

DIRECTOR'S INTRODUCTION

At times it seems as though self evaluation is on everyone's lips. Whether you are working at the front line – in clubs, centres or directly with families; or involved at a more strategic level, all of us are becoming more aware of the real value of reflection and benchmarking our practice and services, seeking ongoing improvement.

The introduction of the Continuous Learning Framework (CLF) in December 2008 brought us an important tool to help all of us to take stock of where we are and help us to look forward and plan improvements in the future. CALA has introduced strands from the CLF into appraisal material used by core staff and practitioners and will be reviewing the early results of this work with colleagues from the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) in the late Autumn.

As a target in our 2008/09 Development Plan, CALA committed to an internal evaluation involving all staff and practitioners. This work was completed in May 2009 with the review encompassing core staff and all practitioners working in CALA managed Early Years centres and Out of School clubs. We are delighted to be able to report that there was strong support and positive recognition for CALA's internal practices and positive feedback across the full review. However there are one or two areas for us as an organisation to progress and seek improvement on. We will be revisiting our approach to marketing our services, updating our website and in strengthening the processes we currently have around internal feedback.

In September 2009 CALA undertakes its 5th consecutive "Investors in People" review and one of the areas we will be seeking external comment on to help plan improvements will be around our internal communication and feedback systems as well as a focused look at leadership within the organisation.

A new partnership between CALA, HiMATS and Edinburgh University is taking shape and in early September we hope to host a shared meeting between all three partners looking at alternative routes to access the necessary level 9 awards for childhood practice managers. In addition CALA is working in close collaboration with Scottish national umbrella organisations and Edinburgh University to develop mentor guidance that will in the future help small employers (and committees) to support their staff through the necessary qualification pathway. It is worth remembering that all managers of childhood practice centres will have to be registered with SSSC by September 2010.

Busy times ahead but perhaps not too different from the year just passed? Whether working to support committees, delivering training and QA, maintaining essential employment support, direct management services, undertaking the all encompassing administration and financial support as well as progressing a number of national areas of work the CALA staff teams have remained constantly busy often at times juggling a growing list of demands and pressures on time. On behalf of the Directors my sincere thanks to all the staff and volunteers who have contributed to a successful year for CALA.

Capt. Alan Kennedy, MBE, Director

TRAINING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

Although we reported last year a downsizing of our personnel capacity within training and QA due to budget constraints it is a tribute to the drive and hard work of the remaining staff within the team to note that there has been no parallel reduction in overall productivity. Between August 2008 and June 2009 the CALA training programme delivered 56 days/workshops including 16 jointly planned Highland local authority early years in-service days and 33 separate tailored programmes. While evaluation on all courses has indicated the sustained high standard that practitioners and managers have come to expect from CALA has been maintained, the Early Maths and Numeracy training has received particularly strong acclaim and we are delighted to be able to offer this training again in the current 2009/10 Highland programme.

The scope and diversity of the fuller programme has ensured that a wide range of topics met the needs of practitioners working with children aged 0-3s, 3-5s and +5s. Newly developed and tailored material included a focus on the Curriculum for Excellence, Parental Involvement and the aforementioned Early Maths and Numeracy, ensuring that our programme remains fresh and valid to sector needs.

In addition to the core programmes, CALA delivered a total of 58 workshops (52 in Moray and 6 in Highland) based on the work of the Out of School Rhythm and Rhyme pilot. We were also pleased to be able to continue to deliver 3 **Play and Learning into Practice** (x 7 days early years foundation course) and in partnership with HiMATS, develop and deliver the first of the new foundation course for Out of School Practitioners, **Play into Practice**. (x 5 days)

Throughout 2008/09 CALA was able to introduce a new QA programme in Moray for Out of School clubs and we are pleased to be able to confirm that work is well under way to extend QA and offer this support to Out of School clubs in Highland. This project begins with delivery in the CALA managed clubs in August 2009 and is focused around the national, generic Quality Indicators for services for children and young people. Quality Assurance continues to be an important part of our internal support across all of our services.

Direct Management Services

Working in close collaboration with Highland Council a core component of CALA's work remains focused on supporting Early Years, Daycare and Out of School delivery through peripatetic management. This model of support brings us continual challenges as most centres and/or clubs come to the negotiating table at times of management transfer with what can seem at times an ever changing array of needs and issues. Centre Practice Managers, (CPMs)



themselves committed to an ongoing learning programme, access support from the internal QA programme and appropriate specialist support from within CALA to ensure the leadership and support they offer to practitioners helps to continually improve services for children and their families. As the year has progressed we have been delighted to note that this service continues to strengthen as it consolidates what remains a recognised innovative model of service delivery. CALA management models are recognised as a key contributor to the overall Highland Council's strategy in meeting the needs of families and children. Over the summer break committees from 3 new centres and clubs have been working closely with CALA managers to aid a smooth transition for their practitioners as they transfer over to CALA management. Currently CALA is supporting 50, toddler, early years, daycare and out of school care centres and clubs by peripatetic management support directly employing over **157** practitioners.

A welcomed additional support for both practitioners and CPMs has been the appointment of the CALA Practice Support Advisor. (PSA) This new post enables CALA to offer concentrated short term practice support to those managed centres experiencing periods of stress by the changes in practice following transition. The support has been universally welcomed by playstaff and managers and is helping to make considerable improvements in centre practice.

Demands on the **CALA Gateway** employment service have continued to be made throughout the year. Members are asked to note that the (very) recent Care Commission inspection on CALA's recruitment and selection procedures and support systems resulted in an extremely positive report highlighting many strengths and centres should not hesitate to contact the Brora office if seeking advice and/or guidance around these areas.

The **CALA Staffbank** continues to grow as centres and clubs throughout Highland turn to the bank for help with relief staff cover. CALA received a small grant to help meet training demands for staffbank personnel last year and while this has helped to meet a large part of the past demand for training this ongoing requirement remains a priority for CALA. The bank currently has 182 workers on its register and during the course of last year delivered 10,689 placement hours.



Family Support Services

The early development work of **Families in Focus** in West Ross has grown throughout the year. This strand of CALA family support identifies and further trains appropriately skilled staffbank workers to work with families experiencing periods of vulnerability. Liaising closely with other professionals, in particular from Social Work and Health, staffbank personnel can actively contribute to a tailored package of support that may be identified for a family often actioned through a Child's Plan. This model is currently being piloted in the Inverness city area and will be closely monitored and evaluated as it rolls out later this year.

The proven and popular services offered by the **CALA Toddler Programme** have once again found favour with Highland's parents and their youngest children. In Highland, where Area funding permits, CALA parent and toddler groups access additional staff support, practical guidance in play activities and well-being, promotional activities and are informally supported to continually develop good practice. It is intended to begin delivery of the well known Play@Home programme with Polish families in the Inverness area by bringing together the work already delivered by Toddler Facilitators and the CALA Bi-lingual Polish Co-ordinator. We are delighted to be able to extend the Toddler Programme in Lochaber and Mid Ross in 2009/10 due to new funding.

The developing Toddler Programme is now managed as part of the wider CALA Family Support Services that includes Families in Focus and the well respected Sutherland and Skye and Lochalsh based **Family First** services. Monitoring these three models of service collectively strengthens CALA's ability to quickly identify and pull together a more focused support for vulnerable families when it may be required. Conversely it also allows CALA to be more proactive in helping families re-engage with their community when ready by using the range of universal parent and toddler services that are available as a stepping stone.

Membership Support

General enquiries and support remain co-ordinated by the Inverness office team where much of the training and Quality Assurance administration is undertaken. Overseeing the monitoring of services through evaluation and membership surveys has also been met through the staff at Inverness this year. The growing financial demands on CALA ensures that the Dingwall office remains a constant hive of activity. The company and membership payroll service is administered from Dingwall as well as a full co-ordination and financial overview of the CALA managed Early Years and Out of School centre budgets. Together, the Inverness and Dingwall teams have continued to undertake Disclosure processing on behalf of members and staff. Last year 482 Disclosures were jointly processed by CALA.

Working closely with both the Inverness and Dingwall teams the CALA recruitment and personnel base sits at Brora. As in previous years recruitment has been a continual area of busy work. During the course of 2008/09 82 new posts were advertised and a comprehensive selection process undertaken. In some cases, depending on current available local capacity, advertisements have needed to be re-run on more than one occasion before successful appointments were made. This continual process makes major demands on budgets and personnel time and is a huge undertaking when consideration is given to the small scale of the Human Resource and Administration teams.

Finance

Continued funding from both the Highland and Moray Council's is greatly appreciated. Service Level agreements have been negotiated with both partners for the coming year.

Our thanks also to Lifescan Scotland, Lloyd's TSB Foundation and the Scottish Communities Foundation for project funding over 2008/09. The Rhythm and Rhyme Moray-based Out of School project is entering the final phase of its two year activity based project and we are looking forward to the final programme and evaluation results. Funding from Lloyds TSB and Lifescan helped boost the work undertaken by the Toddler programme and work with Polish families.

Additional Needs Grant. For a further year CALA has been financially supported by Highland Council and NHS Highland to provide additional grants to those centres delivering early years education and at the same time supporting a child or children with additional needs to access their centre. Just under £78,000 was paid out to 32 early years centres in Highland last year. CALA will be continuing to work with the Highland Council's Early Years and Childcare and Educational Psychology teams to jointly assess and award these grants throughout 2009/10.

CALA distributed a total of just under £10,000 through the **small group grant**. 37 groups benefited directly from this grant from the Highland Council's Childcare Services budget. Financial support for a further two centres was offered as a start up support.



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Photos by kind permission of CALA Staffbank, WELL and the Rhythm & Rhyme Project

Additional financial support towards the cost of this report from

Albany Asset Management and Ansvar Insurance



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