



Code of Ethics

Early Education
The British Association for Early Childhood Education

About Early Education

Early Education is the leading independent national charity supporting families and the professional development of practitioners working in the maintained, private, voluntary, independent and home based settings to ensure effective early childhood education experiences of the highest quality across the United Kingdom.

Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their potential. A child's experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right, and provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.

Our Principles:

Early Education believes:

- ▶ every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured
- ▶ children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships
- ▶ the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning
- ▶ children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates. All areas of learning and

development are equally important and interconnected.

Early Education supports families and early childhood practitioners across all early childhood education settings in order to deliver effective learning and care that is underpinned with a robust understanding of the development of young children.

We believe effective early childhood education requires:

- ▶ a relevant curriculum and practitioners who understand and are able to implement the individual learning of each unique child.
- ▶ practitioners across all early childhood education settings to understand that children develop rapidly - physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially - but at varying rates. Children are entitled to provision that supports and extends knowledge, skills, understanding and confidence that helps them to counter and overcome disadvantage.

We believe effective early childhood education should:

- ▶ build on what children already know and can do. Babies and young children are individuals first, each with unique talents and abilities. Schedules and routines should acknowledge the child's



needs. In order to meet the child's needs children should be observed to understand and respond to their current interests, stage of development and level of learning.

- ▶ acknowledge that parents are children's first and most enduring educators. When parents and practitioners work together, the results have a positive impact on children's development and learning.

- ▶ value and respect the diversity of individuals and communities and ensure that no child or family is discriminated against.

To be effective, those designing and delivering an early childhood education curriculum framework should understand:

- ▶ children's exploration through play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and pre-occupations. In their play, children learn at their highest level. Play with their peers is an important aspect of their own development

- ▶ children learn best through physical and intellectual challenges. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods

- ▶ when children have the opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, they discover connections and come

to new and better understandings and ways of doing things. Adult support in this process enhances their ability to think critically and ask questions.

A rich and varied environment supports children's learning and development through experiences and activities that are challenging yet achievable. It gives children the confidence to explore and learn in safe and secure, yet challenging, indoor and outdoor spaces.

Children's health is an integral part of their emotional, intellectual, social, environmental and spiritual well being and is supported by attention to these aspects. Young children are vulnerable. They develop resilience when their physical and psychological well-being is protected by adults and when their learning environment is supported to work in partnership with other settings, other professional disciplines and with individuals and groups in the community

About the Code of Ethics

This Code of Ethics has been co-ordinated by Professor Iram Siraj-Blatchford, Professor of Early Childhood at the Institute of Education, University of London and former President of Early Education, with support from Holly McGlynn and a small working group drawn from the Trustee Board of Early Education. It has also been reviewed by the Vice Presidents of Early Education.

It draws from and is informed by the codes of ethics of Early Childhood Australia (ECA) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

The concept of ethics is complex. This code of ethics should be used to guide professional behaviour and as principles to inform individual and collective decision making. It is not intended to provide prescriptive solutions to moral and ethical dilemmas. The following definitions and glossary acts as guidance and should be used to stimulate discussion and debate to enhance personal understanding.

Definitions

- ▶ **Children:** children between the ages of birth and eight years.
- ▶ **Families:** The people who have significant care responsibilities for and/or kinship relationships with the child.

- ▶ **Early childhood professional:** A person who works professionally with or on behalf of children and families in early childhood environments.
- ▶ **Communities:** Groups of people who identify as having shared values and intentions. These groups are recognised as complex, being simultaneously connected by commonality and diversity.
- ▶ **Employer:** An individual or organisation which employs early childhood professionals.
- ▶ **Volunteer:** An individual or organisation which works with children in the early childhood field.
- ▶ **Student:** A person undertaking study at any level in a secondary, further or higher education.
- ▶ **Code of Ethics:** Defines the core values of the early childhood field and provides guidance for what professionals should do when they encounter conflicting obligations or responsibilities in their work.
- ▶ **Values:** Qualities or principles that individuals believe to be desirable or worthwhile and they prize for themselves, for others, and for the world in which they live.
- ▶ **Core Values:** Commitments held by early childhood professionals that are consciously and knowingly embraced because they make a contribution to society.



► **Morality:** Peoples' views of what is right, and wrong; their beliefs and their ideas about how they should behave.

► **Ethics:** The study of right and wrong, that involves critical reflection on morality and the ability to make choices between values and the examination of the moral dimensions of relationships.

► **Professional Ethics:** The moral commitments of a profession that involve moral reflection that extends and enhances the personal morality practitioners bring to their work, that concern actions of right and wrong in the workplace, and that help individuals resolve moral dilemmas they encounter in their work.

► **Ethical Dilemma.** A moral conflict that involves determining appropriate conduct when an individual or organisation faces conflicting professional values and responsibilities.

Code of Ethics:

This code of ethics places the utmost importance on the protection and well being of children and families. Taking action to counteract unethical practice is therefore the responsibility of every early childhood professional.

In relation to children:

1. Respect the rights of children as laid out in the United National Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991) and commit to endorsing these rights. www.unicef.org/crc
2. Recognise and respect the individual qualities and potential of each child and that they are active citizens participating in different communities.
3. Understand the vulnerability of children and their dependence on adults
4. Help children understand that they are global citizens with shared responsibilities to the environment and humanity.
5. Create and maintain safe and healthy environments which foster children's social, emotional, cognitive and physical development which respect their contributions to communities and their dignity.
6. Respect the relationship between children and families and acknowledge this in all interactions with children.
7. Ensure that all children and their families with special needs and disabilities have access to appropriate support services.
8. Ensure that each child's culture, language, ethnicity, and family structure are acknowledged and valued.
9. Advocate the right of each child to play and learn in an environment that meets the needs of

children with and without disabilities.

10. Provide all children with a language that they know, as well as support children in maintaining the use of their home language and in learning English.

11. Advocate and ensure that children are not discriminated against on the basis of gender, age, ability, economic status, family structure, lifestyle, ethnicity, religion, language, culture or national origin.

In relation to families:

1. Develop relationships of mutual trust with positive, open and honest communication.
2. Accept the family's right to make decisions (or be involved) about their own children.
3. Maintain respect and the family's right to confidentiality.
4. Learn from families so that they can build on their strengths and be supported in their role of nurturing children.
5. Respect the dignity and preferences of each family and endeavour to learn about their structure and lifestyle, culture and customs, language, religion and beliefs.
6. Share information about the child's education and development with families and help them understand and appreciate the current knowledge base of the early childhood profession.
7. Support the continuing development of parents' skills to enhance their understanding of their children.

In relation to communities:

1. Learn about the communities we work with their priorities and needs and ensure that our work with the children reflects these.
2. Promote shared and informed aspirations among communities which benefit children's happiness, health, enjoyment and wellbeing.
3. Advocate the implementation of laws and policies that promote child and family-friendly communities.
4. Promote developmentally and culturally appropriate knowledge and understanding of young children as well as their individual needs.
5. Use knowledge and research to advocate for an

environmentally safe world in which all children receive health care, food, shelter, are nurtured and live free from violence and abuse in their home and communities.

6. Promote multi agency working and cooperation among professionals concerned with addressing issues in health, education and care, and well-being of young children, their families and their early childhood educators.

In relation to employers:

1. Adhere to lawful policies and procedures and when there is conflict, attempt to effect change through constructive action within the organisation or seek change through appropriate procedures.

2. Do nothing to diminish the reputation of the work unless it violates the laws and regulations designed to protect children or this code of ethics.

3. Support workplace policies, standards and practices that are fair, non-discriminatory and are in the best interests of children, families and professionals.

In relation to colleagues:

1. Build collaborative relationships based on trust, respect and honesty.

2. Encourage colleagues to act in accordance with this code and take action in the presence of unethical behaviours.

3. Acknowledge the personal strengths, professional experience and diversity which other colleagues bring to work.

4. Share knowledge, experiences and resources with colleagues.

5. Use constructive methods to manage differences of opinion in the workplace.

In relation to students:

1. Acknowledge the support and personal strengths, professional knowledge, diversity and experience which students bring to the learning environment.

2. Know the requirements of the students' individual institutions and communicate openly with the representatives of that institution.

3. Provide ongoing constructive criticism and feedback as well as assessment that is fair.

4. Implement strategies that encourage and empowers students to make positive contributions to the workplace.

5. Maintain confidentiality in relation to students.

6. Provide students with professional opportunities and resources so that they can demonstrate their abilities.

7. Demonstrate this code of ethics to students through practical experience so that they adhere to these standards in the workplace.

In relation to my profession:

1. Keep updated with research, theory, content knowledge, high-quality early childhood practices and understanding of children and families.

2. Be aware of, and if appropriate challenge the power dimensions within professional relationships.

3. Pursue and build collaborative professional relationships.

4. Undertakes reflection, critical self-study, continuing professional development and engage with evidence based theory and practice.

In relation to the conduct of research:

1. Be aware of potential results of children's participation in research such as fatigue, privacy, and their interest.

2. Support research to strengthen and broaden the knowledge base of early childhood.

3. Endeavour to understand the purpose and value of proposed research projects.

4. Ensure that research in which I am involved meets standard ethical procedures including informed consent, opportunity to withdraw and confidentiality.

5. Represent the findings of all research accurately and objectively.

6. Ensure that images of children and other data are collected with informed consent only and are stored and utilised according to legislative and policy requirements.

7. Understand the knowledge base related to working with children, families, communities, colleagues and students.



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For more information about our work and to join, visit:

www.early-education.org.uk

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