Our Mission, Vision and Values

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

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

Our Values:
• Childhood – in its own right
• Listening to children – and those who care for them
• A strong voice for children
• Play, fun and creativity
• Parents as first educators
• Participation of children and families
• Community involvement and development
• Partnership
• Inclusion and diversity
• Excellence and evidence-based innovation
• Effective stewardship and governance
• A professional, committed and recognised workforce
• Valuing staff, members and their commitment
On behalf of the Board of Directors and the Senior Management Team of Early Years – the organisation for young children, I am pleased to present the annual report for 2019/2020 which demonstrates continuing achievement for the organisation.

I would like to thank all our Board members for their ongoing encouragement, support and dedication over the last year.

The Board of Directors would like to congratulate our new Chief Executive Officer, Pauline Walmsley, for managing the smooth transition of leadership which enabled the organisation to remain focused and financially stable.

In a year which has seen unprecedented change for the planet, Early Years – the organisation for young children has adapted to new pandemic demands while continuing to support its membership. We have proven to be a strong advocate at government level where we have successfully campaigned with our childcare partners for financial support packages and updates to the Childcare Guidance, all of which has enabled the industry to continue to offer quality childcare in the most difficult of times.

The Board of Directors and Senior Management Team are committed to ensuring the future sustainability of the organisation. We appreciate all the hard work and dedication of our team of professional and dedicated staff, volunteers and members across all regions. We all look forward to another year of successes for the organisation and all our early years settings.

Chairperson’s Foreword

Maria McDonagh

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Pauline Walmsley

I am very proud to write my first Foreword as CEO for the Annual Report of Early Years – the organisation for young children. Looking back over the last year, I am grateful for the support of our Board of Directors, volunteers, members and staff who have worked to make this transition an effective and productive one.

The year marked the final year in the delivery of our 2017 to 2020 Strategic Plan. The organisation continues to deliver a number of key supports to children, parents and communities under Sure Start, the Pathway Fund, Sharing from the Start, the Toybox Project and a bespoke mentoring service for PSEP groups. We continue to deliver Level 5, 3 and 2 qualifications.

Early Years has had an active year in terms of advocacy including substantial input to the Early Childhood Peace Consortium, consultations on Peace Plus and providing leading inputs to key developments within the workforce including the Belfast Childcare Academies, the collaborative development of the new Children’s Care Learning and Development qualifications and the formation and support of the Early Years Care, Education and Play Employers Forum. I am particularly proud that we have played our part in advocating for and influencing the implementation of significant support packages for services during the COVID-19 pandemic and of the actions taken by the sector to provide safe, sustainable and stable services for children.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to my predecessor, Dr Siobhán Fitzpatrick, and wish her well in her retirement.
Achievements

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

£2.6m
Of funding awarded by the Pathway Fund to 144 organisations in the early years sector

1,202
Children with SEN (Special Educational Needs) were supported by the Pathway Fund projects

73
Staff members trained on an evidence-based programme within the Pathway Fund

2,963
Children received an evidence-based programme within the Pathway Fund

236
Participants received support and training in Governance and Management

5
Learners graduate with the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Children’s Care, Learning and Development

50
Learners begin Level 2, Level 3 and Level 5 Diplomas in Children’s Care, Learning and Development through funding from Belfast City Council

4.9
Was the overall quality evaluation score in Governance and Management training (out of five)

868
Families received family support through the Pathway Fund

7,775
Children reached through the Pathway Fund projects. 56% of children who come from 25% most deprived areas

13,000
Over 13,000 children avail of high quality day care services

57%
Of PSEP groups received Level 1 and 2 grades in their ETI (Education and Training Inspectorate) inspections

How much did we do?
Children are strong, competent and visible in their communities

**Achievements**

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

Young children’s rights promoted and evidence-based solutions offered

803

Advocacy contacts to support inter-agency partnerships working between parents and families within the Toybox Project.

How much did we do?

Engagement with key departmental officials and elected officials on the development of a Northern Ireland Executive Childcare Strategy and associated workforce initiatives

Consultation responses provided to childcare development in Northern Ireland: Special Educational Needs; Dormant Accounts Funding; Business Rates; and future Peace Plus European Territorial Co-operation funding, primarily still within a political environment which (until January 2020) experienced the absence of a functioning local Executive or Assembly

Northern Ireland and Reggio Emilia Interpretation and Exploration - supporting the professional development of Early Years staff and members to actively participate in society and develop a sense of European citizenship and identity

£1.5m

Of the Pathway Fund was invested in settings based in the 25% most deprived areas

£0.6m

Of the Pathway Fund was invested in settings based in rural locations
Achievements

Children are physically and emotionally healthy

8,004
Children registered in Early Years led Sure Start projects

70
Children attending the Early Years Centre of Excellence, Fermanagh Early Years Children and Family Centre, which opened in May 2019

How much did we do?

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

6,416
Number of mothers registered in Sure Start projects

2,386
Number of fathers registered in Sure Start projects

5,078
Number of home visits

6,519
Number of families registered in Sure Start projects

94%
Of transitional settings said they were ‘very likely’ or ‘likely’ to contact the Toybox Project regarding a child’s transition.

801
Parents attended play and stay sessions accessed through the Pathway Fund projects
Children are eager and able to learn

Achievements

239
Families and 167 children avail of HighScope through the Toybox Project

2,851
Play sessions with children through the Toybox Project, empowering Traveller/Roma parents to become involved in the education process for their children and themselves

2,228
Programme sessions delivered with Sure Start Programme for Two Year Olds

239
Children were supported through the Toybox Project to enhance their social, emotional, physical, language and cognitive development

276
Families accessed the Toybox Project and 81 Traveller parents have attended training courses

1,893
Home visits completed by Sure Start for Two Year Old Development Programmes

94%
Of parents felt that it is very important or important for Toybox staff to share their child’s Child Development Profile with them, 156 Child Development Profiles were shared

217
Stay and Play sessions and 19 workshops delivered

17%
Increase from 2018/19 in engagement from fathers within the Toybox Project

62
Settings with practitioners trained and implementing, to full fidelity, the evidence-based Eager and Able to Learn Programme aimed at improving young children’s eagerness and ability to learn

93%
Of transitional settings in contact with the Toybox Project regarding a child’s transition

How much did we do?
Achievements

Children are respectful of difference

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

Schools, after-schools and day cares engaged in the Media Initiative for Children Respecting Difference Programme through funding from Good Relations and Peace IV, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council and the Community Relations Council.

Supporting and developing evidence-based ECD programmes for peacebuilding in countries affected by conflict, through partnership with UNICEF and with the support of global research centres at Queen’s University Belfast, Yale and New York University.

Setting participated in community relations and multi-cultural programmes through the Pathway Fund projects.

Children and young people involved in the EU Horizon 2020 WYRED (netWorked Youth Research for Empowerment in the Digital Society) Project. Early Years is one of nine partners amplifying youth voices on the project.

Supporting and developing evidence-based ECD programmes for peacebuilding in countries affected by conflict, through partnership with UNICEF and with the support of global research centres at Queen’s University Belfast, Yale and New York University.

Erasmus+ Early Coding Project developing teaching materials on Computational Thinking and Introduction to Coding – the project aims to contribute to capacity building in the education sector to foster very basic computational thinking skills at pre-school level in the five partner countries through up-skilling and engaging games and fun activities

Erasmus+ WeNA (We Are Not Alone) Project in four partner countries supporting parents who have children with special needs, improve their subjective well-being with the help of creative drama and social support groups.

Erasmus+ ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) Project in four partner countries to support the development of an effective methodology of teaching for children with ASD.

102
 Schools, after-schools and day cares engaged in the Media Initiative for Children Respecting Difference Programme through funding from Good Relations and Peace IV, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council and the Community Relations Council.

1,000
 Children and young people involved in the EU Horizon 2020 WYRED (netWorked Youth Research for Empowerment in the Digital Society) Project. Early Years is one of nine partners amplifying youth voices on the project.

How much did we do?

100%
 Of parents, staff and board of governors members had a positive response to the Media Initiative for Children Respecting Difference Programme and felt it was highly relevant in our society.

19 staff and members participated on the Erasmus+ Northern Ireland and Reggio Emilia exchange and co-operation study trips.

84
 Settings participated in community relations and multi-cultural programmes through the Pathway Fund projects.

Technical assistance to UNICEF Country Offices regarding the design, development and delivery of ECD (Early Childhood Development) programmes.

1,000
 Children and young people involved in the EU Horizon 2020 WYRED (netWorked Youth Research for Empowerment in the Digital Society) Project. Early Years is one of nine partners amplifying youth voices on the project.

102
 Schools, after-schools and day cares engaged in the Media Initiative for Children Respecting Difference Programme through funding from Good Relations and Peace IV, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council and the Community Relations Council.

19 staff and members participated on the Erasmus+ Northern Ireland and Reggio Emilia exchange and co-operation study trips.
Children grow up in a peaceful, prosperous and shared region

€4.2m
Of funding awarded to Early Years – the organisation for young children (lead partner), the Fermanagh Trust and the National Childhood Network for the delivery of Sharing from the Start, supported by the European Union’s Peace IV Programme, managed by the SEUPB (Special EU Programmes Body)

3,167
Children participated in shared curricular activities in Sharing from the Start Programme

Achievements

How much did we do?

99
Pre-school settings engage in the Sharing from the Start Programme, forming 47 partnerships across Northern Ireland and the border counties of the Republic of Ireland

180
Pre-school practitioners facilitating the delivery of shared education classes

99%
Of settings in the Sharing from the Start Programme report ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’ support from Early Years mentors

48
Pre-school settings trained in Media Initiative for Children Respecting Difference Programme

3,167
Children participating in shared education

41
Joint information sessions attended by parents, carers and management committee members

1,747
Hours of shared education classes facilitated between September 2019 and March 2020

94%
Of practitioners felt that peer learning clusters facilitated by the Senior Early Years Specialists were ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’

500
Over 500 early years teachers and practitioners trained by Early Years in Shanghai and Changzhou, China.
Early Years Board of Directors 2019 - 2020

Alma Loughrey
Honorary President

Maria McDonagh
Chairperson

Ethel McIvor

Agata Sobieraj
Treasurer

Nemonie Fulton

Jenni Barkley

Ronan Park

Early Years Council 2019 - 2020

Early Years Council:

Antrim/Ballymena Florence Walker
Belfast Ashlee Berman
Causeway Christina McFarland and Michelle Spence
Cookstown and Magherafelt Wendy Hayman
Craigavon/Banbridge Catherine McPolin and Joanne Conlon
Down Sarah McCambley
Dungannon Ethel McIvor
Fermanagh Katie Murray
Foyle Carra Mullen

Larne/Carrickfergus/Newtownabbey Patricia Rush and Hilda Boyd
Lisburn Sarah McCambley
Newry and Mourne Majella Caherty
North Down and Ards Lauren Moore
Omagh and District Melanie O’Kane
Sperrin Caroline McCormick
Dublin Anne-Marie Dixon
Day Care Forum Francis Loye

Treasurer’s Report 2019 - 2020

The financial year 2019/2020 has seen the Peace IV Sharing from the Start and the Peace IV Rural Respecting Difference projects continue, bringing in revenue of nearly £1,000,000.

Ongoing management and delivery commitments were renewed for the Pathway Fund, Sure Starts, Toybox, DE and Health and Social Care Trusts contract arrangements. This brought in funding of nearly £7 million.

Other projects yielded income of around £60,000.

The core activities of Early Years encompassing membership support, training, publications and management fees, generated income of nearly £1.3 million.

In summary, restricted funding activities generated revenues of over £8.3 million and unrestricted revenues of over £1.4 million.

The organisation is committed to increasing its restricted to unrestricted funding ratio and building up reserves.

Financial planning for the year 2019/20 focused on cost consolidation and efficiency as well as restructuring of the Early Years Specialist role, yielding improving returns on investment, with additional potential funding opportunities to further develop service offerings.

In addition to a very local focus, the organisation continues to take forward new international opportunities with continued delivery on a contract signed with QUB and UNICEF and being rolled out in East Timor, Vietnam, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, the Balkans and the Middle East region.

The organisation’s key financial focus is on increasing new commercial opportunities in order to move towards a more independent sustainability and a build up of reserves. This in turn will allow reinvestment in development to deliver a strong and stable organisation in support of its members.

Agata Sobieraj, Treasurer
Income and Expenditure 2019 - 2020

**Staff in employment in 2019 - 2020**

**ArKe Sure Start**
- Martina Maguire
- Ievgenia Nykyforova
- Padrician O'Kane

**Blossom Sure Start**
- Debbie Johnson
- Keith McAdam
- Emma Winter
- Megan Simmons
- Eleanor Duffy
- Jacqueline Harper
- Paula Doran
- Pauline Bell
- Lindsey Davis
- Florentya Kulinska
- Varta Sabuniene
- Emma Luney

**Clogher Valley Sure Start**
- Dolores Neeon
- Ita Quinn
- Nuala Quinn
- Julie McConville
- Julie Thompson
- Mairead McMullen
- Ciara Reilly
- Vyette Grimes
- Patrisa Smith
- Yvonne Keenan
- Shauneen McCusker
- Ciara Maugh
- Kathlyn Mavitty
- Kern Meanagh
- Zelma Robinson
- Shannen Keenan

**Corporate Services - Admin**
- Amanda Larmour-McQuaide
- George Bryans

**Corporate Services - Finance**
- Anna McShane
- Colm McLaugh
- Christopher McArdle
- Nuala Meanagh
- Carol Gray
- JaneThom
- William Smith

**Corporate Services - HR**
- Samina Waring
- Lorna Houston
- Gillian Totten
- Shannon Martin
- Alan Montgomery

**Corporate Services - ICT**
- Peter Balmer

**Corporate Services - Admin**
- Catherine McCone
- Paula Graham
- Margaret Quinn
- Angela McGrath
- Emma Fulton
- Kerry Anne Johnston
- Rhannan McCann
- Noeleen Mellon
- Jurgita Macionyte
- Cara Mallon
- Siobhan Wallace
- Maralva Alves
- Collette Skeffington
- Aoife Doyle
- Nina Chapman
- Sarah Fargnve
- Maria Igliks-Michalek
- Jillian Greer
- Ciara Dinsmore
- Tilly Jane Porter
- Sarah McCreery
- Dora Araujo
- Collette Campbell
- Paula McVey
- Shanaa Coey
- Aimee Campbell
- Ninola Gil
- Rioagh O'Donnell

**Income and Expenditure 2019 - 2020**

**Restricted and Unrestricted Income**
- Restricted: £8,366,358
- Unrestricted: £1,432,252
- Total: £9,798,610

**Analysis of Income**
- Health & Social Care Trusts Income: 34% (£3,300,220)
- Health & Social Care Board: 4% (£422,691)
- The Pathway Fund: 30% (£2,940,984)
- Project Funding: 9% (£863,192)
- Peace IV Funding: 10% (£959,037)
- Sales of Resources, Day Care, Training and Membership Services: 4% (£433,082)
- Donations & Other Grants: 1% (£140,792)
- Other: 8% (£738,612)

**Analysis of Expenditure**
- Direct Charitable Activities: £9,169,483
- Support Costs: £1,013,469
- Cost of Generating Funds: £46,594
- Governance Costs: £8,900
We would like to thank the following organisations and individuals who have financially supported our work over the past year:

Allianz
The Atlantic Philanthropies
Alzheimer’s Society NI
Antrim and Newtownabbey Council
Ards and North Down Borough Council
Barnardo’s
Belfast Area Childcare Partnership
Belfast City Council Active Belfast
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
Belfast Zoo
The Big Lottery
Blackburn Trust
Bright Start/Department of Education
Cavan County Childcare Committee
Children in Need
Clogher Valley Family Centre Ltd
Community Relations Council
Danske Bank
Department of Education
Eastern Area Childcare Partnership
Erasmus+
European Commission

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
Health and Social Care Board
Hebei Early Education Institute, Shijiazhuang, China
Hope Early Years
Invest NI
Lockton Limited
Mencap
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
Northern Health and Social Care Trust
NICVA
Northern Childcare Partnership
The Northern Ireland Executive Office
Precede Balkan’s Network – European Union Instrument for Pre-accession A
Public Health Agency
Queen’s University Belfast
Special EU Programmes Body
Sisters of Mercy
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust
South Eastern Childcare Partnership
Southern Area Childcare Partnership
Southern Health and Social Care Trust
Southern Regional College
Strategic Investment Fund - Ards and Down
Strategic Investment Fund - Downpatrick
Strategic Investment Fund – Western Zone
Sure Start:
Arke Sure Start
Blossom Sure Start
Clogher Valley Sure Start
Dungannon Sure Start
Kilkeel Sure Start
Newry City Sure Start
Rainbow Sure Start
South Armagh Sure Start
Splash/Brownlow Sure Start
Star (Banbridge) Sure Start

UNICEF
Verity Pensions
Western Childcare Partnership
Western Health and Social Care Trust
Wheelock College