



**Welcome to this first Tayforth newsletter of 2010.**

**Tayforth have recently established a Network group of early years and childcare organisations so that we can improve our support to and engagement with this group of key partners. Throughout 2010 we will continue to build on the early success of this group and provide a range of activities to support workforce learning & development.**

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### SEEING THE LIGHT!

***Margaret Brunton, SPPA***

I'd heard of learning networks from various meetings I'd attended and newsletters that I'd read, but they were not something that grabbed my attention as being of particular relevance to early years and childcare. They were for social work and social care and their respective workforces, and their work seemed to be primarily focussed in these areas, even though I knew that early years and childcare workers were part of the Social Services workforce

The networks remained on the periphery of my vision until a chance meeting at a training event facilitated by Tayforth Learning Network led to conversations with Anne Tavendale, Network Manager, which began to tease out, for both of us I might say, the relevance and benefits of becoming involved in the networks.

The thought of being kept up to date with new policy and practice, on registration and workforce planning and being given information about which training provider was providing what type and level of qualification was enticing. The ability of the network to facilitate and support activities such as seminars, focus groups, events and research, particularly to support workforce development at 'grass roots level' ever more so. But it was more than this that convinced me. Early Years and Childcare is in a period of great change and the landscape is shifting, indeed the Government's Early Years Framework calls for transformational change, including engendering a workforce that is willing and has the capacity to be reflective and with the level of knowledge, skills and aptitudes needed to help children reach their potential. Talking to Anne I realised that the networks have been set up by the Scottish Government to act as catalysts for change and, as I learned more about their work, I realised that they are in a unique position to contribute to supporting workforce development, particularly at the grass roots level and there is much positive evidence that they have been doing this for social work and social care. Early years and childcare are part of the social services workforce and I think it is a wasted opportunity if we don't get involved. The benefits that will result from the support and assistance of the network will assist service providers and workers to embed a culture of learning in how they do their business and will widen access to learning and development opportunities.

The conversations with Anne, I have to say, reminded me of how I became involved in early years and childcare in the first place, I opened my mouth to ask a question at playgroup and then I was chairperson of the group. Now I am a member of the Tayforth's Strategic Management Board. With the support of the Board and working closely with Ann, we want to raise awareness of the relevance of the Network's role and to encourage the active participation of early years and childcare providers in their work, which is about enabling partnership, workforce development, service improvement, effective communication of policy, knowledge and good practice.

### COMING TOGETHER IN TAYFORTH

One of the actions planned by the Tayforth Board was to bring some key stakeholders from early years and childcare in Tayforth to a focus group meeting in order to kick start the Network's engagement with them.

On 1 July in Perth, representatives from a number of organisations came to the meeting, a number of apologies were also received and notices of interest received. Following a brief input on the role of the Learning Networks, the group explored why there has been little or no participation of early years or childcare to date.

A very participative and lively discussion ensued giving a clear insight into why there had been little participation in the networks by early years and childcare. The general feeling amongst the group was of confusion around the role of the networks and their focus with a sense emerging that to date their (the Networks) main focus has been on social workers hence uncertainty around how relevant the networks are for the early years workforce. There was also a lack of awareness that the networks' role is to support all areas of the social services workforce, not only those workers currently requiring to register with the SSSC.

Moving on to discuss how Tayforth could increase participation of early years and childcare, the representatives highlighted the following areas as offering potential for future engagement:

- **Communication:** it was pointed out that information about what is happening in the early years and childcare sector is inconsistently circulated to relevant early years employers, particularly to many small providers who may not receive information because they are not part of an umbrella or network organisation. It was thought the network could help in facilitating effective communication of policy, information and good practice to the sector
- **Facilitating an Early Years and Childcare Forum,** bringing together stakeholders to engage with and inform national initiatives, to identify

priorities and solutions for workforce development in the area

- Supporting them to implement policy initiatives through facilitating activities such as seminars, learning and development events, focus group meetings, partnership working and shared resourcing.
- Helping to simplify for workers and employers the complexity and confusion that prevails around education, qualifications, registration requirements and workforce learning and development in the early years and childcare landscape.

During the meeting a number of common themes were identified by the representatives which were thought to be powerful 'hooks' on which engagement with the network could be fostered. They included

- **Funding related issues:** the need for more information, support to access funding for workforce development, lack of funding for this part of the sector, lack of funding for workers aged 20+, funding directed to meet registration or local authority requirements, small providers, in voluntary and private sectors have scarce financial capacity to support workforce development
- **Workforce development related issues:** the need for assistance in identifying continuous professional development (CPD) requirements, improved information on what exactly constitutes CPD and the support needed to engage, assistance on how to deal with reluctant learners, help to understand more about the Continuous Learning Framework (CLF) and how it can be used, support to bridge the gap between current levels of knowledge and skills and the expectations of the Childhood Practice Standard and Level 9 awards and help understanding and getting onto a career pathway in early years and childcare
- **Training access and delivery related issues:** the need for learning and development opportunities to become more flexible and accessible, especially to support those who can't attend training during the or who live in remote

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area, help in demystifying the jargon around workforce development, facilitating meetings with training providers

- Information about the Protection of Vulnerable Groups: understanding the new legislation and the impact it will have on early years and childcare providers, support to help organisations to comply with the legislation
- Organisational Strategy, Business and Policy related issue: assistance would be welcomed in formulating a training and workforce development strategy which supports compliance with regulatory frameworks but retains an organisation's ethos and culture, workforce planning to meet registration requirements, guidance with business planning to support sustainability, understanding self assessment and implementing quality improvements, help and guidance in dealing with procurement and engaging effectively with single outcome agreement process within local authorities,
- Help on a one to one basis to deal with many of the issues raised

It was apparent during the discussion that the issues raised above had resonance with all of the participants, to a greater or lesser extent. It was generally agreed to have been a useful and agreement reached that the group should seek to continue to meet so that it could influence Tayforth's Board plans and decisions for engaging more directly with the concerns of early years employers, workers and educators.

### CHILDHOOD PRACTICE MENTORS

*Ann Brady,*

#### *Coalition of Childhood Umbrella Organisations*

It was back to study for a number of "mature" students in September as members of the Coalition of Childhood Umbrella Organisations (CCUO) together with representatives from each of the CCUO partner agencies attended the initial induction programme of an **Advanced Mentor**

**Programme** developed and being delivered by Edinburgh University.

The CCUO, a working group of the Childhood Practice Development Group, whose members include; Association of Quality Nursery Scotland, Care and Learning Alliance, National Day Nurseries Association, Scottish Childminding Association, Scottish Out of School Network, Scottish Pre-school Playgroup Association and a representative from the Childcare Partnerships, has commissioned Edinburgh University to develop a bespoke mentor programme.



***Edinburgh University Mentor Students***

Supported by funding released by the Scottish Government, the CCUO has commissioned Edinburgh University to develop and deliver a programme designed to help the CCUO identify and highlight solutions to the issues and challenges facing employers. Ann Brady, Chair of CCUO, and also one of the students undertaking the course comments "The course provides us with opportunities to learn and expand our personal skills and improve our understanding of the challenges facing the smaller employer. They often face particular difficulties when striving to deliver a quality childhood practice service and simultaneously support their staff (and sometimes her/himself) through the learning route to an approved level 9 degree/degree equivalent qualification."

Twelve students, all with management experience and drawn from the membership of the CCUO partners, will undertake this tailored level 10 programme. They have an aim of not only successfully completing the course and gaining recognition of their skills as mentors, but also as an

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additional key outcome, producing mentor guidance for employers supporting staff through the Childhood Practice learning pathways. The guidance will be tailored to meet the needs of all the umbrella organisations and aims to be particularly helpful to the more vulnerable voluntary sector and small private employers.

Ann continues, "the programme has been developed in partnership with Edinburgh University. Each learner mentor will work closely with up to 3 mentees during the programme to ensure that the case studies and support documents that are contained within the final guidance are built around real experiences. This learning will then inform the new guidance that we hope will be ready by the 2010/11 intake of Childhood Practice level 9 students."

### WORKFORCE PLANNING

*Janet Miller and Adrian Snowball*

In October 2008 the Scottish Social Services Learning Network Tayforth commissioned research for the Tayforth Workforce Planning Project 2008 – 2009.

The project was established to improve the Network's knowledge of the workforce, workforce planning and learning provision in social services and learning provider organisations in Tayforth. It sought to develop a picture of workforce planning activity, with particular reference to registration.

So what did it tell us about workforce planning in Tayforth?

A large proportion of those who responded (over 70%) undertake some form of workforce planning. Voluntary sector employers were more likely to be implementing workforce plans than the private or statutory sectors. Workforce plans were more likely to be in place, or under development, in larger organisations (over 250 employees), than in smaller organisations.

The survey also asked about qualifications. Qualification rates were found to be particularly low among front-line support workers. In 30% of

the organisations surveyed fewer than 25% of support workers had qualifications for registration. Managers fared rather better with over 75% with qualifications in 80% of organisations.

Consideration was also given to what learning provision is available. Learning providers face particular capacity issues; of ensuring enough student throughput to keep programmes viable. A common theme was the need for more effective collaboration between employers and learning providers.

The project outcomes suggest that if workforce planning is to be used effectively for improved service delivery, there are specific challenges to be met. The first concerns workforce planning in individual organisations; the challenge for the Learning Network is how best to support organisations to adopt and use approaches to workforce planning that will help them to support and develop their workers. The second area concerns collaboration in workforce planning; there is a need for better information about the entire workforce, and the challenge for the Network is how best to encourage effective collaboration.

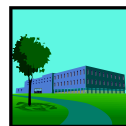
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