

Ministerial Foreword



‘A renewed emphasis on the period between early pregnancy and 3 years old is needed to reflect the evidence that this is the period with the greatest bearing on outcomes and a critical period in terms of breaking cycles of poor outcomes.’

(The Early Years Framework, p16)

Recognising that all adults working with Scotland’s youngest children have an important responsibility to implement *The Early Years Framework* is central to achieving transformational change for Scotland’s children.

We are increasingly aware of the impact and importance our work has now and indeed for the rest of children’s lives. In order for staff to be certain that they are providing world-class experiences for babies and children, they need to know why it is essential that they get it right for every child in these most critical years. By using the *Getting it right for every child* approach, which streamlines services and has been shown to reduce bureaucracy, we can deliver better outcomes for our children and their parents. I want to ensure that the entire workforce is supported and skilled to lead this challenging agenda.

Through prevention and early intervention, we can provide children with the social and emotional support needed to help fulfil their potential and break the cycles of underachievement which often blight some of our most disadvantaged communities. No child’s future should be predetermined by being born into disadvantaged circumstances and I firmly believe that every child should have the chance to succeed, regardless of their background. Intervening earlier with families cannot only prevent children from falling into a cycle of deprivation, antisocial behaviour and poverty, but can save thousands of pounds now and in the longer term.

This national guidance, *Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland’s Children and Families*, replaces *Birth to Three: Supporting our Youngest Children* and was revised by Learning and Teaching Scotland in collaboration with key partners, to support and inform practice across Scotland. The guidance sets out to facilitate students and staff working with and on behalf of our youngest children and their families.

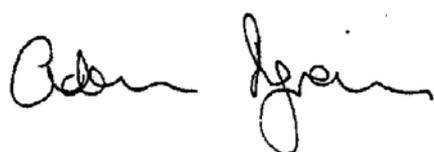
The guidance and accompanying multimedia resource includes important information on pre-birth and brain development and reflects the principles and philosophy of early intervention which underpin *The Early Years Framework*, *Achieving our Potential* and

Equally Well. It reflects the complex and multi-faceted nature of the challenges faced by some of our children and families, making clear that these challenges cannot be dealt with by a single agency, but require multi-agency collaborations. This, of course, is precisely what our three interconnected and mutually reinforcing social frameworks are intended to secure.

Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families identifies the four Key Principles of Rights of the Child, Relationships, Responsive Care and Respect. It aims to improve and enhance evidence-based practice by building on our knowledge of current research and our work with babies, young children and their families.

It highlights practical case studies and gives signposts to related research examples to support staff in their initial and continuing professional development. It also lays a sound foundation for children's learning and development and will ensure a smooth and coherent transition for all children as they begin to engage with *Curriculum for Excellence 3–18*.

I commend this important document and supporting multimedia resource to all those working with Scotland's youngest children as we realise our radical vision to prevent intergenerational poverty and break the cycle of deprivation, thus achieving the best possible start and improved life chances for ALL of our children.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam Ingram', written in a cursive style.

Adam Ingram
Minister for Children and Early Years

Introduction

There is a strong relationship between early life experiences and how babies develop cognitively, socially, emotionally and physically throughout their lives. *The Early Years Framework* states that:

‘It is during our very earliest years and even pre-birth that a large part of the pattern for our future adult life is set.’

(Scottish Government, 2008d, p 1)

This national guidance, *Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland’s Children and Families*, replaces *Birth to Three: supporting our youngest children*. It is built on research and seeks to promote evidence-based approaches. *Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland’s Children and Families* recognises the importance of pregnancy and the first years of life in influencing children’s development and future outcomes. A focus on this period is therefore critical to achieving positive outcomes for Scotland’s children and families. Staff working with babies and families understand that learning takes place initially within the womb. They also appreciate that babies arrive into the world with their individual personalities, ready to adapt to, and be influenced by, their environment.

This national guidance sets the context for high quality care and education and seeks to identify key features that support and promote evidence-based approaches. Throughout this guidance, the following terms are used:

- **parents** to include all main caregivers
- **staff** to include those working with children and families in early years settings
- **adults** to include parents and all those working with (or on behalf of) children.





Staff working with Scotland's youngest children should recognise the impact and importance of their work on children's lives and future life chances. In order for staff to be confident that they are providing the best experiences for babies and children, they need to know why it is essential that they get it right for every child in these most critical years.

In broad terms, the purpose of this guidance is to help inform and support all adults who work with and on behalf of Scotland's youngest children. Along with the related DVD and CD, it should be regarded as a multimedia key resource which provides guidance and also stimulates and generates professional discussion and debate. This kind of approach to professional development leads to the highest quality provision for all babies and children in their very earliest years. To maximise accessibility for all, this guidance and related support materials are available online¹.

The main aim of *Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families* is to promote continuing professional development. It will also:

- facilitate effective partnership working for the benefit of every child
- build confidence, capability and capacity across the current workforce
- inform students engaged in pre-service training programmes
- provide a common reference source to promote reflection, debate and discussion
- share and inform ways in which staff support children and families
- improve and enhance evidence-informed practice.

¹ www.LTScotland.org.uk/earlyyears/index.asp

Many countries are looking with a renewed focus at the area of pre-birth to 3 years because of a growing recognition of the importance of the earliest months and years. Drawing upon national and international research, this guidance sets out four key principles for best starts and positive outcomes, through which effective support and learning opportunities for very young children can be promoted. The four key principles are:

- Rights of the Child
- Relationships
- Responsive Care
- Respect.

Based on these key principles, the guidance proposes sensitive and respectful approaches and ways of interacting that are beneficial to children and families. Nine features have been identified to put the key principles into practice. All of the key principles and features of practice are interrelated and interdependent. How they are used to inform practice is a question for staff, children and families.

Throughout this guidance, there is recognition of the various and complementary ways in which very young children are cared for in different settings. It is based on the fundamental understanding that relationships, environment, health, family and community all influence and shape children's development. Whilst children's early experiences play an important part in shaping their future attitudes and dispositions, very young children are capable individuals in their own right, and, with appropriate support, can develop resilience to deal with many of life's challenges.

