

Newsletter – June 2008

Welcome dear parents and friends of Cowgate,

This newsletter brings...

- *lots of examples of wonderful news;*
- *an update on where we are with the CfE;*
- *news about our trip to Community Play;*
- *what we covered on our in-service day;*
- *an invitation to pick berries for jam with us;*
- *information on how we manage behaviour and most importantly...*
- *an opportunity to celebrate two of our children's block play achievements.*



Grounds for Awareness Application

I am absolutely delighted to inform you that our application for Grounds for Awareness has been successful. We have received a grant of £900. The money will be spent on climbers and planters to encourage even more visitors to our busy little garden. (Thank you Lorraine for taking the time to put this application together your hard work has paid off)

As I look at our wonderful garden a quote comes to mind...

“We have all of this beauty around us and yet grown-ups often lose themselves in offices and imagine they are doing very important things. Can you recognise the flowers by their names and the birds by their singing? Young people, I hope you will take a long time growing up!” Jawaharial Nehru (1889 – 1964)

Sponsored Walk Funds

When we said goodbye to our tired old balancing beam we knew we would have to fundraise for another. The children so loved our other one. We have finally sourced a 'Wobbly Slatted Bridge' from Timberline (£733 inc. vat). Timberline is a family run company. They have introduced a large number of play trail items offering a wide range of physical and imaginative opportunities for the children. We are very much looking forward to watching the children playing on it.

Excellent News

We had a terrific response to our SSO post. The calibre of the candidates was extremely high. However, we had a clear candidate and have invited Dave to join us. Dave was an engineer for 37 years. He has an interest in gardening and do-it-yourself... a well qualified gentleman. As soon as his enhanced disclosure is through Dave will be with us.

Curriculum for Excellence Update

Release of draft learning outcomes and experiences.

As you will no doubt be aware all the draft learning outcomes and experiences for each of the eight curricular review areas have now been released by Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS). They can all be found, together with an overarching cover paper and some guidance to schools, on the LTS website at <http://www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk/outcomes/index.asp>

Release of Building the Curriculum 3

This document will be released on the 10th June 2008. It will provide a framework for learning and teaching 3-18 and will replace the existing 5-14 and secondary curricular guidelines

Consultation on National Qualifications

The details on the consultation on National Qualifications will also be released on the 10th June 2008. You can find Fiona Hyslop's recent statement on National Qualifications at the following web address

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/This-Week/Speeches/smarter/natqual>

The consultation period with regards to National Qualifications runs until the end of October 2008.

CEC Curriculum for Excellence Website

The Authority's Curriculum for Excellence website has recently been updated and you will locate all relevant information there.

http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/internet/Learning/Programmes_and_initiatives/CEC_curriculum_for_excellence

Our visit to Community Playthings in Robertsbridge London

Lian and I enjoyed the most wonderful weekend living with the families at Community Play.

We were invited to Community Play to explore where all our furniture comes from and much more. We enjoyed many pleasant experiences, but as we sat in very peaceful surroundings observing the children in joyous, active play it reaffirmed our beliefs in what experiences we truly believe are crucial to children, children

naturally exploring the environment, thinking independently, enjoying creativity all are intrinsic to a healthy childhood.

Lian and I made our very own Community Playthings truck! We have displayed the truck and treasures from our adventure in the hall.

Community Playthings support the work of Friedrich Froebel. I have attached an article 'His life and influence on education' for your reference at the end of this newsletter.

Berry Picking Day


As a staff team we are planning to visit Craigie Farm on August 2nd @ 11am. We hope to pick enough berries to make our jam for the year ahead, with the children's help of course. As it is a Saturday we truly hope you will come too. We really do hope so; it should be a lovely experience for us all.

A Creative Approach to Managing Behaviour

Some time back we invited parents to a sharing session on how we {parents and staff} manage children's behaviour. There was much enthusiasm from the centre community at the time, but perhaps due to the busy lives everyone leads the little get together never took place. I have come across an article from the British Association from Early Childhood Education, Issue 48 (spring 2006) which I thought you may find useful.

"Helping children manage their feelings

Young children are learning about boundaries and containment. They need to test the limits to find out where and who they are.

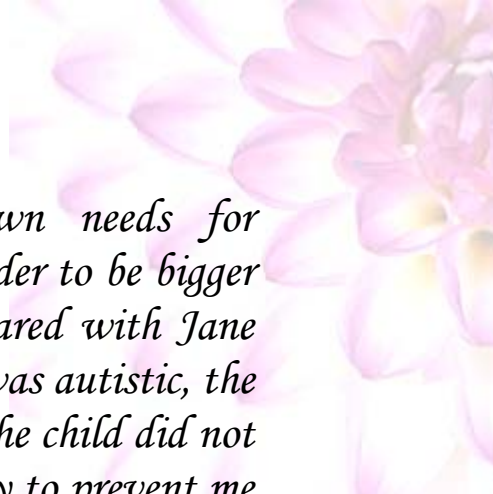


They are learning how to inhibit themselves and delay gratification. It can be challenging joining a group of children from different backgrounds and experiences with new rules and routines; particularly in you are an only child, not used to sharing toys or adults.

In the day-to-day management of behaviour there are other factors staff need to consider, which include:

- ❖ Understanding children's schemas and action patterns*
- ❖ Listening to children, their passions and interests*
- ❖ Knowledge of developmental stages and understanding that these are only a rough guide to understanding individuals*
- ❖ Setting boundaries and limits without shaming or shouting*
- ❖ Realistic expectations and goodwill*
- ❖ Seeing ourselves and using ourselves as role models*
- ❖ Setting-up and maintaining rituals and routines*
- ❖ Knowing the background and past experiences of individual children and families*
- ❖ Providing opportunities for children to practise and experiment with feelings and different behaviour*
- ❖ Working together with colleagues and parents*
- ❖ Dealing with our feelings too*

Very recently, Jane and I were discussing our feelings when managing children's behaviour. We acknowledged that we are role models for the children, we realise that what influences the children is our courage, energy, vibrancy and ability to rise above everyday emotional situations in the centre. We acknowledge that the children need an emotionally safe environment where they are free enough to discover the natural learning process of mistakes and risks and to cultivate their unique strength and for us to love them no matter what. Jane and I acknowledged that



we {practitioners} need to subjugate our own needs for retaliation, personal space and healing time, in order to be bigger than the behaviour that has just occurred. I shared with Jane that many years ago I was bitten by a child who was autistic, the bite scar is still visible today, I knew at the time the child did not intentionally hurt me, his inner chaos and inability to prevent me giving him his medicine caused him to act in that way. Jane and I acknowledged that it is important for us all to return fresh from these experiences, with warmth and positivity ready to face another day and of course we do...

Let us take a moment to celebrate Ben and Omar's breathtaking structure.

Please take a moment to admire the photographs of Ben and Omar's block play (displayed in the hall)

Ben and Omar spent a considerable time on this play, developing moral thinking, such as negotiation, compromise, cooperation, caring and consideration. Language flourished as the boys discussed their structure and explained their work on their structure and shared information. You can see from this amazing structure that unit blocks are a natural material for learning math. Blocks become tools that invite mathematical thinking. Patterns, geometric shapes, part-whole relationships, fractions, adding, dividing, subtracting are all experienced and practiced naturally in the process of building.

Ben and Omar mastered balance and steadiness as they worked intentionally to create forms that pleased them aesthetically.

All children progress through specific stages as they use blocks in play. Ben and Omar are using blocks to represent things they know. This is the most advanced stage of block play.

Well done Ben and Omar 😊

Open day - the Garden at Johnston Terrace

I attended the Open Day on Saturday 7th June. What a spectacular resource for our children. This is the space our children have been using for their Forest School development. In this space the children's affinity with living things has undoubtedly been nurtured. The children have had the opportunity to engage with the rhythms of the weather the habits of an insect, or the design and scent of a flower. The garden is full of wildflowers, which the children picked freely without the usual admonitions not to pick flowers. This space brought new dimensions to their play and I believe there was an increased interest in the litter pickers! In the garden there are risks, for example there are jaggy nettles... the risks I believe are worth it.

We {parents and staff} put the long-term benefits to the children's development above short-term troubles like dirty clothes! Acknowledging, children gain essential insights from nature, which is critical for their development.


Well done to Jane who has worked tirelessly to make this experience a success for the children and many thanks to the parents who fully supported their child's involvement in this experience.

I am looking forward to the next Forest School experience.

In-Service

We had a very successful in-service day. I have provided a summary of the three main areas we explored;

- 1. Listening to and trusting our children*



Children are leaders of their own learning, as a staff team our goal is to develop even more strategies in supporting children in their choices, focus on their strengths and encourage them to find solutions to their own problems. For example, children who may appear to need support with their coats, shoes will be asked 'what can we do to help?' without presuming the child does need help, he/she may have worked out a strategy; when conflicts arise between the children, adults will continue to help the child/ren discuss the issue. Thus, conflicts can be viewed as an opportunity to develop social skills.

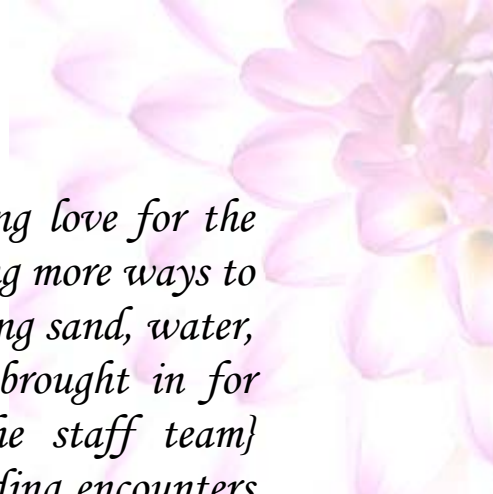
We talked about reviewing our questions and comments to children, and how we must carefully consider these, for example when the child is painting; we will draw them into a dialogue about their work rather than asking a direct question. For example "I like how you have painted a thick blue line beside the yellow one", "I like the colours you have chosen" are comments that show the children you have found a meaning in their work that is not purely based on visual realism and representation.

We hope to have questions all around the building that will support our questioning / commenting strategies (please view suggestions of questions to promote sustained shared thinking at the end of this newsletter)

At the end of this newsletter I have added a resource reference to support development in this area 'Participation and Early Years.'

2. Outdoor Play

We have always valued children's learning in the natural environment. We discussed the concept of an 'invisible membrane' between outdoors and indoors. The garden will be open to all our children all day as all children are eager to connect



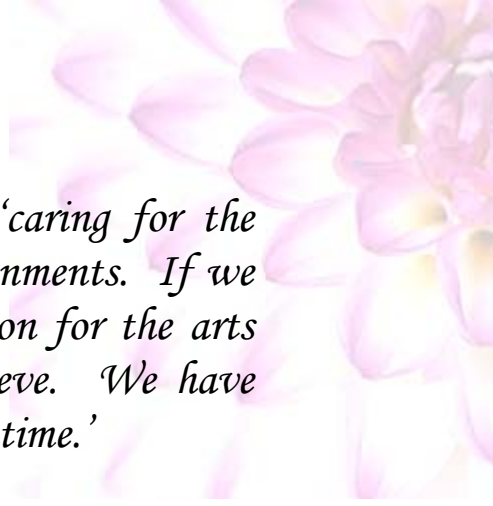
with nature given a chance they develop a strong love for the earth and everything upon it. We discussed finding more ways to bring nature indoors. We already do this by bringing sand, water, pebbles, shells, pinecones, leaves even logs are brought in for children's play. We plant seeds but we {the staff team} acknowledged we want to do much more. Providing encounters with the natural world takes effort, but we owe it to our children. If we expose them to the marvels of creation from an early age and nurture their innate curiosity, children will retain a reservoir of wonder that will serve them throughout their lives.

3. The importance of routines and the rhythm of the day

The staff team agreed that children need consistency. Daily routines help children anticipate what comes next. Having a sequence of events that is the same everyday helps children feel in control. We aim to introduce more routines, involving the children in the process giving them a sense of control and building their confidence.

You may have noticed that very recently we introduced new paint sequence books. The children can now select what colours they would like to make up. Often paint at the art easel is the wrong consistency, the children can now make up paint according to their own needs. The paint will be stored in clear containers on an adjacent table so that the children can select their own colours from a greater range.

Additionally we aim to ensure that when a child approaches the easel at the end of the day it is still as fresh as it was at the beginning of the day.



This brought us onto the concept of everyone 'caring for the environment' all children deserve beautiful environments. If we want children to grow up to have an appreciation for the arts and aesthetics then we must live what we believe. We have decided to introduce a 'caring for our environment time.'

This is a little sample of our dialogue on our in-service day. I am sure you will agree we achieved quite a lot.

Many Thanks

Craig and Laura's daddy George has very kindly (and not at all under duress) been raising funds for us. He has raised £70 this month which we hope to use to buy plumbing resources to enrich our sand and water trays. We aim to have these resources as a permanent part of our daily set up, which the children will constantly rearrange. George you are our hero!

Buttons

Lian has made a request for buttons. All shapes and sizes. If you have any spare buttons around your home would you please bring them in for Lian?

Again we come to an end of the newsletter, I would like to leave you with a well known quote...

"We do not stop playing because we grow old. We grow old because we stop playing" George Bernard Shaw.

With the warmest kindest wishes for the month ahead.

Lynn and the Cowgate Team.

Friedrich Froebel - 1782-1852

His life and influence on education

Miriam LeBlanc

 *Print Version*  *E-mail this page*

What was life like before kindergarten, before 'childhood' existed? Children worked in mines and factories; nobody celebrated birthdays, and by the age of seven, children were considered adults. Then along came Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852), and invented the kindergarten...perhaps as a result of being raised by the proverbial 'wicked' stepmother of fairytales, who gave him little love or attention.


"Play is the highest expression of human development in childhood, for it alone is the free expression of what is in a child's soul."

Friedrich Froebel

It's 2005, and we've passed the high-water mark for childhood. Our children may not be coal mining, but they deal with the pressures of television, advertising, and loss of outdoor play. This discussion of Froebel is more important than ever.

Froebel grew up in the beautiful forests of Thuringia, Germany, with a keen love of nature (the same countryside inspired his famous contemporary, Goethe, to make it his home for decades). This closeness to creation, along with a firm Christian faith, were key to Froebel's educationist ideas, which were centred in the unity and inner connectedness of all life.

Froebel arrived at his involvement in early childhood education via an unlikely mélange of experiences. Weak in language and



writing skills as a child, he grew to excel at visually comprehended disciplines such as geometry and mapmaking. A two-year apprenticeship to a Thuringian forester inspired the enthusiastic fifteen-year-old, who had a natural bent for self-education. He gathered local plants for classification, and avidly consumed books on a variety of subjects. By 1805, after studies in the university town of Jena including surveying and architecture, Froebel had settled on architecture as a career.

But unexpectedly, Froebel switched paths. A friend--possibly someone who understood this highly gifted youth-- counselled him to abandon architecture for teaching, and this seemed to bring on a revelation of sorts. The would-be architect dropped his plans and decided to pursue education as a profession. He accepted an invitation to teach at a Frankfurt school—one of the first schools based on the educator Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi's progressive ideals. Pestalozzi (1746-1827) saw the child as a being with enormous latent possibility and an innate desire to learn. Teachers encouraged the children's natural curiosity and exploration: new and daring pedagogy for turn-of-the-century Europe, where young children were expected to endure interminable lectures and waste hour upon hour in rote recitation.

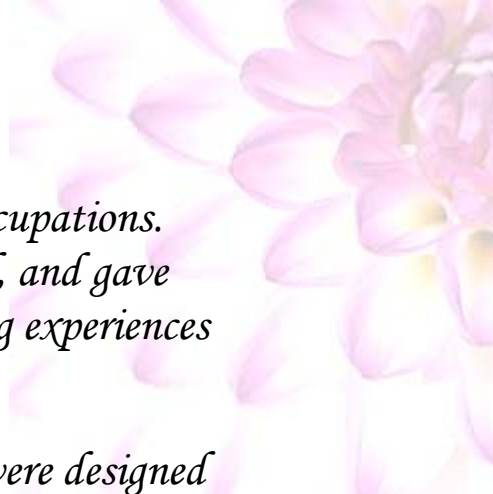
*After two years of teaching in Frankfurt, Froebel spent the years 1808 through 1810 under Pestalozzi at his Yverdon school, and was deeply influenced by him. Pestalozzi's ideas are reflected throughout Froebel's first important work, *The Education of Man*, as in his well-known motto, 'Kommt lasst uns unsern Kindern leben!' (Literally translated as 'Come, let us live with our children!'. One interpretation suggests, 'Let us live in an exemplary fashion for our children.') Froebel believed humans are by nature creative beings. He observed that play was a necessary developmental phase in educating the 'whole' child, enlisting all his imaginative powers and physical movements in exploring his interests. Though widespread today, this insight was*

revolutionary in the early nineteenth century, when play was viewed as idle, and children as miniature adults to be molded as rapidly as possible into economically productive members of society.

After more studies at the University of Goettingen, and a tour of duty (1812-1814) in the Napoleonic wars, Froebel supported himself as an assistant at the University of Berlin's mineralogical museum. There for the next two years he sorted and classified its huge crystal collection, attending lectures on crystallography and mineralogy in between. His observations of the geometrically shaped surface planes of crystals bolstered his belief that fixed laws govern the natural world, and that these same laws guide the development of the child, the adult, and even whole societies. Hence the logic of creation could be illumined through the guided manipulation of forms.

In 1816 Froebel declined an offer of a professorship of mineralogy in Stockholm, and instead launched his dream of founding a school where he might test his observations as they related to the educating of children. He opened the Universal German Educational Institute in Gieshelm that year, relocating in 1817 to the nearby village of Keilhau. Froebel ran the Institute himself until 1830, then went on to found schools using his techniques in Switzerland. He later opened his first Kindergarten in 1840 at Blankenburg, Germany. Until this time there had been no educational system for children under seven years of age, nor recognition that young children were capable of learning social and intellectual skills that might serve as a foundation for their whole life.

Froebel challenged other conventions in education. In his day, intricate and decorated toys for children were the norm; he found them completely inappropriate. As he formulated his curriculum for young children, Froebel designed open-ended instructional

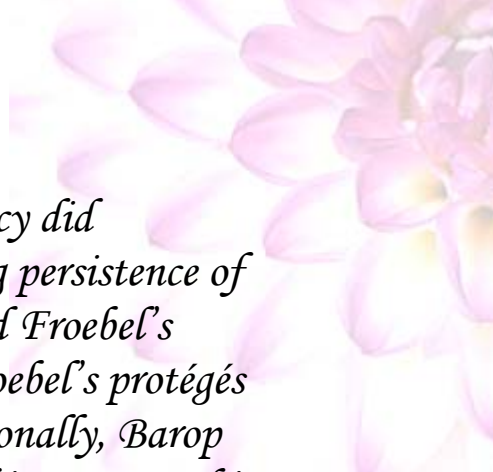


materials called the Gifts, with complementary Occupations. These were for use both in kindergarten and school, and gave children hands-on involvement in practical learning experiences through play.

A frequent misconception today is that the Gifts were designed primarily for use as math manipulatives. As Froebel's insights from his categorization of crystals suggest, they represent in fact much more than that, opening a window to the child's inner self and leading him to a deepening knowledge of the world and the interrelationships of things.

Foundational to the development of the Gifts was the recognition of the value of block play. Froebel believed that playing with blocks gives fundamental expression to a child's soul and to the unity of life. Blocks represent the actual building blocks of the universe. The symmetry of the soul is symbolized as a child constructs with blocks, bringing them together to form a whole. Through proper use of the Gifts, the child progresses from the material to the abstract: from the volumetric lessons offered by blocks, through the two-dimensional planar ones elucidated by play with parquetry tiles (flat, geometrically-patterned wooden shapes), to deductions of a linear nature drawn from stick laying, to use of the point in pin-prick drawings. Points, in turn, describe a line, and the child completes the logic by returning from 2-D to the 3-D realm of volume through peas work (joining small malleable balls with short sticks) and on to solid three-dimensional work in clay.

Froebel did not live to see the flowering of his concept of a 'garden for children.' A ban on kindergartens was issued in 1851, a year before his death, by the suspicious and conservative Prussian court. (Why did the autocratic Prussian state feel threatened by kindergarteners? Was it because kindergarteners were becoming free-thinkers rather than a homogenous mass or



entry-level workers?) But the great educator's legacy did eventually become widespread through the untiring persistence of his co-workers. Johann Arnold Barop, who married Froebel's niece, was one of many of these. While some of Froebel's protégés would go on to promote the kindergarten internationally, Barop assumed leadership of the fledgling Keilhau school in 1833, and is credited with its survival under persecution from the Prussian authorities. Keilhau and a host of later institutions embodied Froebel's vision—represented most truly in the first kindergartens of the later 1800s, but with influence extending through the twentieth century and beyond.

Interestingly, Barop's great granddaughter Annemarie, educated in the Keilhau Froebel School where her father was principal, ended up joining the intentional community behind Community Playthings in 1932. Here, where family and school life are inseparably twined, she found an environment in harmony with Froebel's philosophy of life as an undivided whole. She soon became involved with our community nursery, greatly influencing its future development. Community Playthings eventually emerged as a supporting business to the community, meshing with its educational ethos.

The Froebel School at Keilhau is still in operation today. Tabea Manke, one of our nursery teachers, recently visited the site with colleagues. She encountered much reminiscent of the educational philosophy that has profoundly influenced our community childcare and business to the present day.

Links

For more information, have a look at [Froebel Web](#)

Froebel image from <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-froeb.htm>

Participation and Early Years

Clark, A., and Moss, P.(2001) Listening to young children: the Mosaic approach. National Children's Bureau £16.00 ISBN 1.900990.62.8 Can be ordered on 0845 458 9910

Outlines a new framework for listening to young children's perspectives on their daily lives - the Mosaic approach. This approach has been developed with three and four year olds in an early childhood institution and has been adapted to work with children under two (including pre-verbal children), children for whom English is an additional language, keyworkers and parents.

Clark, A, Kjørholt, A.T. and Moss P.(eds) (2005) Beyond listening: children's perspectives on early childhood services. Policy Press

£8.99 ISBN 978 1861346124 [Order via internet](https://www.policypress.org.uk/catalog/product_info.php?cPath=10090&products_id=874)

https://www.policypress.org.uk/catalog/product_info.php?cPath=10090&products_id=874

This book focuses on listening to young children both from an international perspective and through combining theory, practice and reflection. Each chapter is rooted in everyday lives of young children and presents a range of experiences for practitioners to draw on. It addresses key questions of how we listen to young children, what view of the child different approaches presume and the risks for young children that listening entails.

Dickins, M., Emerson, S. and Gordon-Smith, P (2004). Starting with choice: inclusive strategies for consulting young children. Save the Children £4.95 ISBN 1 84187 085 4 Available from NBN International on 01752 202301 or e-mail orders@nbninternational.com.

http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/54_2356.htm

Provides early years workers with clear, practical guidance on consulting young children, and a range of techniques that help young children to express their views and make choices. It also looks at when consultation can be effective, how it fits in to the foundation stage guidance, and how to train and support early years workers to gain the skills they need. This guide shows that innovative and exciting solutions can be found so that all children can participate in group decision-making.

*Fajerman, L., Jarrett, M. and Sutton, F. (2000), **Children as Partners in Planning: A training resource to support consultation with children.** Save the Children, ISBN 1841870315. £15.00. Available from NBN International on 01752 202301 or e-mail orders@nbninternational.com.*

http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/54_2306.htm#resources§ion=publications&subsection=details

Intended for all childcare workers and professionals associated with Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships who are working to fulfil DfES guidance on consulting children on local childcare plans. It includes an explanation of what consulting children involves, three training programmes with photocopiable resources and handouts; case studies, and activities to use with children.

*Miller, J. (2003), **Never Too Young: how young children can take responsibility and make decisions.** Save the Children/National Early Years Network, ISBN 1 84187 075 7. £10.00. Available from NBN International. Tel: 01752 202301 or email orders@nbninternational.com*

http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/54_2343.htm

Practical resource showing how children under eight can participate, make decisions and take responsibility for their

actions. It provides early years workers with information about why participation works, and includes a range of techniques for involving children in decisions that affect them.

*National Children's Bureau (2004) **Listening as a way of life leaflets.** NCB*

Available to download

http://www.ncb.org.uk/Page.asp?originx6668cx_211360867683c3p6773783809

A set of six leaflets containing details of research, practice and methods that work with young children from birth to eight as well as additional references and places to find more information. The six leaflets cover why and how we listen to very young children, listening to babies, listening to young disabled children, supporting parents and carers to listen and finding out what young children think about equality.

*Lancaster, P. and Broadbent, V. (2003) **Listening to young Children.** Open University Press. £14.99 ISBN 0335213723*

[Order online](#)

[Further information](#)

<http://www.coram.org.uk/listening.htm>

Early Childhood Unit

Aims to ensure that all who work with young children and their families can access the best information and support to improve their policies and practice. ECU encourages discussion and debate about the needs of young children and develops practical projects to support practitioners.

http://www.ncb.org.uk/Page.asp?originx6713ip_79291366884951k30k2176875649

*Participation Workers Network Wales
Blast off series (2007)*

A series of 9 good practice guides based on the experiences of participation workers in Wales

, <http://www.participationworkerswales.org.uk/participation>

Questions to promote Sustained Shared Thinking

- ❖ I wonder what will happen if...?*
- ❖ How would you feel if...?*
- ❖ Why is this one better than this one?*
- ❖ How is... like...?*
- ❖ What do you need to do next?*
- ❖ How can you find out?*
- ❖ Let's make a plan so we don't miss anything*
- ❖ Tell me how you did that?*
- ❖ When is another time you need to...?*

❖ *Why is this one better than this one?*

❖ *Can you think of another way we could do this?*

