

## CCCU hosts 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Baby Room Conference

*By Polly Bolshaw*

On Friday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2013, students and practitioners attended the fourth annual Baby Room Conference in Canterbury, hosted by Sacha Powell and Kathy Gouch. The day comprised of several key speakers giving presentations not exclusively concerning babies but the world of early years, ranging from examples of small-scale research and practice to international policy and UK politics. All the speakers were both inspiring and engaging, giving lots of food for thought and things to consider. In particular, here are some key reflections:



### **Promoting Positive Relationships with Families – Using Heritage Bags**

Angeline Conaghan from GroundSwell Arts shared information about the Lullaby Project, a project aimed at creating individual songs for children based on their own preferences, experiences and history. To make these songs, Angeline asks the family to create a “heritage bag”, compiled of items that are of personal significance to the child and their extended family. These bags sound like a fantastic way of sharing information about a child’s parents, extended family, friends, heritage and significant experiences, which the setting could use to develop their personalized provision for that child. Is this something you could introduce in your setting?

### **“Bubbles of Care”**

Dr Anne Meade, a prominent member of New Zealand’s early years community, gave an overview to New Zealand’s *Te Whaariki* and how it is adapted in practice in her own childcare setting in Wellington. Within her setting, “bubbles of care” are a key feature, in which practitioners work together to recognise when important moments are taking place between a practitioner and child, and give a silent signal to each other as to not to interrupt the moment, so that important relationships can be fostered. Along with this, practitioners work with one child for prolonged periods of time, for example by changing a child, then preparing them for a nap and getting them off to sleep (as opposed to a conveyor-belt of changing method), again so that relationships can be fostered through these sustained periods and intimate moments. Does your setting operate a conveyor-belt of care, or does it use these times as opportunities to develop relationships and significant moments?

### **Television is not a Teacher**

Anne Wood, producer of many children’s television programmes such as Rosie and Jim, Teletubbies, In the Night Garden and Brum, spoke of how children’s television does not teach children, but instead provides the opportunity for children to reflect upon their own experiences and reinforce in them what they already know. She also stressed the importance she gives to having a slow pace to the narrative, to encourage anticipation and thinking. This is something that can be adapted in early years settings when considering the speed at which story books are read, and the time given over to looking at the pictures. How often do you pause when reading stories to give your children the chance to consider what might happen?

# Student Research: The Child Soldier: Just Another Victim?

*By Matt Hadfield, ed. Eleanor Jones*

The child soldier has come into the forefront of debates surrounding childhood in the last 20 years, appearing in conflicts in Sierra Leone, Congo, Sudan, Sri Lanka and Palestine, to name but a few. In 1999 Amnesty International claimed that at least 300,000 children under the age of 18 were involved in armed conflicts around the world. This discussion will seek to draw out key themes related to perceptions of child soldiers and hopefully result in a greater understanding of the phenomenon that is the child soldier.

Often when we see images of child soldiers there is a sense that the child in question does not know what they are doing and that they are indoctrinated into the army against their will. This reinforces the idea that these children are victims. They are innocents that have been forced to fight as they do not understand, and are incapable of making their own decisions. The child is vulnerable and is therefore in need of protection from fighting. This is sometimes the case, and it would be naïve to assume otherwise. John Locke's idea of the blank slate (Cunningham, 2006) is prevalent here. However this is too simplistic a view when looking at child soldiers. If we reduce children to the role of the innocent victim, are we not just packaging them into the western view of childhood? What can be said about children's agency? Children may choose to fight for a number of reasons other than being forced to, such as witnessing the death of family, the destruction of homes, displacement, harassment or oppression. John Ryle (1999) takes the controversial stance that if children desire to fight then there are instances in which they should. He argues that if children are in peril, whether that be from direct attack, or if their way of living is threatened, then they have a right to defend themselves. He states that preventing a child from picking up arms may compromise other rights, such as having an opinion, bodily integrity, and to protection of life and property. In contrast to this, Martin Macpherson (Ryle, 1999) argues that children should not be allowed to fight, as the line between forced and voluntary is too hard to draw.

Undoubtedly war is horrific, and it should be the desire of the world to limit it where it can. It could be argued that it would be in the best interests of these soldiers to escape the horrors of war. This, surprisingly, is also not as simple as it sounds. Leaving the army may not always be the viable option for a number of reasons. For example, those who volunteered and have spent a great deal of time in the army may feel they cannot do anything else. In many cases the army may be seen as a better way of living than the lives these children left behind, especially in areas affected by extreme poverty and a lack of food. For female child soldiers leaving the army can be complicated by other factors, for example the girls may be raped or taken as a wife by a commander in the army. In the cases of rape where the girl has lost her virginity there may be a fear of returning to one's family. There is a constant theme running through dominant discourse about doing what is in children's best interest. What happens then, if a child soldier is fighting for their freedom or way of life, or what serves in their political or economic interest? Is this not in their best interest? If picking up a weapon prevents them from starving or being put in a situation where they are not able to defend themselves, then surely this is seen as the desirable option given the circumstance?

To conclude, it is very easy to say child soldiers have lost their childhood and should be taken from the army as soon as possible. However, when looking at the reasons why children join armies, their agency and how they go about leaving or attempting to leave, the discussion surrounding definitions of the child soldier, and childhood more generally, becomes a lot foggier. The notion of childhood as a protected life stage in particular needs to be viewed critically. The existence of the child soldier means that not all children can be viewed through this western universal lens. It is too simplistic. It is essential then that when we look at childhood and the many experiences around it, we try to see everything in a local context, and avoid sweeping generalisations and so called universal truths or ideals.

## References

Cunningham, H. (2006), *The Invention of Childhood*, London: Random House  
Ryle, J. (1999), 'Children at arms', in *New York Review of Books*, 46:4, New York

# Let's Celebrate!

*What could we be celebrating this month?*

By Eleanor Jones

1<sup>st</sup>: May Day

5<sup>th</sup>: Children's Day (Japan)

15<sup>th</sup>: Shavuot (Jewish Festival of Weeks)

20<sup>th</sup>: Victoria Day (Canada)



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## *In Practice...*

*By Eleanor Jones*

In a recent article in *Nursery World* (11th April 2013), Sue Waite from the University of Plymouth's School of Education presents the findings of her research into the quality of outdoor learning. She found a significant difference in the teaching taking place inside and outside the classroom. Waite said, 'Outdoor spaces offer opportunities for children to be more creative, inquiring and socially skilled, as they can pursue their own lines of interest and talk together. In classrooms, dominated by specific learning outcomes and teachers talking, it is very easy for learning to become something which is spoon-fed.' The researchers also found that learning through outdoor play improved children's readiness to learn.



With this in mind, it is important that we give careful consideration to what goes into our outdoor areas. Elizabeth Jarman for Families recently shared the following five things to consider before spending money on your outdoor area:

- 1) How long before a child has mastered the challenge it offers?
- 2) Don't think 'What does it do?', think 'What can a child do with it?'
- 3) What could you provide that offers the same experience that costs a fraction of the money?
- 4) How can it be changed, manipulated, altered, engaged with?
- 5) In what ways will it still be engaging in six months time?

## *What to Read... Childcare Sufficiency and Sustainability in Disadvantaged Areas*

*By Polly Bolshaw*



On 19<sup>th</sup> March 2013 Sarah Dickens and Ivonne Wollny, both from the National Centre of Social Research, presented findings of their research, *Childcare Sufficiency and Sustainability in Disadvantaged Areas* at ICMEC's (International Centre for the Study of the Mixed Economy of Childcare) second international seminar of their 2012/13 series. This research was commissioned in light of the introduction of free 15 hours funding to the least advantaged two-year-olds from September 2013, to explore, amongst other research questions, whether local authorities will need more support to ensure there are enough places for two-year-olds with the introduction of their funding. The research found that in order for childcare to be sustainable in disadvantaged areas, settings must in some way be publically funded, and also that despite support for the scheme, providers felt that "through market forces alone" there would not be enough places that are high-quality.

# New Leaders in Early Years Coaching Scheme

By Eleanor Jones

As part of the New Leaders programme, the university recently made a Facilitated Coaching Scheme available to all current New Leaders in Early Years students. This scheme involves experienced professionals making themselves available to undertake facilitated coaching sessions to support you as a new employee in the Early Years sector. The New Leaders In Early Years students are unique and that the Early Year's sector is very diverse. With this in mind, the objectives of the scheme are to support you in role to:

- define your job role and purpose
- bring out your talent and potential in yourself and others
- gain clarity in your thinking and commitment
- support you to challenge and change your beliefs and perceptions
- identify and solve problems
- make decisions, implement changes and overcome obstacles
- plan for the future and take advantage of potential new opportunities

The facilitated coaching will help you to develop as a professional and provide a means for you to:

- identify your talents and ways to lead and support effectively
- engage in knowledge transfer for learning in a new or expanded area of responsibility
- explore Early Years occupation-specific knowledge and insights
- develop judgment, discretion and "soft skills" in order to be effective
- create and reinforce a positive vision for change and effective ways of working
- develop and sustain yourself, others and a positive team culture
- develop effective systems and processes that are known, understood and implemented by yourself and others
- identify opportunities to shape the workforce of the future in an intentional, deliberate way that meets the national and local Early Years strategic goals and objectives

Many of you have already taken up this opportunity and are finding it a helpful and supportive process. Students have said:

*"I found the scheme really good. It has given me a different perspective on things, valuable insight into my work and advice in terms of my career. It has also been helpful to have a listening ear when I need it."*

*"The scheme is providing me with an exciting opportunity to explore the direction I can take my career in. It has been invaluable to be able to talk through my thoughts and ideas in confidence with someone who is able to help me put these ideas in context and explore them further, including how to make future plans a reality."*

If you have not yet taken up the opportunity for facilitated coaching and feel that you would like to, it is not too late. Please contact Frances Matthews for more details.

## Upcoming Events at Rowan Williams Court, Medway Campus

### Student Showcases

## Making a difference

## Transforming early years practice

**Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2013**

**5:00 – 6:30**

**Deborah Bell (BA Early Years Leadership with EYPS, Yr3 Undergraduate)**

**Physical Development of Young Children** –Deborah is going to share her interesting work in her setting regarding the physical development of very young children.

This will be complimented by:

**Patricia Taylor (MA Student)**

**Action research on PE and young children –is it really valued?**

This student showcase will be introduced by Anita Cooper (PhD Student) who will pose the question – to be or not to be a graduate professional? What difference does a degree make to those working in the Early Years Sector? Come along and join in the debate!

### Evening Expert Lecture

## Making a difference

## Transforming early years practice

**Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2013**

**6:00 – 7:00, light refreshments from 5:30**

**Mark Dudek**

Mark Dudek is a specialist in architectural design for education and early years settings and Research Fellow at the University of Sheffield. He has written many papers and books on the subject of children's environments, including *Schools and Kindergartens: A Design Manual*, *Nurseries: A Design Guide*, *Kindergarten Architecture*, *Architecture of Schools: The New Learning Environments* and *Spaces for Young Children: A Practical Guide to Planning, Designing and Building the Perfect Space*. He has also been involved in designing many early years settings, including recently five Sure Start centres in London, as well as previously acting as a governmental design advisor for the UK, Japan and Luxembourg. Come along to hear his views on the design of children's environments.

# An Introduction to Forest Schools

By Polly Bolshaw



Kent Wildlife Trust

On Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> April sixteen students from across the Faculty of Education, including Kerry Lawrence, Kathryn Hogarth and myself from the NLEY programme, had the opportunity to attend an introduction to Forest School day, run by Kathryn Barton of Kent Wildlife Trust. The day treated students as “forest school pupils” and included a selection of activities that children would partake in over a series of forest school sessions, including making fires, whittling, using carpentry tools to make our own creations, building shelters, toasting marshmallows and learning to appreciate the natural world and the opportunities it provides for young children, as well as gain more ideas about how we can incorporate the Forest School ethos into our own individual settings.

The aim of the Trust’s forest school sessions are to create opportunities “to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland environment” – which I believe were met during this day. One student spoke of how, having read literature outlining the benefits of forest schooling and outdoor education on children’s self-esteem, she had now experienced a boost in self-esteem herself through accomplishing the tasks. Indeed, the chance to learn new skills, such as using tools like manual drills and bow saws, (as well as the trust and responsibility that came with this) did increase my self-esteem.

What surprised me was the extent to which we were given the freedom to try ourselves and develop our skills through “doing”, rather than observing – certainly drawing upon one of the EYFS’s three characteristics of effective teaching and learning as *playing and exploring*. In addition, there are many opportunities for *creating and thinking critically*, for instance whilst using natural, open-ended items to make models and items. And above all, certainly the forest school approach fosters *active learning*, especially in view of enjoying achievements. In our session, the sense of achievement and pride created was fantastic too: all the students seemed proud of the fires they lit, the shelters they built and their handiwork constructed of natural materials. Plus, the activities we took part in also created many opportunities for social development, for instance having to work together whilst building shelters or the need for two people to cooperate and communicate well whilst using a bow saw.

Certainly, if you get the chance to take children in your setting to forest school sessions, or implement aspects of the approach within your own setting, I would certainly recommend it. For more information about Kent Wildlife Trust’s forest school sessions, go to <http://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/forest-schools>.



Building a shelter



Toasting marshmallows



Whittling



Using tools

# Keeping On Track with your Dissertation – Writing Your Methodology

By Polly Bolshaw

When writing your methodology, as well as including information about how you collected your data, there are other aspects to your research it is important to include. Here are some questions and themes you may want to consider:

- **Research context:** where is your research being carried out? Why?
- **Ethical considerations:** what ethical issues did you have to take into account to ensure your participants' wellbeing and also your own academic rigour?
- **Establishing your paradigm:** which paradigm does your piece of research fit within? Social constructivism? Positivism? Postpositivism? Advocacy/participatory? Pragmatism? Why?
- **Your approach to data collection:** what type of data collection did you think would best answer your research questions? Did you decide upon qualitative, quantitative or a mixed method approach? And why? And within this approach, what specific data collection strategy did you employ, and why, over other methods?

For more information on writing a methodology, I found Cresswell's (2009) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches* to be comprehensive and clear in providing information about writing your methodology.

## Applying to do a PhD

By Eleanor Jones

PhD research must make an original contribution to a field of learning. A prospective student must start with their own research idea. They must then find a university department where an academic has complementary research interests and so could be a likely supervisor. This requires prospective students to look carefully for the right research department for them to work in. You must research the strengths various departments have, as in order to support a PhD student the department must have the same specialism as the area the prospective student is interested in. When you find a department that does cover the right area, start by contacting the department and getting into a conversation about the research you want to do; whether they might have appropriate supervisors; and whether they've got funding available. You can then prepare your research proposal before formally applying to the university.

In terms of funding, for the arts, humanities and social sciences this is usually a separate issue. The student may apply for a studentship from the university department or the relevant research council (AHRC or ESRC), or sort out self-funding. Another potential alternative may be paid teaching work in the university department you will be studying in.

The Canterbury Christ Church University Graduate School has devised the following five questions for prospective PhD students to ask themselves when deciding if it is right for them:

1. Are you able to write an 80,000 word thesis which is as good as the most advanced academic book in your subject?
2. Do you have a research idea that will sustain you for 3 years?
3. Do you know and have a point of view about the major discussions in your academic subject?
4. Are you prepared to change your ideas completely?
5. Are you prepared to find, read and use over 200 books and articles?

The Graduate School are always happy to speak to anyone considering an application, and can give 'neutral' advice on the process involved. You can make an appointment by email or by dropping into the office.

*By Polly Bolshaw*

As introduced in the last edition of the newsletter, Capita Education Resourcing are now working in partnership with CCCU to assist with finding employment opportunities. Sophie Hryniewicz is the recruitment consultant for early years and has vacancies in London, Kent and beyond. Frances has put some employment opportunities on ClicLearn, but here are some of Sophie's other current employment opportunities to illustrate some of the kinds of roles she has. For further information on any of these roles or to speak to Sophie directly on what kind of services she can offer in helping you find a job, contact her by emailing [sophie.hryniewicz@capita.co.uk](mailto:sophie.hryniewicz@capita.co.uk) or phone her on 020 7202 0031.

## **Current Vacancies:**

### **Deputy Nursery Manager                      Meanwood, Leeds                      Salary Negotiable**

A small and friendly nursery in Meanwood, Leeds, is looking for an experienced deputy nursery manager. This independent nursery in Meanwood, Leeds, has two rooms and has a highly committed staff. As a deputy manager you will be expected to lead the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum; ensure that all children attending the setting are kept safe and receive rich and stimulating play experiences which support all aspects and components of the EYFS curriculum and meet requirements of regulatory bodies with relation to EYFS matters, special needs, child protection, Health and Safety and to ensure that company policies and procedures are adhered to.

### **Nursery Manager                                      Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire                      Salary Negotiable**

A small, vibrant, family-run nursery group is looking for a nursery manager for its new Rickmansworth setting. The nursery is newly built, with state of the art facilities and lots of colour! The nursery aims to provide a fun, stimulating and safe environment for children. The team are very friendly and pride themselves on their fun attitude to work. As manager you will be expected to manage the day to day running of the nursery, including finances; ensure that all children receive stimulating play experiences appropriate to their age and stage of development and manage staffing rotas.

### **Roving Nursery Manager                      Southern Region                      £28000 - £30000**

Tree Tops Nursery is looking for a Roving Nursery Manager to cover the Southern region. This role will require you to trouble shoot and parachute in and out of nurseries around the Bedfordshire/Cambridgeshire/London & Surrey areas, and will require a great amount of flexibility. This role as Roving Nursery manager is ideal for someone who likes variety, a challenge and meeting new people on their journey. Tree Tops Nursery is part of a top ten countrywide nursery group, who offer compassionate, professional care for children in a fun and loving environment. The Roving Manager will perform normal Nursery Manager duties, as well as trouble shooting underperforming nurseries, quickly making changes and have a high degree of flexibility.

### **Senior Nursery Nurse                                      Fulham                                      Competitive Salary**

Committed and innovative Senior Nursery Nurse required to assist our manager in our nursery in Fulham. This nursery in Fulham is part of a top ten countrywide nursery group, who offer compassionate, professional care for children in a fun and loving environment. Established in 1991, the nursery family has grown and we now provide childcare in 33 settings. Our staff have a real passion for childcare which we pride ourselves on delivering. We already have three nurseries rated overall Outstanding by Ofsted and 191 Outstanding areas of learning across the company. The Company is committed to children and parents! Our Senior Nurses have key holder responsibilities, report to the Nursery Manager, and must be comfortable leading the delivery of the EYFS framework. Other responsibilities may include acting as duty manager on occasion; liaising with outside agencies such as Early Years Advisors and Health Visitors and ensuring Welfare and Safeguarding Children procedures are followed.