



Birth to Five Service

# Birth to Five Service Conference



**'Celebrating Together'**

**Birth to Five Conference**

**19 & 20 June 2009**

**Bishop Grosseteste College**

Expressions of interest are being taken for next year's conference. Contact the Birth to Five Office on 01522 587570

## 'Celebrating Together' Early Years in Lincolnshire



An African Elephant, Puddle Potential, Songs on a 'Lybra' Theme and 'An Attachment to Eggs' are a strange assortment of themes but not so for those of us who attended our own Early Years Conference at Bishop Grosseteste College over the weekend.

The Conference created that special environment which we all know, has the potential to create quality learning experiences which are real, appropriate, exciting and engaging for the very young.

Led by our own Birth to Five Staff and Children's Services Representatives; Childminders, Nursery Workers, Teachers, and Play Leaders, soon got involved with a diversity of experiences and professional development opportunities on offer. Enjoyment and a sense of fun featured prominently creating strong evidence that we certainly practice what we preach!



As did Keynote speaker Jan Dubiel, QCA Programme Manager EYFS who delivered hard evidence about the progress of EYFS in a fun and engaging presentation punctuated by his own real experiences of working with very young children.



Jan referred to 'The Early Years Landscape of Today.' How different it looks compared with 10 years ago! All delegates and colleagues nationwide had been working hard to implement the Principles and Practice of EYFS and were able to listen to Jan's evidence base on how successful the changes had been. Clearly there had been remarkable progress but in some areas, there was still work to do. He reported using findings from focus groups from all disciplines of Early Years Professionals nationwide and encouraged conference delegates and their setting colleagues to air their views too within the ongoing QCA survey.

Jan delivered his 'inside' information with the integrity of an Early Years Practitioner of many and varied roles. He emphasised unreservedly, areas of challenge and uncertainty within the findings to date. These were then put in context by underlining and reaffirming and celebrating the skills experience and knowledge of all the early years' professionals in the room who would go on to develop early years education even further. Within these comments he strongly emphasised the need for renewed respect and acknowledgement of professional expertise within this area of work we all share.





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## Workshops:

Mary Barlow:  
*Get That Baby Buzz*

Children's Centre Teachers:  
*PEEP*

Kate Hookham:  
*Potential of a Puddle*

SoundLincs:  
*Music*



Jan clearly defined his perception of 'An Early Years Expert.' He felt that being a parent did not automatically generate this title 'Parents are experts on their own child', whereas professionals have the knowledge of thousands of children to enrich their own expertise and practice for the good of all children. He felt it was also absurd that people from the world of celebrity, once they had become parents, believed themselves to be experts in

early education and used their celebrity status to communicate and expound their theories to the very wide audience at their disposal!

He illustrated how this was true of individuals from The Secondary Education Sector who were given and tasked to drive, direct and make significant decisions about early years education in the past. Jan proclaimed that as such these people had no early year's expertise whatsoever, a situation which he felt was 'beyond belief'.

'This situation was totally unacceptable,' he said and to this end strongly emphasised 'Practitioner Empowerment.'

He called on us all to be proud of being Early Years Professionals and to speak up and challenge the outside agencies who bring their own agendas and criteria to our early years settings. It was this part of the message,..... The child as the focus of our work, which proved to be highly significant for delegates who said afterwards how they felt supported by what they had heard in the conference hall, from this very gifted and knowledgeable speaker.



Jan, himself, a very experienced Early Years Practitioner, transmitted and supported his strong message with illustrations of incidents within his work with children. There was engaging humour in the delivery but his total respect for how children see the world and respond to it, shone through for us all. His messages were, therefore, very powerful, very well informed and inspiring.

Jan provided an excellent launch for a conference which went on to deliver a wealth of opportunities to support and expand our practitioner skills. In so doing it reflected the capacity for true enjoyment and celebration of the work of skilful and committed professionals within Early Years Education in Lincolnshire.

Delegates left the conference taking with them strong, unwavering messages about quality and fun within education for all our children and absolute commitment to the principles and practice of The Early Years Foundation Stage. The underlying message was summed up expertly by Justine Hyde of Wellies Horncastle, who said,

'This has been brilliant. Everyone who has come must feel inspired.'  
'Roll on second conference!'