

Nurture in East Ayrshire

November 2014

Background

From a small beginning, the Nurture approach in education has grown across East Ayrshire.

Around five years ago, in response to a specific need to support one young primary pupil, East Ayrshire Psychological Services worked with the headteacher and staff to introduce a Nurture approach to the school. This provided targeted support for the child as part of the school, his class and with his family.

This intervention, based on a researched evidence-base, produced an evaluated impact that led to agreement from the authority to trial the approach on a wider basis within the school.

Following a period of implementation and evaluation, the model had such a significant impact on the wellbeing and outcomes for a small group of children that it was extended to include five more schools.

The Nurture class model has been running successfully since then and has extended to strategic developments within Early Learning and Childcare, Primary and Secondary Sectors, with our Supported Learning Centres and Special Schools and also in innovative practice with our Children's Houses in collaboration with colleagues in Child and Adolescent Mental Health and Social Services.



So what is Nurture?

Nurture, or using a nurturing approach, is about providing opportunities for children and young people to develop their social and emotional skills and understanding, in order to prepare them with the foundations that will help them build positive healthy relationships as they grow up. It can help to increase their skills, coping strategies and their overall resilience and wellbeing.

These foundations will provide our children and young people with the basis to tackle their learning and improve their attainment chances in the long term. Nurture is something that can benefit everyone, supports a targeted number and can significantly impact the small number of children who are most in need of additional support.

Nurture interventions help to model a range of skills for children including:

- appropriate interactions and problem solving approaches
- social confidence
- competence
- resilience.

A nurture class can help a child:

- learn how to learn
- to develop skills at their pace
- to take part in a group
- to listen and share with others
- to make new friends
- to be able to regulate their own emotions and behaviour.

Nurture in East Ayrshire is based around six key nurturing principles that not only benefit children and young people most in need, but are principles that, when applied effectively, can support the social and emotional wellbeing of everyone.

Six key Nurturing principles:

- 1 Children's learning is understood developmentally
- 2 The learning environment offers a safe base
- 3 The importance of Nurture for the development of self-esteem
- 4 Language is a vital means of communication
- 5 All behaviour is communication
- 6 The importance of transition in children's lives is understood

The Nurture Group Network
www.nurturegroups.org



Nurture classes in East Ayrshire

In East Ayrshire these are generally classes of between 6 and 12 children in a primary school supported by two key staff in the class and by their main class teacher and a whole establishment approach.

Children attend these groups normally for four mornings a week and also remain an active part of their main class group, typically returning full-time to their own class within four terms. In East Ayrshire, Nurture classes are staffed by two key adults, normally a teacher and classroom assistant, who implement specific individual plans with the children, in collaboration with their class teachers and families.

Parents are also a key element of our Nurture classes and nurturing approaches across the authority and are involved in a range of ways with significant involvement from our Early Learning and Childcare Practitioners (Community).



Evaluation of impact and outcomes

Our data shows children:

- improved on all areas of social and emotional development
- had significantly fewer challenging and problematic behaviours that interfered with their learning
- had significant improvements in language development and acquisition
- continued to make academic gains in literacy on a par with peers

The impact of the work undertaken to introduce Nurture to East Ayrshire was recognised in a COSLA Excellence Award, achieved in 2011.

Parents said:

- *"It's like a light has gone on and he's flying through his work."*
- *"There was a huge impact socially, with their interactions with others."*

Staff said:

- *"Children now strive for responsibilities, having become used to more responsibility in a smaller nurture group."*
- *"Staff have now noticed more sharing, emerging friendships and more tolerance with other children that they would previously not engage with."*

The Nurture journey

From these early beginnings, our Nurture framework emerged. The East Ayrshire Nurture Framework provides both a preventative and proactive approach to supporting children and young people experiencing, or at risk of developing, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The framework supports practitioners to embed attachment theory with a relational approach into their practice.

In addition to the targeted class approach for some children, East Ayrshire is innovatively using the approach on a multi-agency basis to support children at high risk of negative life experiences in both specialist education and in the early years setting. There is a particular focus on early intervention by supporting children and families at the birth to five years stage. In addition, this approach is being developed with Social Services, particularly in our Children's Houses and foster care settings.

Early Years

Over the past two to three years an intensive programme of training and development has provided tailored learning about Nurture approaches with all Early Learning and Childcare staff, including Early Learning and Childcare Practitioners (Community), and partner provider establishments.

Specific interventions have been taking place across our Early Childhood Centres to introduce Nurture-based changes to the learning experiences of our children and this is in the process of being evaluated.

As part of the Early Years' Collaborative, the training and development programme will continue, ensuring a Nurture approach is further embedded into all of our establishments.

Secondary schools

Nurture approaches have been successfully part of the provision in Cumnock Supported Learning Centre for a number of years, leading to this effective practice being introduced to other Supported Learning Centres and specialist establishments, with highly positive outcomes. The key has been to see the approaches and principles embedded both at a universal level and in a targeted way for those individuals requiring additionality in their supports.

This has evolved into targeted training opportunities for secondary school staff to develop whole school Nurture approaches, aimed at improving wellbeing for all and early intervention for those in need of additional support with improved outcomes and a reduction in significant emotional and behavioural needs in later years.

Key members of education staff, including Psychological Services, are currently working with Education Scotland on the National Nurture Working Group to develop a resource to support the introduction of Nurture in secondary schools across Scotland.

Children's Houses

With our Children's Houses, a programme of supported change has been developed through a partnership approach with the NHS Ayrshire & Arran Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and East Ayrshire Psychological Services, in collaboration with Social Services staff. This has been complemented by a social pedagogical approach from Social Services. Evaluation to date has been very positive with changes in understanding and practice regarding professionals' interaction and support with our young people.

The team is currently developing a second phase of training and development as we progress our priority to find alternative approaches to support our looked after children from within the authority.

Forward plan:

- Extension of Nurture training and coaching model through work with:
 - Early Learning and Childcare practitioners
 - key primary school staff
 - secondary schools and key pupil support staff
 - Children's Houses in collaboration with CAMHS colleagues from NHS Ayrshire and Arran
 - Social Work colleagues including Corporate Parenting and Children and Families teams
 - specific groups of East Ayrshire foster carers
- Development and implementation of a Professional Development Nurture Network for staff across the authority.



CONTACT