

News Release

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NEW EARLY YEARS DEGREE SIGNALS MORE SKILLS FOR NURSERY WORKERS

The first university degree for nursery and childcare workers based on new professional standards will help give Scotland's youngest kids the best start, Children's Minister Adam Ingram said today.

The new BA Childhood Practice qualification – offered in universities for the first time this year – will allow early years workers to further their skills, understanding and abilities in line with the new Standard for Childhood Practice.

Mr Ingram, who will meet some of the first students to start the course today, said:

“This government is clear that an early start is the best start for Scotland's children. By ensuring support is in place at the first opportunity we can give every young person the chance to reach their potential, which will lead to benefits for everyone in Scotland.

“Developing the skills and career opportunities of those delivering early years services is key to helping us achieve that goal and the new professional standards will promote excellence in the sector.

“We firmly believe that investing in our children during their earliest years is central to influencing future life chances which is why we will have an unprecedented focus on this area through our Early Years Framework, to be launched soon.

“The students starting this new BA Childhood Practice are at the forefront of that drive, helping our youngest children develop and get off on the right track. That's why it's so encouraging to get the chance to meet and congratulate those starting the course.”

The undergraduate degree for lead practitioners and managers in the early years workforce is the first course to meet the new standards developed by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), QAA Scotland and others in the education, voluntary and private sectors.

The Standard for Childhood Practice aims to support early years and childcare workers to follow a skilled career path within the sector and help workers to be recognised as professionals. Longer term, all early years and child care managers will be required to gain new awards of 360 credits and SCQF level 9 for registration with the SSSC.

SSSC Chief Executive Carole Wilkinson said:

“The early years are a significant time for children and research shows the best outcomes for children come from effective and well led services committed to improvement and enhancement.

“The high uptake of places on the Childhood Practice degrees shows how responsive this sector is to providing what is best for children and their families and the commitment of the sector to register with the SSSC.”

Strathclyde University Deputy Principal Anne Hughes, who chaired the group which developed the new standards, said:

“We have worked to ensure that the practice and principles enshrined in the new standards will produce the best, most highly-qualified professionals for their extremely important work in the learning and development of children.

“The awards have been designed to reflect the considerable changes which the profession has undergone in recent years, with new areas of policy and accountability, but it has the ultimate goal of ensuring the highest quality of care for children.”

NOTES FOR NEWS EDITORS

1. There are 220 students who started the BA Childhood Practice degree in October.
2. The course is being run at the UHI Millennium Institute and the universities of Strathclyde, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow. Lead practitioners/managers achieving these awards will work with children up to 16 years of age.
3. Minister for Children and Early Years Adam Ingram will meet students starting the course at a reception at Strathclyde University’s Jordanhill campus tonight (11 November, 2008).

4. Last year the Scottish Government announced the development of the Standard for Childhood Practice:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2007/10/31094755>
5. The Childhood Practice Development Group - consisting of training providers from higher and further education, public, private and voluntary sector employers, SQA, HMIE and SSSC – enabled development of the BA Childhood Practice courses from the standards.

Contact: Brendan Rooney 0131 244 4001