

# Working with Early Years

Early Years – the Organisation for young children is the largest Organisation in Northern Ireland for young children. It is a non-profit making Organisation which has been working since 1965 to promote high quality childcare for children aged 0-12 and their families. Early Years is a membership-based Organisation, a registered charity, a company limited by guarantee and is governed by a Board of Directors.

## Early Years Values and Behaviours

Early Years is committed to providing an exceptional service to our members and service users. Our values serve not only to define what it looks like to work in Early Years but also demonstrate a high respect culture for all those in this community – children and their parents and carers, members, partners and other users of our services. Behaviours are critical factors that characterise how we work together. These will distinguish what really makes working at Early Years ‘distinctive’. We all need support to ensure we have the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake our roles effectively, but the behaviours go beyond this to communicate the ‘Early Years way of working’.

### Our Mission

To promote and develop high quality evidence-informed early childhood services for young children, their families and communities.

### Our Vision

- Children are strong, competent and visible in their communities
- Children are physically and emotionally healthy
- Children are eager and able to learn
- Children are respectful of difference
- Children grow up in a peaceful, prosperous and shared region

### Our Values

- Childhood - in its own right
- Listening to children – and those who care for them
- A strong voice for children
- Play, fun and creativity
- Parents as first educators
- Participation of children and families
- Community involvement and development
- Partnership
- Inclusion and diversity
- Excellence and evidence-based innovation
- Effective stewardship and governance
- A professional, committed and recognised workforce
- Valuing staff, members and their commitment

Working ethically is intrinsic in all that we do:

“We should endeavour to work fairly, with honesty and transparency; everything we do has to stand the test of public scrutiny. We should be caring and responsible for our actions, show respect for our colleagues, and always work for the benefit of the communities we serve, spaces we inhabit and culture we create.



**To deliver the vision, a range of key services is provided, as shown below:**

**Early Years Support Services** – a team of Early Years Specialists provides a range of programmes, services and curriculum support to member groups, practitioners, parents and those providing services in the early years sector.

**Membership Information Services** – members receive support from a dedicated Early Years Specialist and can avail of a number of benefits, including access to a successful lobbying Organisation, preferential rates with third party suppliers, a highly competitive insurance package, access to quality advisory and training support, and membership discount on publications and training materials.

**Training** – training is provided to member groups, parents, adults working with young children in pre-school settings, SureStart projects, nursery and foundation stage classes, management committees and other professionals in the sector, as well as our own staff.

**HighScope** – a team of specialist practitioners within Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland supports settings using the HighScope curriculum – this approach has been researched, developed and shaped by knowledge and understanding over a 40 year period.

**CORAL (Children, Outcomes, Research, Action, Learning) Initiative** – this initiative is aimed at demonstrably improving outcomes and includes two programmes, the Media Initiative for Children Respecting Difference Programme (hereinafter called MIFC Respecting Difference Programme) and the Eager and Able to Learn Programme, which have been subjected to random controlled evaluations with the aim of tracking how the work of the Organisation and member groups improves long-term outcomes for young children, using evidence-based practice and policy advocacy.

**Community Development** – the Organisation provides training and support to the pre-school sector, and parents and communities, to build capacity within local communities by using the key principles of community development.

**SureStart** – SureStart is a government-led, child-focused, community-based initiative aimed at giving every child the best possible start in life. Early Years employs 80 staff in SureStart projects in Northern Ireland and provides strategic direction in its role as Lead Body of five SureStart projects.

**Toybox** – the Toybox Project is a rights-based service model which aims to reduce significantly the educational inequalities experienced by young Traveller children, through the delivery of an outreach play-based early intervention service provided in partnership with children and parents.

**Accreditation** – Early Years delivers accreditation programmes for pre-school and daycare settings. Developed in line with international research on best practice in early years care and education, the process provides external verification on the high quality nature of a setting's service provision.

**Lobbying and Advocacy** – policy influence is supported by a research and evidence-based practice programme to establish evidence on delivering best outcomes for young children. Key components of this work include a Director of Knowledge Exchange, a Policy Officer, ongoing lobbying of politicians and policy makers, a media relations strategy and grassroots mobilisation of members.

**International Work** – the Organisation carries out activities across an international network of partners, including a project within Serbia to deliver a pre-school expansion programme and an International Network on Peace Building, leading the sharing of best practice across countries experiencing conflict and post-conflict situations.

**New Projects** – Early Years continues to innovate and diversify in the number and range of projects it delivers in order to achieve the vision of the Organisation. An example of a new project is UP4iT! which is a family-based obesity prevention and obesity management programme being delivered in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust area.

## **The Benefits of working for Early Years**

### **Early Years Pension Scheme**

Early Years provides a competitive pension scheme for all employees.

### **Employers for Childcare Vouchers**

In partnership with Employers for Childcare, Early Years offer the childcare voucher scheme to existing scheme members. These vouchers offer a flexible and easy way to help working parents afford quality childcare by savings on registered childcare costs.

### **Staff Care Counselling Service**

Early Years provide a confidential counselling service that is accessible to all employees on a 24/7 basis. This independent and confidential counselling and information service is free of charge to all employees. Counselling support is available on a wide range of areas.

### **Health Cash Plan**

Early Years provides a Corporate Health Cash Plan where the employee can claim cash towards her/his everyday health care costs such as dental check-ups and treatment, eyesight tests and contact lenses, therapy treatments such as physiotherapy and chiropody, and much more.

The scheme also provides a Network Benefits scheme which allows employees to access a wide range of discounts and special offers to help their salary go a little bit further.

### **Annual Leave**

Employees receive either 23 or 25 days annual leave pro rata per annum (depending on their salary grade) plus 13 statutory holidays. Leave entitlement increases by an extra two or five days in after the completion of five years' service.

### **Flexible Working**

As an Investor in People, Early Years are committed to retaining a skilled workforce; recognising the necessity of supporting its employees to maintain a work life balance. Early Years is committed to flexible working arrangements and other practicable measures to assist staff balance their employment obligation with domestic and caring responsibilities.

### **Investor in People**

Early Years has a long commitment to investing in its people and successfully achieved Investors in People accreditation in September 2002. The Organisation recognises that its people are the most valuable asset that it has and that investing in their development and growth adds value for those who access services, members, funders and other stakeholders.

# **The Recruitment Process**

## **1. Application Form**

Applicants are encouraged to submit an application form to the following email address: [monitoringofficer@early-years.org](mailto:monitoringofficer@early-years.org). However, hard copy applications are welcomed and all applications will be treated equally regardless of whether they are hard copy or emailed. If you require the Early Years application form in an alternative format, please contact the Human Resources department who will arrange this.

Applicants should receive an automatically generated receipt when they submit their application online. As on occasions, email problems can occur, we suggest applicants call the Human Resources Department on 028 9038 7905 before the application deadline to ensure their application has reached the Organisation.

CV's will not be accepted as alternatives to the Organisation's application form, any CV's submitted will be discarded. Fax copies of application forms will also not be accepted.

Before completing the application form, applicants are strongly advised to carefully consider the job description and personnel specification which outlines the criteria required for the post.

It is the responsibility of applicants to ensure that the application form is fully and correctly completed and that all relevant information in support of their application is included.

If a criterion outlined in the personnel specification states 'demonstrate', applicants must clearly explain on the application form how they fully meet the criteria through their previous work experience.

## **2. Equal Opportunities Monitoring**

The Organisation monitors applications for employment in line with legislation.

When returning your application by post, the equal opportunities monitoring form must be sealed and returned in a separate envelope. If you return your application by email, the monitoring officer will separate the equal opportunities monitoring form from your application prior to the shortlisting stage.

The monitoring information will not be available to those involved in the recruitment process.

## **3. Personnel Specification**

The personnel specification is a profile of the skills and aptitudes required for the post. It lists the essential and desirable criteria that will be used in the shortlisting and selection process. The essential criterion is considered by us as the minimum acceptable standard required to do the job.

## **4. Shortlisting: Essential Criteria**

Shortlisting (i.e. determining who should be interviewed) is based on how well the information in the application form meets the selection criteria listed in the personnel specification.

The essential criteria in the personnel specification will be used as an eligibility sift and applicants must clearly demonstrate on their application form how they meet the essential criteria required for the post to be considered eligible for interview.

The recruitment panel's assessment of this will be made on the information provided, so it is in the candidate's best interests to clearly show the panel how achievements, skills, experience and knowledge apply to the selection criteria.

## 5. Shortlisting: Desirable Criteria

Where there are a large number of applicants, candidates may also be shortlisted using the desirable criteria from the personnel specification and applicants should demonstrate in their application form how they meet the desirable criteria.

## 6. Closing Date

Application forms should be received no later than **10am on Wednesday 15 May 2024**. Any application forms received after the closing time and date will not be considered.

We will not accept any application where we are asked to pay any shortfall in postage.

## 7. Interview

Interviews will be held on **Wednesday 29 May 2024**.

As a general rule, interviews will not be rescheduled to accommodate candidates who are unable to attend on the agreed date due to reasons such as holidays.

If a candidate fails to present him or herself for interview, it will be deemed that they have withdrawn from the recruitment process.

If a candidate is unavoidably detained enroute to interview they should contact the Human Resources Department immediately. Provided contact is made prior to their final deliberations, the panel may agree, after consideration of the circumstances, to allow the candidate to attend. Any candidate who contacts the panel after deliberations have commenced will not be considered for interview.

## 8. Appointment

The appointment will be made by the selection panel.

There may be a reserve list of applicants drawn up for this post which would last for a maximum of six months. Should a similar post become vacant within this time, the HR Department will make contact with the reserve candidates to seek their interest in the role. These posts may be either full-time or part-time on a permanent, temporary or fixed-term basis.

## 9. Employment Start Date

It is envisaged that the successful candidate will commence employment with the Organisation **as soon as possible**.

## 10. Vetting

Early Years considers child protection to be of paramount importance and are committed to ensuring that the Organisation complies with all the necessary procedures to enable them to achieve this standard. This includes internal vetting procedures and additional vetting procedures set out by statutory or regulatory bodies and legislation where required.

### a). Organisational Vetting

As a minimum all employees will be required to fulfil the following satisfactory checks by Early Years in order for confirmation of appointment to be made.

- An AccessNi disclosure check;
- Two employment references including one from the current or most recent employer.

## **b). Other Vetting**

Additional statutory/regulatory vetting checks will be required for certain posts. These will include:

- Trust health assessment
- Trust check (SOSCARE)
- Fit person assessment

The vetting required for your employment with the organisation will be outlined on your letter of offer.

Employment will not commence until all checks have been completed and are deemed satisfactory by the Organisation.

## **11. Eligibility to Work in the UK**

We ensure that candidates are legally eligible to work in the United Kingdom before they commence employment with the Organisation. Candidates will not commence employment with Early Years until they provide such documentation.

## **12. Canvassing**

Canvassing by or on behalf of a candidate will disqualify that candidate.

## **13. Data Protection**

Application forms and any additional information provided will be held confidentially for a period of 12 months.