



pengreen

Centre for Children and Families



Early childhood practitioners as
advocates and activists

Early Childhood Workforce Initiative

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Integrated centres for children and families – a global ‘project’

ECECs working collaboratively with parents and the wider community have the capacity to transform children’s life chances.



“if there is no explicit emancipatory or empowering vision guiding the project from the onset, it will prove difficult to realise any emancipatory effects”

Boog 2003, 434

Integrated centres for children and families require a different kind of
community engagement;
'How' is more significant than 'what'

By encouraging families to participate in the re-shaping of the shared context in which they live out their individual lives

By supporting parents and children to become effective public service users

By building the capacity of children, families and communities to secure outcomes for themselves

By harnessing the community's energy for change and parent's deep commitment to ensuring that their children have a better deal



With thanks to Demos, the Scottish
Government, Pen Green

Activism: Get to know your community and it's history;
Communities of oppression – the action group against the centre



Protest march video



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Activism: Lessons from indigenous peoples

- Take what people offer and build on it
- Pride matters: never humiliate; never blame
- Find reciprocal ways of working
- Look to your elders for help
- Don't accept being minoritized
- Insist on complexity
- If you're seen as 'trouble' take it as a compliment
- Seize the day and leave no-one behind

Pen Green

A Centre that encourages children to be all
that they can be



“...our image of the
child is rich in
potential, strong,
powerful, competent
and, most of all,
connected to adults
and other children.”

Loris Malaguzzi

'Learning to be Strong'- children, parents and staff living and working in 'oppressed' communities

I'm strong;
I'm able to challenge;
I'm able to question
I'm able to choose;
I feel good about being me



Children should feel strong
Children should feel in control
Children should feel able to question
Children should feel able to choose
Children should 'feel good about being me'

1984 'Learning to be strong' A book reflecting the lessons we have learnt

1987 A curriculum document for parents and children

1990 A resilience and safeguarding CPD programme for children



Issues for Children in our centre

Being part of a minoritized or marginalized group

Special rights and disabilities

Refugee status

Poverty

Coping with major changes and daily transitions

Being part of complex family networks that form and reform

Divorce or separation

Living in more than one home

Conflict over access

Violence

Physical and emotional abuse

Drug or alcohol abuse

Trauma in early childhood

Advocacy, agency and activism are the key concepts that underpin our work

Advocacy - parents and early years educators speaking on behalf of, and interceding on behalf of children



Agency - children, parents, staff believing they can change situations and determine the outcomes of events. Agency reflects self esteem and self confidence. A child (or adult) high in agency will readily become involved in challenging problems and will be appropriately assertive interacting with peers

Activism – within a 'pedagogy of activism' reflective teacher educators construct their practice as part of a struggle for social justice and social change

Pen Green beliefs about what children need from all the important adults in their lives

- Adults who can contain their emotional needs
- Adults who are able to raise self-esteem
- Adults who can help them to gain more control over their lives
- Adults who encourage them to be self-directing
- Adults who encourage them to push boundaries
- Adults who encourage them to feel they have the power to change things
- Adults who promote learning as a lifelong experience
- Adults who are actively engaged in their own learning and development
- Adults who know how to get their own emotional needs met
- Adults who are not afraid of bodily warmth, cuddling and of making those relationships with children
- Adults who want to work in an equal and active partnership

Building resilience

feisty children, children with a sense of 'chuffedness',
children who can self regulate



- The ability to understand and control their own emotions, self discipline
- The ability to get their emotional needs met
- The ability to adapt to new situations
- The ability to take critical a stand
- The ability to make choices
- The ability to integrate different experiences into a common understanding - mental flexibility
- The ability to articulate their own position and take on board the perspectives of others and communicate effectively
- The ability to take initiative and to be self assertive

EC Practitioners networking globally with opportunity to visit ECE provisions overseas built into their CPD



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Early Childhood Educators

Standing on the shoulders of giants- part of a proud profession

- Robust professionals with a strong theoretical understanding
- Good Supervision and Support
- Strong initial training and CPD
- Good remuneration and conditions of reference



- Builder and maintainer of relationships with children, parents, carers
- Pedagogical expert
- Committed to emancipatory practice- activism

References

Whalley, M., Arnold, C., Lawrence, P. and Peerless, S. (2012) 'The voices of their childhood: families and early years' practitioners developing emancipator methodologies through a tracer study', in *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 20 (4), pp.519-535.

Whalley, M. (2017) *Involving Parents in Their Children's Learning* (3rd edn). London: Sage.

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