



Learning Through Play!

## Scottish Pre-school Play Association

### SPPA welcomes the Early Years Framework

The Early Years Framework presents Scotland's vision and action plan for its youngest children and establishes a new conceptualisation of early years that children should be valued and provided for within communities. Following its launch in December 2008 Ian McLaughlan, SPPA Chief Executive, stated, for the organisation, that 'SPPA looks forward to working with our members, the Scottish Government, local authorities, and colleagues across the sector to implement this exciting framework for the early years in Scotland.' Here we give a brief overview of it and our reaction to it.

SPPA welcomes the strong emphasis the Framework places on the importance of strong, sensitive relationships with parents and carers; the right to a high quality of life and access to play; the need to put children at the centre of service delivery; the need to provide more support through universal services when children need it; and that children should be able to achieve positive outcomes irrespective of race, disability or social background.

Ian McLaughlan, on behalf of the organisation, endorses the holistic approach the Framework takes to the delivery of early years and childcare services and says that 'it offers Scotland a great opportunity to deliver the best outcomes for our youngest children both in the short and longer term. The drive to integrate services and for creative partnerships to emerge in the sector to support the development of communities which offer supportive and stimulating environments for children and which encourage the empowerment of parents by embedding structured support for parenting to enable them to fulfil their parenting role all welcome components of the Framework'.

In our view, the Framework provides the policy driver for early years services in the years to come. It offers a common framework within which collaborative working and creative partnerships can flourish. It will help to create services that focus on engagement and empowerment, improve outcomes for users, offer flexible and affordable access and which are responsive to the needs of children and families. In our view the Framework heralds an end to the current fragmented approach to working with young children and gives direction to developing integrated education and childcare services; to using the strengths of universal services to identify needs and risks and to deliver early interventions; as well as helping parents to understand the responsibilities and sustained commitment associated with bringing up a child.

Ian McLaughlan firmly believes that voluntary sector organisations, such as SPPA and others have a role in supporting the implementation of the Framework. He says 'their proven ability to positively engage with children,

families and communities has led them to be innovative, flexible and adaptable in service delivery. They are skilled at harnessing parental and community involvement in the delivery of services and have shown that they are able to work with parents and families who are least likely to access mainstream services. They are adept at working collaboratively in interagency partnerships'. In SPPA's opinion these 'traits' establish a clear, albeit challenging, role for our involvement in delivering the Framework.

However, SPPA has raised in a number of fora that the implementation of the Framework is set against a backdrop of reduced public spending in an uncertain financial climate and at a time of severe economic downturn. Inevitably, we believe, this will have a disproportionately adverse effect on already struggling voluntary sector community based early years services and SPPA has expressed concern that the fragility of services delivered by the voluntary sector will be exacerbated and as a consequence may impede ability to engage fully in the delivery of the Framework. SPPA is supporting voluntary sector providers to address a complex array of issues such as governance structures, financial sustainability, workforce development and resource acquisition amongst other things to enable them to participate fully in delivering the vision for Scotland's youngest children.

<sup>1</sup> The Early Years Framework was jointly published and launched by the Scottish Government and COSLA on 10 December 2008. Visit [www.scotland.gov.uk/earlyyearsframework](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/earlyyearsframework)