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Early Years Placements

A Critical Guide to Outstanding
Work-based Learning



Jackie Musgrave
Nicola Stobbs

EARLY
YEARS

First published in 2015 by Critical Publishing Ltd

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-909682-65-8

This book is also available in the following e-book formats:

MOBI ISBN: 978-1-909682-66-5

EPUB ISBN: 978-1-909682-67-2

Adobe e-book ISBN: 978-1-909682-68-9

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Cover and text design by Greensplash Limited
Project Management by Out of House Publishing
Printed and bound in Great Britain by Bell & Bain, Glasgow

Critical Publishing
152 Chester Road
Northwich
CW8 4AL
www.criticalpublishing.com



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Acknowledgements

Our grateful thanks to the students who have generously shared their experiences and provided contributions to this book.

We would also like to acknowledge our use of Crown copyright material.

Meet the authors



Jackie Musgrave is a senior lecturer in the Centre for Early Childhood at the University of Worcester. She qualified as a sick children's nurse and then taught early childhood care and education at a college of further education. She has taught higher education students for the past ten years. Jackie gained her Masters degree at the University of Sheffield, her dissertation focusing on an aspect of practice-based learning for level 3 students. Her thesis for her doctorate examined the effect of chronic health conditions on young children's inclusion in their early education.



Nicola Stobbs initially trained as a primary school teacher, teaching across various age groups. She then worked in an early years setting for 12 years as the setting manager. During that time, Nicola mentored many students on placement in her setting and also completed her MA in early childhood and gained Early Years Professional Status. Having combined her early years role with university tutoring for two years, Nicola then became a full-time lecturer at the University of Worcester. She remains committed to supporting students in becoming the excellent practitioners that children deserve.

1 Introduction

Work-based learning (WBL), sometimes known as practice-based learning or professional practice, is a vital component of vocational higher education courses. The skills and knowledge that you can gain from WBL can dramatically increase your employability. The focus of this book is to guide student practitioners on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) courses through your WBL with the aim of enabling you to have an outstanding experience and maximise your future employability. This focus is especially pertinent because the early years workforce is becoming increasingly professionalised.

The Nutbrown Review has focused attention on WBL as a vital part of becoming an effective early years practitioner:

Practice placements are an essential part of training Students need to observe and work alongside practitioners whose practice is high quality ... Only settings that are rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted should be able to host students on placement.

(Nutbrown, 2012, p 7)

There was also a recommendation that students should 'be experiencing practice in a variety of settings ... so that they can see different ways of working and learn from a variety of expert practitioners' (p 21). Further emphasis on the importance of placements was stressed by the recommendation that this should take place in 'at least three different and appropriate settings, to last a total equivalent of a minimum of twenty percent of the total course duration' (p 23).

Although some of you will have undertaken some WBL prior to beginning your course, many of you may regard the expectations of you as undergraduates as daunting as well as liberating. This is partly because you are expected to work as part of a team of practitioners rather than as a student under the direction of teachers or college tutors. Tutors will explain the activities that you are expected to undertake during placement, however there may be little time to address individual concerns or cover all possible eventualities. In addition to addressing the

needs of undergraduate students, this book will address the position of graduates who are trainees for Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS).

About this book

Each chapter has a visual map, which signposts the content of the chapter, and an explanation of how the content links to the Early Years Teacher Standards (that were published in September 2013). This book has been written in a way that incorporates our students' opinions and views, as well as advice from practitioners, in the form of *Dear Student* letters. The content of the letters is intended to offer you support by covering a range of subjects and issues relevant to WBL. Other features to help you understand the topic being covered include critical questions, case studies and critical reflections as well as suggestions for further reading.

Chapter 2 includes a range of practical considerations for you to address ahead of starting your placement. The theme of the chapter is to help you plan carefully for your WBL so that you do your utmost to ensure that you have an outstanding experience.

Chapter 3 deconstructs the meaning of professionalism for student early years practitioners. It explains the concept and helps you to understand what it means to be a professional student.

Chapter 4 outlines the main points about safeguarding and child protection. It draws on the messages learnt from Serious Case Reviews and focuses on your role in safeguarding children as a student in practice.

Chapter 5 summarises key documents that have formed government policy in recent years. The chapter content makes links to your practice and includes suggestions of how they influence your practice and how they can be used in your academic work.

Chapter 6 includes a range of practical guidance of what you can do to make a good impression on your first day. For example, how getting to know the routines straight away can reflect well on how you are viewed by your temporary colleagues.

Chapter 7 helps to define what is meant by 'theory' and explains how and what you can use to support theoretical understandings of your practice.

Chapter 8 emphasises the vital place of observation, planning and assessment in contemporary ECEC. The content explains in clear language the links between these three concepts. The content explains how observations are the key to knowing children and how in turn, knowing children can help you to plan how best to manage children's behaviour.

Chapter 9 addresses the statutory assessment elements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, including the 2-year-old check and the end of key stage profile.

Chapter 10 gives you some suggestions of how to manage relationships with colleagues when on placement. It addresses some of the difficulties that male practitioners can experience in a predominantly female environment.

Chapter 11 discusses some of the challenges associated with working with parents from your perspective as a student practitioner.

Chapter 12 explores the difficulties associated with student practitioner and child(ren) relationships. The content encourages you to acknowledge your own feelings in such relationships and encourages you to think about your responses to contradictory, and sometimes unethical practices that you may encounter.

Chapter 13 helps you to explore the concept of reflective practice in relation to your WBL experiences. There are examples that you can adapt to help you develop your skills in this important aspect of ECEC.

Before the appendices is a glossary of terms and acronyms used in ECEC.

Our commitment

As a Registered General Nurse/Registered Sick Children's Nurse and a trained primary school teacher, we are committed to the practice and principle of WBL, having benefitted from this when we were student practitioners and then subsequently as we mentored students undertaking WBL in our institutions post-qualification.

This commitment, based on our personal experience rather than evidence-based research, was upheld as we moved into higher education and we became responsible for the preparation of early childhood studies students in becoming professional practitioners. As we planned programmes that included elements of WBL we struggled to find a theoretical framework to guide our planning for student preparation for placement. Therefore, we decided to gain students and practitioners' views of what they think all students need to know as they partake in this valuable learning experience. We hope that you enjoy your placements, and most of all we hope that you find this book useful.

Reference

Nutbrown, C (2012) *Foundations for Quality. The independent review of early education and childcare qualifications. Final Report*. Runcorn: Crown Copyright. [online] Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175463/Nutbrown-Review.pdf (accessed 1 December 2014).

Glossary

2-year-old check	Statutory assessment which is part of the EYFS
Children's Centre	Place that offers multi-agency services for child development including the third sector (volunteers and charities).
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
Critical friend	Trusted friend who can provide support and give constructive criticism.
CV	Curriculum Vitae – a résumé of your professional experience and qualifications.
Development Matters	Non-statutory guidance material that supports practitioners in implementing the statutory requirements of the EYFS.
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service: the service that makes police checks to identify whether people have a criminal record. It is a statutory requirement that people who are working with vulnerable people, such as children, are screened. If they have convictions for criminal activity, they may be barred from working with vulnerable people.
DSO	Designated Safeguarding Officer: is the designated member of staff in an organisation for staff to go to if they have a concern about safeguarding. The DSO is screened and trained to be able to conduct this role and will have up to date knowledge of referral routes.
Early Years Teacher	Recognised qualification in parallel with existing Early Years Professional.
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ECM	Every Child Matters
EYE	Early Years Educator

EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage: the Statutory Framework which comprises of a set of Welfare and Learning Development Requirements that must be followed by providers who care for children between 0 and 5 years of age. The EYFS became statutory in 2008 and there were two revisions in 2012 and 2014.
EYITT	Early Years Initial Teacher Training
EYTS	Early Years Teacher Status
Mentor	Trusted advisor (possibly tutor or lead professional) who has experience in the early years, who is able to offer support and advice through reflection on work and practice.
Mentoring	Nurturing an individual's progression through a supportive, professional relationship with a mentor.
Multi-disciplinary	Using the input of several professional agencies at the same time.
Nutbrown Review	A review of childcare qualifications carried out by Professor Nutbrown on behalf of the government.
NCMA	National Childminders Association
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, responsible for inspections and grading of settings in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage.
Parents	Described in law to include biological relationship (mother, father) and any other responsible adult (carer) who has taken this role in a child's life.
Partnership with parents	Working relationship with parents/carers, which encompasses mutual respect and information sharing to promote equality and prevent unfair practice towards families and children.
PBL	Practice-based learning
Pedagogy	Theory and main beliefs of teaching children with regard to the nature of children's learning.
Practice	Work methods
Practitioners	Adults involved – in this regard – with caring and supporting young children's learning across a range of settings.
Reflective practice	Reviewing actions and outcomes to inform future practice.
SaLT	Speech and Language Therapist
Schema	A cognitive framework or concept that helps to organise and interpret information.
SCR	Serious Case Review
SEN	Special Educational Needs

Setting	A place where children and parents can access children's services. These cover a wide range of places including Children's Centres, nurseries, pre-schools or playgroups.
Te Whariki	New Zealand Early Years curriculum
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
WBL	Work-based learning

SAMPLE

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