, a sensory room with a baby drop in and midwifery services, office space and a kitchen which meets demand for community space in the area as well as contributing to the physical and economic regeneration of North Belfast.

Local and accessible services

The catchment area of the facilities and services provided at Wishing Well Family Centre includes some of the most disadvantaged communities in Belfast, with the area blighted by high levels of unemployment, low levels of educational attainment, high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour, inter community issues and areas of dereliction particularly directly on the interface between Ardoyne and Upper Ardoyne. The centre is accessible to all communities in the area, offering a range of pre-school, childcare and out of school services for children and their families, family support, facilitating community activity and meetings and also delivering an environmental project on a daily basis for members of the wider community.

The core focus of the organisation is the provision of services to local children and their families, giving much needed support to parents and promoting the physical, mental and educational development of local children aged 0 to 12 years. From an original staff quota of two, Wishing Well Family Centre now employs 35 full and part time members of staff and has become one of the largest employers in the area.

Current services include a Day Nursery (70 places), which incorporates a baby and toddler unit (six weeks to two years), a junior playgroup (two to three years) and a senior playgroup (three plus). Wishing Well Family Centre operates a pre-school group (24 places), funded by the Education Authority and an out of schools group (24 places). Other activities include a volunteer environmental project, advice surgeries on a drop in basis, Sure Start services and courses, seasonal holiday schemes, a local bus service, volunteering and training opportunities and educational support to students and trainees.

In Wishing Well Family Centre, it is the members of the staff team who are the greatest influence on the smooth running of the organisation and its ability to fulfil its vision and mission by offering support to families, responding in a caring and open way to social, educational, economic and environmental needs within the community.

Wishing Well Family Centre demonstrates excellence in its personal practice and maintains positive partnerships with statutory agencies, local nurseries, schools and groups as well a host of professionals working with children. Strong links with its community and local neighbourhood partnerships have led to community ownership of the Centre and this has had a very positive impact on the well-being and progress of the children. These relationships have been developed and sustained through good practice, transparency and an ethos which promotes equality, diversity and inclusion for all.

Early Years – the organisation for young children would like to thank Wishing Well Family Centre for sharing its story with us and demonstrating what can be created for children and their communities when funding is successful. We would like to wish them all the best with the provision of their current services and support to the local community in Upper Ardoyne/Ardoyne and North Belfast.
Making Learning Visible – the Incredible Apple Project

Authors: Jill Dillon (Centre Manager, Juniors Day Care, Omagh), Yvonne Tracey (Project Manager, Rainbow Sure Start) and Siobhan Wallace (Project Co-ordinator at Dungannon and Coalisland Sure Start)

Jill Dillon, Centre Manager from Juniors Day Care in Omagh, participated in the third Erasmus +KA1 study tour in April 2017. Having been inspired by the collection of ideas, mini-stories, thoughts and theories in developing project work¹ she observed in Reggio Emilia, she reflected on how she could enhance the rich daily life the children experienced in her setting.

In Reggio Emilia, there is great emphasis on children and adults coming together to design learning contexts in which the tension towards knowledge is ‘switched on’ and encouraged to get moving. Learning contexts grow into journeys of professional development. In exchanges within a team, each person is asked to make clear to others their choices along the learning journey with children. The learning contexts are moulded into projects which maintain the dual value of professional development and innovative learning for children.

Jill describes the inception of her learning journey of introducing project work to staff, children and parents. In their setting, they have creatively referred to this as ‘The Varsity’ (team working collectively to the same aim).

The Incredible Apple Project, which lasted 18 months, kicked off with a common task for most children in the home and day care – preparing a meal.

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¹ Project work, or ‘progettazione’ in Italian, implies a global and flexible approach in which the initial hypotheses are made about classroom work (as well as about staff development and relationships with parents), but are subject to modifications and changes of the direction as the actual work progresses.

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The children and staff began this learning journey by visiting the local supermarket to purchase groceries. The children were curious about apples on this visit, looking at the different varieties, talking about what could be done with them and asking the Shop Assistants about them. So naturally out of this, our first learning topic would unfold; an in depth project to look at the apple.
This focus on the apple took us out into the local community, to local small businesses such as grocery shops, farm shops, allotments, local parks and crop machinery suppliers. Everyone was incredibly accommodating and welcomed us with open arms.
In our exploration of the apple, we covered among other things the stages of growth, varieties of apples, preparation, decomposition and drying out.

Our project has continued to evolve into new exciting opportunities. We have discovered that the time given in each learning opportunity is critical. Patience and focus are required and should be provided at the children’s pace. This project has deepened the children’s curiosity and broadened their knowledge and language skills more effectively by slowing down and allowing the flow to take place.
This project initially proved challenging for ‘The Varsity’, yet Jill worked with the team to keep formats simple. She allowed the process to unfold naturally. However this proved a scary notion as it was difficult for some of the team to ‘go with the flow’. This project evolved over an eighteen month period and brought to the surface learning which sometimes escapes planners and more scheduled sessions. Children could take the lead and thankfully staff soon began to see the benefit of this not only for the children but for themselves too.

The benefits of the approach adopted for the team, parents and children are evident from the recent visit of the Reggio Learning Community (hosted by Juniors Day Care). Members of the team were motivated in discussing their Incredible Apple Project. It was evident how engaged the children were in the project from a variety of work and documentation now displayed throughout the setting.

‘Making Learning Visible’ highlights the strong Reggio interest in the world of vision – what one can see, what one can understand and what one can convey in lifelike form. It reflects the investment in documentation as a powerful means of communicating to children, parents and staff what has been learned in a significant experience.

“Everything is possible, you just have to train your eyes,” Loris Malagussi.

Follow our Reggio inspired practice throughout Northern Ireland by speaking to your Early Years Specialist or contact the Training Department at training@early-years.org
**Playful Museums Festival Events – February 2019**

**Venue: Carrickfergus Museum**

**Event:** Build Medieval Carrickfergus (age 1-5 years)
**Date:** 23rd February 2019 from 2.00pm – 4.00pm
**Cost:** Free
**Booking:** Drop in workshop
**Child Development:** Creativity, Physical development, Fine motor skills

**Venue: HMS Caroline**

**Event:** HMS Caroline: Maritime Babies (suitable for 4 months to pre walking)
**Date:** 14th February 2019 from 10.30am – 11.30am
**Cost:** Free
**Booking:** Required email learning.caroline@nmm.org.uk or 028 9045 4484
**Child Development:** Communications Skill, Fine motor skills, Early maths, Social development

**Event:** Lego Trail (Age 3 years and up)
**Date:** 18th and 19th February 2019 from 11.00am – 4.00pm
**Cost:** Normal entrance fee (20% discount if your tickets online)
**Booking:** No Pay on day or in advance email learning.caroline@nmm.org.uk or 028 9045 4484
**Child Development:** Communications Skill, Fine motor skills, Creativity, Physical movement, Early Maths, Social development

**Event:** Fishy Goings On (suitable for 18 months +)
**Date:** 9th February 2019 from 12.00pm - 2.00pm
**Cost:** Normal entrance fee (20% discount if your tickets online)
**Booking:** No Pay on day or in advance email learning.caroline@nmm.org.uk or 028 9045 4484
**Child Development:** Creativity, Early Maths, Music and Social development

**Venue: Ballymoney Museum**

**Event:** A Mermaid’s Tail – Trail, A sensory storytelling installation (age 3-5 years)
**Date:** 22nd, 23rd and 25th February 2019 from 10.00am - 12.00pm
**Cost:** Free
**Booking:** Pre-booking required only for groups of 8+  cms@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk

**Venue: Mid-Antrim Museum**

**Event:** Play, Make, Dance! (age 3-5 years)
**Date:** 16th February 2019 session 1 at 10.30am, session 2 at 12.00pm
**Cost:** Free
**Booking:** Yes call 028 2563 5029
**Child Development:** Communication skill, Creativity, Physical movement, fine motor skills
Venue: The Barn Museum Craigavon  
**Event:** Weaving workshops (age 2-5 years)  
**Date:** 18th February 2019 from 11.00am-12.30pm  
**Cost:** Free  
**Booking:** Pre-arranged group  
**Child Development:** Communication skills, imagination, creativity and hands on making

Venue: Newry and Mourne Museum  
**Event:** Growing up with stories’ with the Armagh Rhymers (under 5 years)  
**Date:** 28th February 2019 from 10.00am - 12.30pm (4 short sessions)  
**Cost:** Free  
**Booking:** Contact Declan.carroll@nmandd.org or 028 3031 3178  
**Child Development:** Communication, Physical movement, Singing, Music and Social development

Venue: Enniskillen Castle Museum - The Cosy Corner  
**Event:** Music Box (under 5 years)  
**Date:** 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th February 2019 from 10.00am  
**Cost:** Free  
**Booking:** Not required  
**Child Development:** Movement and Co-Ordination for young children

**Event:** Yoga for Babies and Toddlers (under 5 years)  
**Date:** 6th, 13th, 27th February 2019 from 10.00am  
**Cost:** Free  
**Booking:** Not required  
**Child Development:** Better sleeping patterns, settled behaviour, development of brain and nervous system, Movement and Flexibility

Venue: Armagh Robinson Library  
**Event:** Tartaraghan Puppets with a bespoke puppet show (under 5 years - with parents)  
**Date:** 19th February 2019 from 6.00pm – 7.00pm  
**Cost:** Free  
**Booking:** Yes call 028 3752 3142  
**Child Development:** Participation, Music, Social development

Venue: No 5 Vicar’s Hill  
**Event:** Tartaraghan Puppets with a bespoke puppet show (under 5 years - with their Dads)  
**Date:** 16th February 2019 from 10.30 - 11.30am  
**Cost:** Free  
**Booking:** Yes call 028 3752 3142  
**Child Development:** Participation, Music, Social development
Venue: Tower Museum
**Event:** Stem (age 3-5 years)
**Date:** 2nd February 2019 from 12.00pm – 1.00pm
**Cost:** £3.00
**Booking:** Yes tower@derrystrabane.com
**Child Development:** Thought process, Problem solving

**Event:** Baby Yoga (age 0-2 years)
**Date:** 9th February 2019 from 12.00pm – 1.00pm
**Cost:** £3.00
**Booking:** Yes tower@derrystrabane.com
**Child Development:** Flexibility and Movement

**Event:** Stem (age 3-5 years)
**Date:** 16th February 2019 from 12.00pm – 1.00pm
**Cost:** £3.00
**Booking:** Yes tower@derrystrabane.com
**Child Development:** Thought process, Problem solving

**Event:** Jo Jingles (age 0-2 years)
**Date:** 23rd February 2019 from 12.00pm – 1.00pm
**Cost:** £3.00
**Booking:** Yes tower@derrystrabane.com
**Child Development:** Flexibility, Movement, Creativity

Venue: Irish Linen Centre and Lisburn Museum
**Event:** Flaxie Buds Bonanza Day! (under 5 years – with parents)
**Date:** 24th February 2019 from 10.00am - 4.30pm
**Cost:** Free
**Booking:** Not required
**Child Development:** Social and Emotional Development, Cognitive development, Self-expression, Fine motor skills, inventiveness

Venue: Strule Arts Centre, Omagh
**Event:** Early Years Music and Movement (under 5 years)
**Date:** 9th February 2019 from 10.30 - 11.30am
**Cost:** Free
**Booking:** Required Strule Arts centre by website or Tel
**Child Development:** Communication Skills, Physical movement, Music, Social development

Venue: North Down Museum
**Event:** ‘Toddlers Take Over the Museum’ (age 3-5 years)
**Date:** 15th February 2019 from 10.00am - 12.00pm
**Cost:** Free
**Booking:** Not required www.northdownmuseum.com or 028 9127 1200
**Child Development:** Creativity, Communication skills, Social development
The two year Erasmus+ KA2 MEET (Metacognitive Educational Training) Project with Early Years – the organisation for young children and their three international partners from Italy, Spain and Cyprus, culminated in a multiplier event at the Erickson Innovation Conference in Italy in October 2018. Erickson is the leader in Italy in publishing, software creation, training and research in the fields of teaching, education, learning disabilities, special needs, full inclusion, applied and clinical psychology, social work and welfare.

The MEET project aims to empower children’s learning development and to provide an innovative approach to learning. The project aims to support teachers and
families to enable young children from three to five years to consolidate their understanding of early mathematical concepts. Within the framework of Early Childhood Education and Care, the MEET project’s most important output is an Online Tool using a metacognitive approach towards enhancing logical and mathematical skills through playing. Erickson has taken an interest in promoting and developing this tool which is a great accolade for the MEET project.

Following the MEET project meeting hosted by Early Years in the Newry Early Years Children and Family Centre in March 2018, Specchio Magico – Co-operative Sociale onlus, the lead partner in the MEET Project – organised an event with nine municipalities in the Lombardy Region of Italy to examine the process of home visiting with a view to introducing this in their region.

The delegates had received detailed presentations on the services offered by the Newry Early Years Centre, and Sure Start, and were very impressed with the benefits of home visiting as a tool to improve outcomes for young children and their families. Anne Rice, Senior Project Manager, was invited to talk to early years teachers, social workers, psychologists and members of the local political parties and councils about the benefits of home visiting and how to overcome the barriers within the Italian context.

Mary O’Reilly, International Professional Team Lead, shared information about the Early Years services in Northern Ireland which use home visiting as a component of overall delivery – the Toybox project, Eager and Able to Learn Programme, Media Initiative Respecting Difference Programme and the HighScope Programme.

Early Years is hopeful for future collaborations with Specchio Magico and the Municipalities of Lecco in Lombardy.
Families who took part in the filming by the BBC Donna Traynor and her filming crew recently visited St Francis of Assisi Primary School in Keady to film the Family Health Initiative for a segment on BBC Newsline about getting healthier. The Family Health Initiative is a healthy lifestyle programme delivered by Early Years- the organisation for young children, and is funded by the Public Health Agency in the SHSCT and is supported by Everybody Active 20:20 Coaches funded by Sport Northern Ireland.

During the filming, the families took part in a discussion around fruit and vegetables, played badminton together and made a healthy smoothie, while Donna and her team asked some questions.

The Family Health Initiative is a fantastic, free, family focused healthy lifestyle programme for all families in the SHSCT area with children aged 8-11. This eleven week programme encourages families to get healthier and try new sports and activities including dance, badminton, smoothie making, cookery and much more. There is no better way to spend time together as a family than having fun, trying new foods and activities.

All the families were excited to see themselves on BBC Newsline a few weeks later when the segment went live. The need for obesity prevention initiatives was further supported by the ETI Chief Inspectors Report 2016-18 where one-fifth of children entering primary school were overweight or obese. Levels rose to one in four pupils entering post-primary schools. Ms Buick called for a long-term and strategic commitment from Stormont departments to tackle childhood obesity.

The BBC filming is available to watch on the Early Years Facebook page www.facebook.com/earlyyearsorg

Any groups interested in the Family Health Initiative please contact Diane on 07791334012
Autism Spectrum Disorder Training Available from Early Years – the organisation for young children

Early Years delivers a wide range of training programmes which help continue our drive to improve practice. All our training programmes help develop the confidence and competence of participants in the understanding of play and the needs of young children across the statutory, voluntary and independent sectors.

Training programmes and materials are reviewed annually and are based on evidence from research and best practice to deliver outcomes for young children.

This unique four and a half hour training course is designed to support staff working in early years settings, and aims to enhance the participant’s knowledge of Autism and the intervention strategies which are effective in assisting young children with the disorder achieve their full potential.

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability which affects how children perceive the world and interact with others. Children on the Autistic Spectrum often see, hear and feel the world differently to other people. With the right support and intervention, children with Autism can achieve their full potential.

This four and a half hour training course sets out to inform staff working in early years settings about:

- The development of appropriate strategies including revision of the physical environment, visual schedules and timetables to support children with Autism and to ensure successful integration within an early years setting.
- An increased awareness of working with parents, carers and other professionals.

This course is suitable for anyone working with young children in an early years setting.

You do not need knowledge of Autism Spectrum Disorder but some experience of working with children with Autism in an early years setting is desirable.

This training has received positive evaluations from participants:

“*The facilitator’s skills were exceptional, with sound knowledge of the Spectrum.*”

“Very informative training, excellent group discussion.”

“Hearing positive stories of children with ASD.”

“I am now more aware of the autistic spectrum traits and characteristics.”

“Awareness of where parents may be coming from regarding the early identification process.”

For more information regarding this training, please contact the training department on 028 9066 2825 or emailing training@early-years.org
Teach your children well: the science of lasting peace
Author: Nick Garbutt - this article first appeared in ScopeNI

Experts from Northern Ireland have helped write a landmark paper which could help to build a more peaceful world.

Contributions of Early Childhood Development Programming to Sustainable Peace and Development, published by the Early Childhood Peace Consortium concludes: “We have the science, the knowledge, the technology and the experience to build a world of peace.”

This bold claim is backed by a wealth of scientific evidence and case studies of successful interventions. It concludes with a section which makes a series of recommendations of what governments can and should do right now to help build a more peaceful future. Some of these are based on pioneering work carried out in Northern Ireland.

What is important about the report is that it merges insights from two different perspectives on peace and development. Traditionally peacebuilding experts focus on high level strategies like government reform and economic development. On the other hand ECD practitioners are concerned with interventions with individual children and their families.

The report brings evidence from both. And it warns that “without an integrated approach centring around children, evidence suggests that cycles of poverty and adversity may continue for generations”.

Since 2001 90% of conflicts have been in countries that have already experienced civil war within the past 30 years. And nearly half of countries relapse into conflict within a decade. It therefore follows that peacebuilding cannot just be about reducing violence. It must also include strategies to address risk factors as well.

The report identifies three risk factors: Structural and Systemic (unemployment, inequality, marginalisation, corruption etc) Cultural (discrimination embedded in educational/religious/cultural practices, biased historical narratives, denial of mother tongue language) and Family (poverty, domestic violence, trauma of care-giver, high stress levels, substance abuse, mental ill health etc)

All of these can lead to violence, from armed conflict through to trouble in the home or at school.

There have been many past instances when well-intentioned efforts to build peace have exacerbated tensions and increased the risk of violence. The report therefore proposes that all government peacebuilding efforts should adopt what it calls the “4Rs”. These are Redistribution (equitable access to services, resources,
employment) Recognition (language, cultural diversity, freedom of worship, civic participation in state-building) Reconciliation (addressing historic and contemporary injustice, public debate about the past, building trust between people and government and different groups) and Representation (extent to which services support fundamental freedoms and the extent to which people participate in the running of public services).

It would be a fascinating exercise to see just how well the Northern Ireland peace process stacks up to this model. Three of the nine co-authors of the paper include Professor Paul Connolly, interim Vice Chancellor at Queens University, and Siobhan Fitzpatrick and Pauline Walmsley from Early Years.

The report gets even more interesting when it focuses on early childhood development. It has long been accepted that investing in ECD is vitally important in any society. It defines this as “nurturing care” which involves health, nutrition, the right caregiving, security, safety and early learning.

The key is that the support does not just help the child, but also parents or other caregivers and also the communities in which they live.

There is a huge body of science to support this. Much of it arises from studies of children who have been exposed to stress. Some of this can be direct, like living through war, some of it is indirect like parents become unemployed or unable to work, perhaps because their group is marginalised in society.

The effects of adversity in early childhood can last a lifetime, or even become intergenerational. For example children who are maltreated are more likely to maltreat their own children, and those who become imbued with prejudice or norms of violence are more likely to continue these beliefs as grown-ups.

Globally 357 million children are living in conflict zones and 50 million have been displaced by conflict. All of them are vulnerable to what scientists call toxic stress. This is where a child is not protected from harm or does not receive adequate care, and as a result experiences prolonged stress. This can happen in early childhood or inside the womb.

The result is that stress hormones are increased and these can alter the neuron structure and functioning of the developing brain. The brain regions affected are those that deal with regulating emotions, rational decision making and self-control.

As the child grows up the result can be increased anxiety, fear, hostility and aggression and decreased levels of social empathy and trust.

Scope has previously examined theories
relating to intergenerational trauma through changes to genes (epigenetic modification). One hypothesis is that prolonged stress can trigger the epigenetic modifications required to increase survival in a harsh environment. If this is correct children of traumatised parents are likely to be hypersensitive to stress because that will better prepare their bodies for violence or flight. This raises an extremely unsettling possibility. Given that there are currently many millions of children exposed to toxic stress we could be in for cycles of violence and adversity for generations.

One finding which is beyond dispute is that children exposed to toxic stress are likely to develop unsettling behaviour. Play habits of children in conflict or post-conflict societies can often involve recreating the violence they see around them. So in South Africa, for example, researchers observed children playing “police raid” games and in Northern Ireland children were seen talking about bombs and discussing which paramilitary groups they would join.

Early childhood development programmes are therefore essential. Studies in the USA, Jamaica and Guatemala have shown that vulnerable children who did not take part in such programmes went on to earn significantly less wages (as much as 46% less) than those who did. This can have impact at a state level, reducing a country’s gross national income. This on top of the massively increased public expenditure trying to correct problems later in life.

Similar studies have shown a link between violent crime and a lack of ECD programmes.

Finally there is confirmation of what many of us intuitively believe: that children born into families who are marginalised, experience inequalities or social exclusion can develop low expectations about the future, low self-worth and even antisocial or self-destructive behaviour.

A study by Professor Connolly found that when toxic stress or neglect is added to the mix this can also lead individuals to feel a heightened need for belonging. When this is combined with a lack of job opportunities later in life it can make them vulnerable to joining violent or criminal groups.

The document contains many case studies from around the world dealing with issues as varied as blood feuds in Albania, kidnapping and forced displacement in Columbia, prejudice and conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland and trauma and fear in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It is a compelling read with a positive message, one which should be adopted by governments, not least our own.
Wyred is about empowering young people, by trusting them and listening to them. What we do is bring them together, they talk to find out what issues matter most. Then they explore the issues more deeply in projects, looking for solutions, and better understanding. Finally they share what they have discovered, with society, with those who make decisions. We guide them, they grow and realise their voice can be heard, and play a more active role in society. And society, and policy, find out what really matters to young people.

Partners

- UNIVERSIDAD DE SALAMANCA (USAL)
- OXFAM ITALIA ONLUS (OXFAM)
- PYE GLOBAL (PYE)
- ASİST ÖĞRETİM KURUMLARI A.Ş. (DOA SCHOOLS)
- EARLY YEARS – THE ORGANISATION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN LBG (EARLY YEARS)
- YOUTH FOR EXCHANGE AND UNDERSTANDING INTERNATIONAL AISBL (YEU)
- MOVES (MOVES)
- THE BOUNDARIES OBSERVATORY C.I.C. (BOUNDARIES)
- TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY (TAU)
The WYRED Objectives

- to provide a framework for research in which children and young people can express and explore their perspectives and interests in relation to digital society
- to provide a platform from which children and young people can communicate their perspectives to other stakeholders effectively through innovative engagement processes
- to engage children and young people in a generative research cycle involving networking, dialogue, participatory research and interpretation
- to generate a diverse range of outputs, critical perspectives and other insights which can inform policy and decision-making in relation to children and young people’s needs in relation to digital society
- to make this process continuous and sustainable

The Story so far – Year 1

- New methodological framework for working with young people:
  - Dialogues develop their voice.
  - Projects develop sense of agency, give depth and ground their views.
  - Process of evaluation/interpretation develops relevance.
  - A platform which functions as a safe space for young people to carry out their explorations and exchanges, which also serves to connect young people from different countries and environments.
- A substantial number of young people, across seven European countries, and a wide range of ages and socio-economic backgrounds, have been engaged in the process.
- A valuable Delphi process as part of a wider process of youth dialogues which has identified a set of concerns which are of particular importance to European young people at present.
- The consortium is supporting a wide range of youth-led exploratory and research projects in which young people are getting the chance to go beyond opinion to a more in-depth understanding of the issues which concern them.
- A wide range of different organisations across Europe have been made aware of the WYRED project and its approach.
WP5 Dialogues
Early Years Northern Ireland

Prioritised Topics
Self-image and self-confidence
Cyber bullying and shaming
Internet safety and privacy

Research topics/activities:
Self Esteem-How does the online world affect this?
Do children really understand when they are bullies online?
Are children aware of keeping safe online?
Why do children tell lies on the internet?

For more information visit www.wyredproject.eu
The Early Years Disclosures Service

Early Years is a registered Umbrella Body with AccessNI and can process AccessNI checks on behalf of our members.

The Early Years Disclosures Service can provide the following services:

- Form processing
- Guidance on the AccessNI process
- Disclosure tracking and progress

For further information please contact:

The Early Years Disclosures Service
Early Years
6c Wildflower Way
Belfast
BT12 6TA
Phone 028 9038 7908
Email disclosures@early-years.org

Early Years Salary Service

Early Years provides a Salary Service to members supporting their organisation’s finances. The service consists of the following elements:

- Maintaining pay and deductions records for your staff.
- Process SSP:SMP/student loans as required.
- Provide monthly payslips for your employees.
- Calculate HMRC liability (P32) and forward payment slip to you each month.
- Process leavers and provide P45.
- Process new employees.
- Process Pension Contributions.
- Provide government departments with statistical and financial information as requested.
- Complete the end of year return to the HMRC and online filing as required.
- Provide year end P60 to all employees.

Further Information
Please contact Colm McCaughley, Finance Officer, at Early Years, 6c Wildflower Way, Belfast, BT12 6TA or email pgwages@early-years.org

**VERITY PENSIONS**

**Time is running out. Time to act**

As an employer you have a legal obligation to provide your staff with a workplace pension, before your staging date.

The Early Years members pension scheme has been successfully launched and adopted by a number of groups.

**Verity Pensions**, the scheme advisers will take you through the following steps:

- Explain your obligations and the costs.
- Formulate a plan to clarify what you have to do and when.
- Provide specific pension advice / information to your staff.
- Set up the employee pensions and provide ongoing support.

For further information call 028 79386624 or email: support@veritypensions.com

IT IS IMPORTANT TO ACT NOW