

# Our judging panel



**Steve Alexander**  
Chief executive  
Pre-School Learning Alliance

The Pre-School Learning Alliance is the largest children's education charity in England and supports 800,000 children and their families. Previously, Steve was chief executive of the British Dyslexia Association. He has more than 25 years' experience in senior roles in the NHS, local authority and voluntary sectors. He has helped to shape national policy, including as an associate consultant with the National Development Team.



**Liz Bayram**  
Chief executive  
National Childminding Association

Liz joined the NCMA as director of policy and public affairs in 2004 and became chief executive less than two years later. Her career began in journalism and she then took her skills in campaigning and raising awareness to the voluntary sector. Her leadership has helped the NCMA to raise the profile of childminders. She is also trustee of the National Children's Bureau and the National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations.



**Julian Grenier**  
Headteacher  
Kate Greenaway Nursery School and Children's Centre

Julian was a member of the working party which wrote the 'Principles' section of the Foundation Stage Curriculum, and has written and co-written some of the guidance for the new Early Years Foundation Stage as well as writing a short supplement about the Early Excellence Programme. He is currently studying for a doctorate in education at the Institute of Education. Julian is a regular writer for *Nursery World*.



**Laura Henry**  
Managing director  
Childcare Consultancy

Laura has more than 20 years' experience in the early years field. The Childcare Consultancy specialises in quality training and expert advice to childcare settings. With private, independent, voluntary and maintained sector clients, the team has developed an enviable reputation within this sector. Laura writes for early years journals and is often called upon to give expert advice on sector issues, nationally and internationally.



**Martin Howarth**  
Assistant director for Strategic Services  
DCSF

Martin is assistant director for Strategic Services – Early Years, Extended Schools and Special Needs at the Department for Children, Skills and Families. His role includes responsibility for the Government's £1.7 billion early years grant and 0-7 partnership pilot programme. From 2005-08, he headed Croydon council's SEN inclusion strategy. He also worked on the Government's 'Removing Barriers to Achievement' strategy.



**Linda Keats**  
Nursery manager  
Laindon Neighbourhood Nursery

Linda began her career in early years in Australia more than 20 years ago and has been involved in many areas of childcare. She progressed from nursery assistant to development officer, deputy, and then on to her current position as nursery manager at Laindon – which has just received its second 'Outstanding' Ofsted report. Her passion for early childhood education is accompanied by a commitment to ensure it is seen as essential to a child's lifelong learning journey.



**Emma Knights**  
Joint chief executive  
Daycare Trust

Emma Knights took up the post of joint chief executive with Alison Garnham in June 2006. She has had a variety of roles in the voluntary sector, and worked at Child Poverty Action Group in the 1990s. Her two most recent posts were at the Legal Services Commission and the Local Government Association, leading projects on child poverty and attainment. She was the founding chair of the after-school club at her children's school in Norwich.



**Anne Longfield**  
Chief executive  
4Children

Anne Longfield has worked in the children and families policy and services arena for almost 25 years. Chief executive of 4Children since 1997, Anne has played a leading role in influencing thinking and delivery of support for children, families and wider communities. She has a strong interest in community development. She has held several Government adviser roles, including in the Prime Minister's strategy unit at the Cabinet Office.



**Sophie Lowles**  
Project officer  
Children's Workforce Development Council

Sophie has worked as a member of the early years team at the Children's Workforce Development Council for three years. She is the manager of several national projects, which include work on the early years sector learning strategy and driving up the minimum level of qualifications in early years settings. Having gained her first degree in sociology, she is now studying for a Masters in public policy.



**Anne Nelson**  
Chief executive  
Early Education

Anne became a deputy head in 1973 and three years later head of Wolvercote First School in Oxford. As a school improvement adviser, Anne has worked across primary, secondary and special schools. In 2004 she was appointed chief executive of the British Association for Early Childhood Education. She is vice-chair of Early Childhood Forum and chair of the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership in Oxfordshire.



**Anne O'Connor**  
Early years consultant

Anne has taught in inner London primary schools for more than 20 years, specialising in early years and foundation stage. She set up and ran one of the first units in Tower Hamlets, east London to integrate nursery and reception children. Now a freelance early years consultant, writer and trainer, she is an associate trainer for the Institute of Education, University of London, and an advisory board member for two Children's Centres.



**Ruth Pimentel**  
Early years national director  
National Strategies

As the national director for early years, Ruth has overseen the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage. She has also led an expansion of the early years work within the National Strategies in recognition of the importance placed on high quality early years provision. A trained teacher, Ruth has worked in many schools and settings, and also as an inspector. She has provided qualified teacher support to Foundation Stage settings.



**Wendy Scott**  
Consultant in early education  
President TACTYC

Freelance consultant Wendy has been an early years teacher and an inspector, and led a demonstration nursery school. She lectured in early years education and taught the UK's first multi-professional advanced diploma at the Roehampton Institute. After six years as chair and chief executive of the British Association for Early Childhood Education, she became a specialist adviser to the Department for Children, Skills and Families.



**Jenny Spratt**  
Head of early years and childcare services  
Peterborough city council

Jenny has been head of early years and childcare services for Peterborough city council since 1998. She has a background in early childhood education and was head of a nursery school for nine years. She represents the Local Authority Early Years Network on the Early Childhood Forum and is on the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes early years advisory group. Jenny was co-author with Professor Tina Bruce of *Essentials of Literacy from 0-7*.



**Lesley Staggs**  
Early childhood consultant

Lesley began teaching in the north-east and became head of a nursery school in a mining community, followed by a large nursery school in London. She was an inspector in two London boroughs. At the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority she led work on the Early Learning Goals and Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage. She became a senior adviser within the Sure Start unit and in 2003 the first national director for the Foundation Stage.



**Judith Stevens**  
Early years regional adviser  
National Strategies

Judith Stevens is an early years regional adviser working in north London. She has worked as a childminder, teacher, early years and mathematics co-ordinator and as an early years adviser. She has an interest in problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy, and developing enabling environments. She has written for early years publications, including *Nursery World*. Her most recent books are *Maths in Stories* (2008) and *Maths Now!* (2008).



**Purnima Tanuku**  
Chief executive  
National Day Nurseries Association

Purnima works closely with ministers and senior civil servants, representing NDNA and the sector. She has helped with the development of NDNA's new National Early Years Enterprise Centre and headquarters, which opened in June 2007. Purnima has focused on the charity's ability to support and represent the membership. She has much experience at senior executive level working with public, private and charitable organisations.



**Nicole Weinstein**  
Freelance journalist  
Specialist in early years

Nicole Weinstein is a freelance journalist specialising in early education and childcare. She spent five years writing in-house for *Nursery World* and now produces its 'Tried and Tested' monthly resources feature. She has many links with the childcare sector, working with those who run on-the-ground services as well as those at the forefront of the industry. Since becoming a mother she is even more passionate about the early years.