

Investing in children's futures:

The new childhood practice awards

Issue 2: November 2008



New early years degree signals more skills for nursery workers

The new BA Childhood Practice qualification – offered in universities for the first time this year – will allow early years workers to further their skills, understanding and abilities in line with the new Standard for Childhood Practice.

The Minister for Children and Early Years Adam Ingram welcomed the new cohort of Childhood Practice students at Strathclyde University on Tuesday 11 November. This was an opportunity for all universities currently delivering the programmes and for the members of the Childhood Practice Development Group to meet with the students to celebrate the roll out of the new awards.



Mr Ingram said:

"This government is clear that an early start is the best start for Scotland's children. By ensuring support is in place at the first opportunity we can give every young person the chance to reach their potential, which will lead to benefits for everyone in Scotland.

"Developing the skills and career opportunities

of those delivering early years services is key to helping us achieve that goal and the new professional standards will promote excellence in the sector.

"We firmly believe that investing in our children during their earliest years is central to influencing future life chances which is why we will have an unprecedented focus on this area through our Early Years Framework, to be launched soon.

"The students starting this new BA Childhood Practice are at the forefront of that drive, helping our youngest children develop and get off on the right track. That's why it's so encouraging to get the chance to meet and congratulate those starting the course."

To date there are five universities offering the course - Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Strathclyde with the University of the Highlands and Islands.

Others are set to follow. SQA has also expressed an interest in developing the award to level 9 and in the meantime are working on the launch of the new HND in Childhood Practice.

Many of the students who have signed up to this first cohort are experienced managers and learners and all have been given credit by the course providers for their previous learning which means they gain advanced entry.

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There was real excitement in the group and although some expressed anxieties most were really pleased to have been selected into the first cohort.

Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) Chief Executive Carole Wilkinson said:

"The early years are a significant time for children and research shows the best outcomes for children come from effective and well led services committed to improvement and enhancement.



"The high uptake of places on the Childhood Practice degrees shows how responsive this sector is to providing what is best for children and their families and the commitment of the sector to register with the SSSC."

Strathclyde University Deputy Principal Ann Hughes, who chaired the group which developed the new standards, said:

"We have worked to ensure that the practice and principles enshrined in the new standards will produce the best, most highly-qualified professionals for their extremely important work in the learning and development of children.

"The awards have been designed to reflect the considerable changes which the profession has undergone in recent years, with new areas of policy and accountability, but it has the ultimate goal of ensuring the highest quality of care for children."

The undergraduate degree for lead practitioners and managers in the early years workforce is the first course to meet the new standards developed by the SSSC, QAA Scotland and others in the education, public, voluntary and private sectors.

The award in Childhood Practice at SCQF level 9 and with 360 credits will become the required qualification for those registering with the SSSC as managers of day care of children services from 2011. The SSSC will provide further information about the arrangements for this in due course.

The story so far...

Find out more from the course providers

University of Dundee

On a suitably sunny day in September the new Childhood Practice degree programme was launched in Dundee. The content of the BAPD in Childhood Practice is underpinned by The Standard for Childhood Practice (2007) which aims to improve leadership skills and to show how informed professional action can ensure better outcomes for children. The programme is work-based, part time and delivered flexibly using a blended learning approach including interactive online distance learning.

Students were shown the steps required to access the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and navigate their way around programme

materials and support areas. It is the intention that, through the electronic world, a community of practice will be created. Participants will share their knowledge, skills and experience, supporting and challenging each other to develop practice to enhance the experiences of children and families.

At the end of the day people realised that, although they might be studying in scattered communities across Scotland, there were others engaging in the same process.

Further information about the programme can be found at: http://www.dundee.ac.uk/undergraduate/courses/professional_development_childhood_practice.htm



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University of Glasgow

The University of Glasgow is delighted with the level of interest generated by practitioners in early years and child care settings towards the new BA Childhood Practice. After the selection process, the University of Glasgow has approximately 80 learners on the programme. The successful applicants are all currently in lead practitioner roles, or are aspiring leaders, in early years and playwork.

The University of Glasgow has developed partnership arrangements to deliver the programme with eight local

authorities. Practitioners who have been accepted onto the programme, are employed in a range of local authority, private and voluntary



establishments across each of the local authorities. The classes have been organised so that staff working in different

authorities will get the chance to share their practice and expertise with one another.

The partnership agreements secured will enable learners to undertake the programme on a day release basis that builds on the model of delivery many of the learners have been accustomed to when undertaking previous qualifications. Those embarking on the degree have a wide range of previous qualifications in Early Years and Playwork, for example, SNNB, HNC, PDA, SVQ3 and SVQ4.

The University of Glasgow has built on its partnership with Experiential Play, an SVQ training provider, to support the mentoring of the learners from the Glasgow City Council area. This arrangement will support learners in the transition from vocational learning programmes to the University programme.

For further information on this course you should contact k.kelman@educ.gla.ac.uk

University of Strathclyde

The BA Childhood Practice degree at the University of Strathclyde was passed by Senate in June 2008 and accredited by SSSC in July 2008. The first BA Childhood Practice students arrived on the Jordanhill Campus on Tuesday 9th September.

The fifty students starting the degree come from a variety of contexts, including:

- various Local Authorities throughout west central Scotland
- private nurseries
- voluntary sector settings
- the Care Commission
- eight students are already in leadership roles in a childhood practice setting
- 15 students aspire to be leaders of the future
- taking the degree for their own professional development.

The students have completed one module **Effective Learning and Communication** and are working on their assignment. They begun the second module selecting either: **The Critical Years 0-3** or **Music and Dance** and will complete five modules in their first year of study.

Tutors have been impressed by the engagement of the students and their clear commitment, energy and enthusiasm.

For further information, please visit:
<http://www.strath.ac.uk/cps/courses/bachildhoodpractice/>
or contact Bryan Hall on 0141 950 3342
or via email at: bryan.l.hall@strath.ac.uk

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University of Edinburgh

The University of Edinburgh are now more than half way through the first semester of the BA in Childhood Practice (BACP). The newly developed undergraduate programme has been creatively designed to meet the new Standard in Childhood Practice (2007) and is underpinned by the three main aspects of professional development identified in the new Standard namely:

- professional values and personal commitment
- professional skills and abilities
- professional knowledge and understanding.

Course are delivered from the following areas:

- education studies
- child and family health education
- child/family development and social policy
- management and organisational behaviour
- childhood studies.

The programme is aimed at those wishing to mix study with work, and will build on previous work and study experiences. Students undertake three years of part-time/evening study, linking policy and practice throughout the programme. They work in a range of early years and childcare settings and continually reflect on, and contribute aspects of their own experiences to the learning within their group. On completion of their part-time degree students will have equipped themselves with essential knowledge and understanding of the early years and childcare sector as well as improved the skills that they will apply in their current and future roles.

Students who successfully achieve the BACP are eligible to apply for registration as a manager/lead practitioner with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).

The university is currently working in partnership with other organisations to provide flexible forms of delivery to meet the needs of a range of students.

For further information, please contact Lorna McNicoll at: 0131 651 4801 or via email at: lorna.mcnicoll@ed.ac.uk

On course

What is it like to be on the new Chi

Jane Hepburn

Jane is currently head of Dalmeir Early Education and Childcare Centre and has worked with young children since completing her SNNB award in 1973. Jane has come into the degree in Childhood Practice with a range of qualifications, a lifetime of experience and a "passion to learn".

Jane's philosophy is a simple one: "I want to make sure that the children and families and the staff I work with feel valued. This means giving them the best possible experience in the nursery." Jane's view is that relationship building holds the key to good leadership and one of the successes of doing this course is the confidence it gives to develop those.

"I was always good with children and often did things intuitively. The degree programme (Jane started at Strathclyde University last year on Childhood Studies but this has been converted to Childhood Practice this year) has helped to reinforce many of the practical aspects that I took for granted.

"One aspect of the course that has fascinated me is the emphasis on childhoods. It has made me much more aware of where some attitudes to children come from and has helped us in the centre to develop strategies to deal with these."

Jane's own attitude to learning has changed markedly over the years.

"School wasn't a good place for me. I was discouraged and felt a failure. The inference was I wasn't going anywhere." Fortunately Jane has proved them wrong. She has a string of awards and continues to want to learn.



Childhood Practice course? Find out from two learners...



"After doing my SNNB I was one of the first to do the HNC in Working with Children in their Early Years. Then when the SSSC registration requirements were published did the SVQ Level 4.

"I feel so proud now doing the degree. My sons think their mum is pretty special and one of the main reasons for me doing this is to prove to myself I can...and perhaps to prove those people who didn't rate me, wrong!"

Lesley Curran

Lesley Curran is the depute head of centre at Dalry Nursery. Lesley's work involves working with often vulnerable families and children who have been referred to the centre. Originally a civil servant, Lesley didn't come into childcare until her own children were in Primary 1. At that time Lesley enrolled at Langside, where in 1991 she finished the SCOTVEC modular nursery nursing course. Lesley worked in a variety of centres including those funded through Urban Aid and as a supply nursery nurse for Glasgow city Council. 10 years later Lesley decided to do an HNC in Business management.

She explained,
"At the time Devolved School Management was coming in and I thought this would be a useful course."

Lesley followed that with the PDA Childcare and Education and the A1 Assessors award.

She has had an opportunity to do a degree before but the time just wasn't right for Lesley family wise...but now is.

"I'm really keen to do the degree in Childhood Practice and am delighted Glasgow University has offered me a place. They have given me credit for some of the previous courses I have done and I'm really looking forward to returning to learning."

When asked what has motivated her to do this Lesley was emphatic,

"I want other people to see this profession much more positively. Too often you hear...they're just playing with the children...that job must be great etc.

It is great but its professionally challenging and complex. This course is important because of the emphasis there is in our work on involvement with other agencies and work with families."



18th European Early Childhood Education Research Association Conference

Reconsidering the Basics in Early Childhood Education

Stavanger, 2008

Frances Scott Workforce Development Manager with the SSSC and Joan Menmuir, a consultant for SSSC, were invited to present a workshop on the development of the benchmark standard for Childhood Practice and the development of the BA Childhood Practice at 18th EECERA conference in Stavanger, Norway in September.

Around 630 delegates attended the conference from 36 countries. There were 130 delegates from the UK including around 20 from Scotland. They represented Strathclyde University, University of the West of Scotland, Stirling University, James Watt College, LTS, SSSC, West Lothian Council, West Lothian Psychological Services, East Dumbartonshire Council and CALA.



What became apparent was the excitement generated amongst delegates at Scotland's achievement. Admired by attendees as a grounded yet innovative piece of collaborative practice, interest was shown in the standard and the methodology used to devise it from across the globe. Many remarked on the standard's potential, simplicity and focus and of the possibilities it provided for enquiry based action, to enhance skills and knowledge and so improve professional activity when working with children.

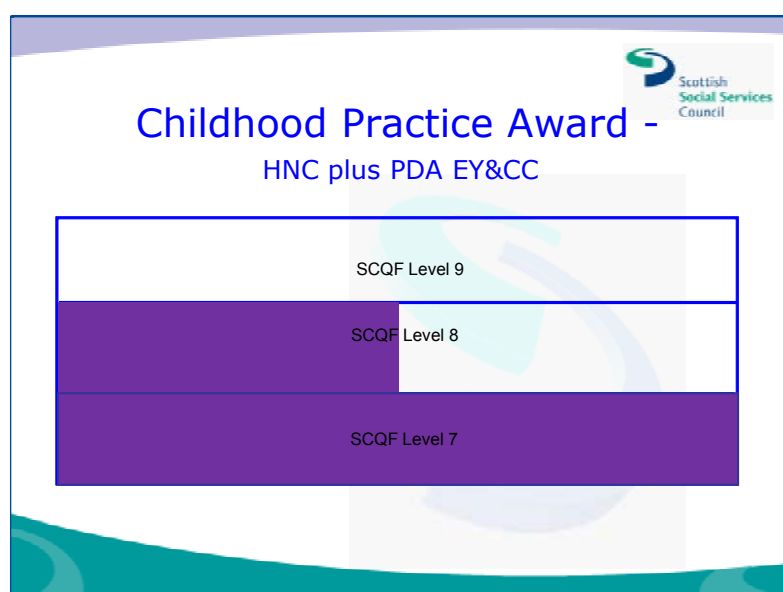
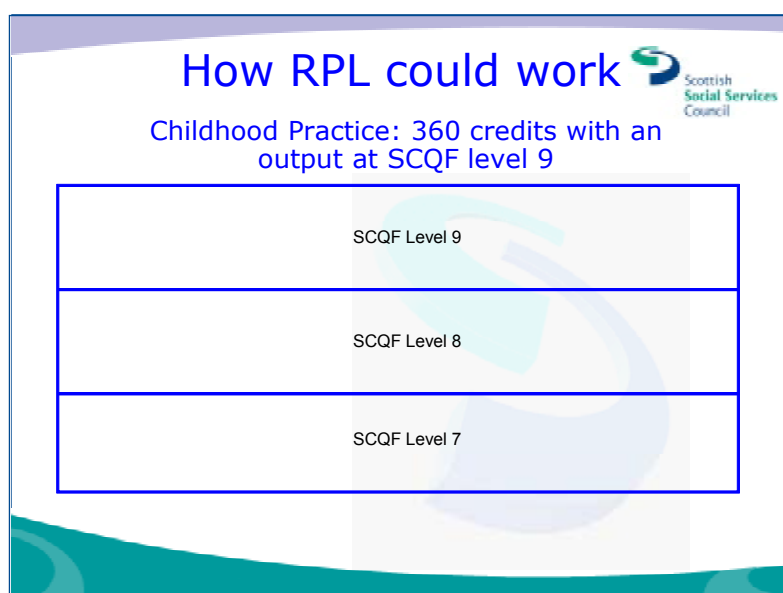
Joan and Frances had debates and discussions about the possibilities of Childhood Practice with many delegates and in particular with a member of parliament for South Australia who could see the potential for similar engagement in her home constituency. Colleagues from Scandinavia were equally interested in its potential.

Although deemed part of the UK delegation, Scotland was flying high by the close of the conference. Other presentations by Scotland delegates were warmly received and some exemplary practice was identified and explored. Visits to Norwegian pre-school showed that Scotland currently compares very favourably in both the qualifications held by staff and in the quality of experience children have in pre-schools. What became clear was that the real potential lies in Scotland's future provision where Childhood Practice graduates will be equipped to drive forward the collaborative, transformational services and quality of experience children and families ask for.

What do we mean by RPL?

RPL or, the recognition of prior learning, describes the mechanism used by training providers to give credit for either formal or informal learning. It means that learning that is current and relevant can be used to provide evidence of a learner's competence. That in turn can mean a learner can use RPL for entry to a particular course or for additional credit within an award, using the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework to assist the process. An example of this for the BA Childhood Practice is shown below. Diagram 1 shows the size of the award made up of learning at SCQF levels 7, 8 & 9. Diagram 2 Shows (shaded in) the volume of credit (RPL) you may get if you already have an HNC and a PDA in Early Education and Childcare.

What you are still required to do is shown in white. Each course provider will have worked out a system for giving you credit irrespective of whether you have done the HNC/PDA route or the HNC/SNNB/SVQ3/ SVQ4 route however you should contact them directly as they will provide you with up to date and accurate advice.



Early years and childcare career pathways toolkit



A key message of the National Review of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce in 2006 was the belief that “developing improved career pathways is key to the overall development of the early years and childcare sector and to addressing issues of recruitment and retention.” The then Scottish Executive’s response, Investing in Children’s Futures, defined career pathways as “the routes available to staff to move within the sector and between related sectors.” Investing in Children’s Futures gave an expectation that a “toolkit which supports understanding of progression routes for early years and childcare workers” should be in place by September 2009.

This work is led by a Learning and Development Adviser from the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) with close engagement with a wide range of representatives from across early years and childcare. The project is also working to ensure that it links with other current initiatives such as the Continuous Learning Framework.

The aim of the toolkit is to provide support to identify career pathways and assist with information about appropriate qualifications. It will be useful for both those wishing to enter the sector, (including school leavers) and those already employed in early years and childcare.

Key outcomes of this work would enable pathways which support staff to move both laterally (between and across sectors) and vertically (where workers increase their level of responsibility.) It is hoped that this would both help to attract new people to the sector and retain experienced staff.

The project will be primarily aimed at the current areas of early years and childcare which include working in pre fives settings such as nursery schools and classes, child and family centres, playgroups, crèches and in out of school care, family support and childminding.

The project is currently in a development phase and it is envisaged that the toolkit will take the form of an accessible electronic resource. This will be made widely available to enable those within the sector as well as those not currently working in early years and childcare to access to information about a career within this emerging profession.

For further information please contact Margaret Bruce, Learning and Development Adviser on margaret.bruce@sssc.uk.com

To find out more please contact us

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