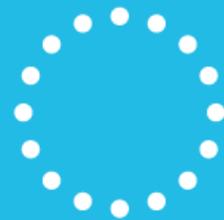


Early Childhood Research Bulletin

Issue 6



Children's
Research
Network

Children's Research Network News

Special Interest Group on Early Childhood Research

The group has a number of focuses at the moment. A major one is sharing information, findings and access to relevant publications and research reports and theses. This focus includes supporting the establishment and sustaining of an Early Childhood Database, contributing to a planned youth participation book, producing bulletins and planning to produce a Child Research Digest next year.

Early Years Sector News

Montessori and Early Childhood Professionals Ireland (MECPI) feature practitioner, researcher, trainer, and organisational blog contributions in celebration of ten years as an online community of practice

To celebrate ten years as a community of practice, Montessori & Early Childhood Professionals Ireland (MECPI) has invited a number of key contributors to write for their blog. Contributors include Professor Nóirín Hayes, Dr. Geraldine French, Professor Mathias Urban, Dr. Mary Moloney, Imelda Graham, Karen Higgins, Angela Canavan, Dr. Mary O'Kane, Dr. Shiela Long, Dr. John McGarrigle, Arlene Forster, Ciairín de Buis, Máire Mhic Mhathuna, Dr. Jennifer Pope, Dr. Thomas Walsh, and Dr. Jools Page.

Teresa Heeney, CEO of Early Childhood Ireland has written about the path towards professionalism, identifying the changes that have taken place, in addition to the challenges ahead.

Dr. Sheila Long, Institute of Technology, Carlow, writes about respecting the natural world in ECEC setting,

advocating for critical reflection on ourselves, and our patterns of consumption in our settings. Dr. Long highlights stories of environment degradation and calls for a more radical conceptualization of the young child and their interconnection with the non-human world.

Joan O'Sullivan, Proprietor of Little Footsteps in Swords, Dublin, writes about the past years in a small crèche, from the launch of Aistear to the impact of Prime Time's 'Breach of Trust' episode. Joan O'Sullivan reflects on recent development and the 'very real hope that the sector is entering a period of meaningful consultation and partnership with State agencies'.

Dr. Mary Maloney, Mary Immaculate College, envisions a reformed early childhood education and care sector in her blog post. Referencing the pace of change in the sector, Dr. Maloney describes the NCCA proposals relating to structure in a redeveloped primary curriculum.

The MECPI blogs are available [here](#)

Children's Rights Alliance Panel Discussion on the forthcoming National Early Years Strategy

Investing in Every Child: A Panel Discussion on the forthcoming National Early Years Strategy was held by the Children's Rights Alliance in May in Chartered Accountants House. The Panel Discussion focused on the priorities for the Strategy to give every child the best start in life. Chaired by Tom Costello, panel members included Frances Byrne, Director of Policy and Advocacy, Early Childhood Ireland; Marian Quinn, Chair, Prevention and Early Intervention Network; Denise McCormilla, CEO, National Childhood Network; and Orla Touchy, National Parenting Lead with the Lifestart Foundation. A keynote address was delivered by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Dr Katherine Zappone, TD.

The Leadership for INClusion in the Early Years (LINC) programme wins the Jennifer Burke Award for Innovation in Teaching and Learning

The Leadership for INClusion in the Early Years (LINC) programme has won the prestigious Jennifer Burke Award—an annual accolade which recognises and rewards innovative practice in the areas of teaching and learning [click here](#). The award was established in 2009 in memory of Jennifer Burke, to acknowledge and reward innovative practice in Irish Teaching and Learning.

The LINC Programme is a one-year, Level 6 Special Purpose award delivered by a consortium led by Mary Immaculate College (MIC), which includes Early Childhood Ireland and Maynooth University-Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education. The course is designed to facilitate practising early years' educators to promote the inclusion of children with additional needs.

LINC received the award for a submission that highlighted the innovative nature of its framework entitled, Competency-Based Framework ensuring the Inclusion of Children with Additional Needs in Early Years' Settings. The submission is available to view [here](#). This Competency Framework, Reflections for Inclusion, forms the basis of the programme's student learning experience – from the blended (online and classroom-based) modules, to the one-to-one mentoring session received by each student and to their final portfolio, which enables the student to review their learning and practice in relation to each of the 25 elements under the three pillars of the competency framework – inclusive culture, inclusive pedagogy and inclusive practice.

MA Degree in Early Childhood Studies, NUI Galway

Building on the success of the BA in Early Childhood Studies & Practice, the Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development (CALPD) at NUI Galway in collaboration with the UNESCO Child & Family Research Centre, based in the School of Political Science and Sociology, launched a master's degree in 2016. The MA in Early Childhood Studies, offered on a part-time, 2 year, blended learning basis, was designed to provide progression routes for graduates of the BA as well as offer opportunities for those in the wider early years field

to upgrade to a post-graduate qualification relevant to the sector. Along with modules focused on 'Children's Rights and Wellbeing', on 'Contemporary Perspectives on Play, Learning and Pedagogy' and on 'Leadership, Mentorship and Emerging Professions' to name a few, the MA includes in its research focus a dedicated module exploring the participatory role of children in research, entitled 'Engaging Children as Social Researchers'.

Drawing on the notions underpinning this module, and wider concepts throughout the programme, a number of students developed research projects which included children in the process. These projects were focused on the following topics:

- Asking the experts: An exploration of children's views and experiences of quality school-aged childcare, which sought the perspectives of 45 children in 3 types of settings on what they believed to be the key components of quality school aged childcare
- Taking account of the voice of the child within the Regulatory Inspection Process of Early Years Services, carried out by an early years inspector, in 2 settings, to ascertain children's views on their lived experiences of ECCE
- Young children's perspectives of child-teacher interactions when compiling Learning Portfolios – a case study to inform pedagogical assessment practice;
- An exploration of children's perspectives on their own participation rights in early years setting, based in a preschool in the south west, involving the same group of young children over a period of time, to examine the concept of participation and how it is constructed in their setting, from their views.

Other topics, which focused on the early years sector, but did not necessarily involve children as co-researchers looked at the suitability of uniforms for children in ECCE programmes, explored attitudes of ECCE teachers to the inclusion of children with special educational needs, the presence of creative learning in the early years, and an exploration of early years practitioners perception of professional identity, entitled Who am I? What do I do? Why do I do it?

From a research perspective, this new MA offers opportunities for those in the early years field to further develop their knowledge and to challenge expected and accepted notions of early year practice, to expand their

research skills, and to use these skills to examine contemporary topics relevant to the Irish context, including the practice and policy climate, the experiences of families, the views and experiences of children. The CALPD is currently accepting applications for the new intake of MA students from this autumn [click here](#)

Recent Research & Reports

Preschool to Primary School Transitions Initiative Final Report

The final report of the NCCA's Preschool to Primary School Transitions Initiative has been published. The driver for the initiative was set out in Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020.). The aims of the initiative were to:

- Support practitioners and teachers in helping children and their families experience a more positive transition from preschool to primary school.
- Pilot and evaluate two draft reporting templates developed by the NCCA for the sharing of information on children's learning and development between preschools, schools and families.
- Promote and build positive, reciprocal relationships between preschools and primary schools through participation in shared transition activities and experiences.
- Work with and involve children, families, preschools and schools in different ways in the transition process.

The national reporting templates along with a suite of support materials will be available in the autumn. For more information [click here](#).

Review of Early-Years Education-Focused Inspection

The Department of Education and Skills has published a report outlining insights and future developments of the Early-Years Education-Focused Inspections (EYEI) April 2016 – June 2017. The review of the first year of

Implementation of Early Years Education-focused Inspection provides a detailed evaluation of the nature and quality of early childhood education provision and practice under the ECCE Programme. This report presents a review of the EYEI model after the first full year of implementation and covers the period April 2016 to June 2017 during which 867 inspections were completed. Composite findings from an analysis of inspection reports prepared by the DES Inspectorate are presented in relation to the four areas of practice set out in the EYEI Quality Framework1:

- The quality of the context to support children's learning and development
- The quality of processes to support children's learning and development
- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements
- The quality of management and leadership for learning.

The findings of this report provide insight into early years practice and the workings of the new inspection model. While challenges presented, a number of positive findings also emerged. Positive findings relate to the commitment to quality of the Early Years practitioners who deliver early childhood education and the ways in which effective leadership in Early Years services promotes and supports this good practice. The report is available [here](#)

Recently Published Books

New Publication on Supporting Children with Autism

Autism from the Inside Out: A Handbook for Parents, Early Childhood, Primary, Post-Primary and Special School Settings' is one of the Key Seminal Texts Underpinning the innovative Award-Winning Leadership for INCLUSION in the Early Years (LINC) Programme.

It is the first book in Ireland focused on providing parents, early years, primary, post-primary and special school settings, with guidance, advice and effective strategies for supporting children with autism. Published by Peter Lang, the book is co-edited by Dr. Emer Ring, Dr. Patricia Daly and Professor Eugene Wall, with chapters being provided by a range of national and international renowned experts in education and psychology at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. Rejecting 'disorder' in favour of 'difference', the book

presents evidence-based strategies and approaches that emphasise the possibilities of enabling all children with autism to achieve their fullest potential through understanding and celebrating difference.

Adam Harris, CEO of AsIAm, provides the Foreword and Chapters in the book include effective teaching strategies to promote successful learning; the importance of play for children with autism; addressing children's sensory differences in practice; the central role of the special needs assistant; responding to children's strengths and needs through individualised planning; assessment practices; the key role of parents right from the start; the environment as the third-teacher; promoting children's well-being; developing a knowledge and understanding of autism; leadership for the education of children with autism and self-evaluation as a way forward.

Adam Harris, will launch the book at a conference being co-hosted by Mary Immaculate College and the Children's Research Network on September 15th at Mary Immaculate College. For Conference booking [click here](#).

Child Protection Guide for Early Years and School Age Childcare Services (4th edition)

Protecting and safeguarding children is both a legally mandated responsibility and an opportunity to ensure that all children have a healthy, happy childhood. Access to safe, quality early learning and afterschool programmes and enriching educational and cultural experiences help promote healthy child development and improve every child's chances to have a happy childhood.

As a leading training and consultancy provider to early childhood education and care and school age childcare services, Barnardos is aware of managers' and practitioners' concerns about competencies, policies and procedures in the areas of child safeguarding and protection. The need for services who work with children to understand their obligations under Children First and to have in place appropriate policies and procedures is necessary, not only for the protection of children, but also for the protection of staff.

Protecting Children: A Child Protection Guide for Early Years and School Age Childcare Services is intended to guide managers, practitioners and support staff working

in early years and school age childcare services as they develop, implement and adopt policies and procedures to safeguard and protect children.

Protecting Children is focused on two key areas:

- The promotion of positive practice, which incorporates the protection and welfare of children.
- Guidance in relation to dealing with concerns about suspected or actual child abuse or neglect.

The aim of this publication is to provide a comprehensive guide to child protection for early years and school age childcare services covering relevant legislation, the policy context, principles and procedures. There is also guidance in relation to best practice for working with children, parents and other agencies. A key message of Protecting Children is that safeguarding children should be a part of the organisational culture of all organisations who work with children. Guidance provided in this manual is in accordance with the Children First Act 2015, and all other governing regulations. It is essential that all individuals working with children familiarise themselves with the Children First Act and all applicable legislation.

The guide aims to be an accessible and practical rather than a theoretical book, however it is informed by Irish and international research and by Barnardos' extensive experience in this area. While Protecting Children is not a training manual, it includes materials such as templates and scenarios which we hope will act as a resource for practitioners and managers seeking to implement best practice in relation to the protection and welfare of children in their care. The guide is available for purchase [here](#).

Developments in the Sector

A Code of Ethics for Early Years Teachers in Ireland – by Heino Schonfeld, Early Years Development Manager, Barnardos.

In 2016 the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs established an Early Years Forum to assist with policy development and implementation. A sub-group of this body including representatives from the main stakeholders of the early years sector dedicated itself to the issue of professionalisation of the early years workforce. The main issues facing the group were the following pillars of professionalisation:

- Qualification and continual professional development
- The establishment of a professional body
- Pay and Conditions
- Naming of the profession
- A common Code of Ethics

An initial draft of the code of ethics went through numerous re-drafts following detailed feedback from the group members. A simple definition of a code of ethics is that it is a standard of values and morals by which a group makes decisions about what is right or wrong or a set of rules about good and bad behaviour.

Some use the phrases code of ethics and code of conduct interchangeably, but it may be useful to make a distinction. A code of ethics will start by setting out the values that underpin the code and will describe a profession's obligation to its clients or customers. The code is publicly available and addressed to anyone with an interest in the profession's activities and the way it does business. It will include details of how the profession intends to implement its values and vision, as well as guidance to practitioners on ethical standards and how to achieve them. However, a code of conduct is generally addressed to and intended for employees of one organisation or service alone. It usually sets out restrictions on behaviour and will be far more compliance or rules focused than value or principle focused.

There are many definitions of a "profession" over the ages. Originally, the term was quite restrictive and applied only to the so called "learned" professions: Clerics, medicine and law. According to the European Union's Directive on Recognition of Professional Qualifications (2005/36/EC), professions are "those practiced on the basis of relevant professional qualifications in a personal, responsible and professionally independent capacity by those providing intellectual and conceptual services in the interest of the client and the public".

In any case and by any standard, the development of an "early years profession" in Ireland is only beginning. Some progress has been made: Practitioners are complying with statutory minimum qualification (except for the majority of 'childminders'); there is a national quality framework (Síolta) and a national curriculum framework (Aistear). But as measured against common standards, it is premature to speak of a profession of early years teachers in Ireland. This contrast with the

long tradition of early years professionals on the European continent: For example, the first dedicated training colleges for early years teachers in Germany were established in 1836 and 1840 by, among others, Friedrich Froebel.

Early years practitioners find themselves now at the very cusp of becoming a profession with all the privileges and challenges that come with it. Therefore a first national and common code of ethics has become essential and timely. While there have been several attempts to draft codes of ethics for the early years, all of these were exclusive to a particular organisation or sector. And all of them were very 'long' in an attempt to be comprehensive and directive.

The drafting of a national code of ethics for the early years was complex as it had to be inclusive of all members of the future profession including centre based workers, childminders and others such as lecturers, researchers and policy makers. It also had to take account of relevant international and national documents in order to align with previously agreed principles and values. The initial drafting was also cognisant of previous attempts to draft codes of ethics in Ireland and examined codes of ethics in other jurisdictions.

The Irish code of ethics also had to be short enough to be printed easily on a two page sheet and accessible to practitioners and parents. The seminal documents consulted for the initial draft were the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, the Irish Constitution, Síolta and Aistear. Other documents considered were previous attempts at codes of ethics in Ireland and similar documents in other jurisdictions.

The first draft of a code of ethics for early years teachers was submitted to the professionalisation sub-group of the Early Years Forum for consultation and advice. Following feedback from members of the group, a revised document was presented to the full Early Years Forum at the end of 2017. This presentation included an invitation for further feedback from the Forum.

The latest and final version, following most recent feedback and amendments was approved by the Early Years Forum and the Department for Children and Youth affairs in March 2018, and is available [here](#).

There are currently discussions underway with the DCYA on the distribution and promotion of the Code among services, practitioners and parents. However, the Code is now available for display in early years settings and for training in relevant colleges and universities.

Safeguarding Statement Guide

A guide is now available for all early years services in Ireland on how to develop a child safeguarding statement. The Children First Act, 2015, introduced a requirement for certain organisations that provide services to children and families to have a Child Safeguarding Statement. Early years services are also required to have accompanying Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures. The aim of the guide is to provide support and guidance for early years services in developing their Child Safeguarding Statement and accompanying Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures. All the information in the guide is designed to be tailored to the age and number of children in the service, the type of service, the management structure, the number of employees and the other policies and procedures that are in operation. The guide is available [here](#).

Reforms in the Childminding Sector

Pathway to a Quality Support and Assurance System for Childminding in Ireland, a report compiled by the Working Group on Reforms and Supports for the Childminding Sector, was launched in March. Having studied and discussed the research and the feedback from the scoping and consultation process, the Working Group provides a range of proposals in the areas of Legislation; Regulation, registration and inspection; Quality supports and standards; Funding and financial supports; and Strategy and implementation. The aim of the proposals in these areas is to substantially enhance the quality of childminding in Ireland to:

- Achieve the best possible outcomes for children
- Safeguard and protect children.
- Provide parents and families with a safe and nurturing environment for their children.
- Build on the unique strengths of childminding, including close relationships, continuity of care and home-from-home provision in the local community Support childminders to provide enjoyable, high quality care, development and learning opportunities for children of all ages.

- The report marks a significant milestone for childminders and those availing of their services. It is hoped the report will greatly influence policy over the coming years.

The report is available [here](#)

Training & Events

EECERA Conference

The 28th EECERA Annual Conference will take place in Budapest, August, 2018. EECERA is an independent, self-governing, international association which promotes and disseminates multi-disciplinary research on early childhood and its applications to policy and practice. The EECERA Annual Conference is the largest early years research conference in Europe and is hosted in a different European city each year by a local university or early years network. The EECERA 2018 conference will revisit and reassess knowledge and understanding of the enabling family and community conditions which support young children's education and well-being. The Budapest EECERA 2018 will seek to explore and address three key questions:

- How do early childhood services work more positively and proactively with parents, families and local communities to support children's home learning and development and what are the critical areas?
- How can multi-professional and multi-agency services be enabled to work more collaboratively with young children and families?
- What is the balance between universal, local strategies and individual family approaches in supporting children's learning and well-being?

In addition to a series of keynotes, the conference will include a series of papers across a range of themes. More information is available [here](#).



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Early Childhood Interest Group

This bulletin is produced by the Special Interest Group in Early Childhood of the Children's Research Network for Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Please feel free to share this bulletin, also available on the Network's website
www.childrensresearchnetwork.org

If you have items you would like included in the next bulletin or have any comments or questions, please contact Denise Scully (Project Support) on
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