

Research & Impact Intern: Early Childhood Development & Policy

This internship is part of the Find a Solution programme which brings together current students and local Third Sector organisations to tackle issues of strategic importance through projects that will have a lasting impact.

The role will be for a total of 160 hours, to be worked flexibly between June and September (to be discussed with successful candidate). This role is being funded by the Postgraduate Researcher Hub, however it is open to both PGT and PGR students in the College of Social Sciences.

About us

Early Years Scotland (EYS) is Scotland's leading specialist charity dedicated to ensuring every child from pre-birth to age five has the best start in life. We work directly with children, families, and professionals to remove barriers to learning and wellbeing at the earliest stages, helping children thrive and reach their full potential. Our programmes support families in Scotland's most deprived communities, where children face increased risks of poverty and adversity. We also provide professional learning for Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) practitioners and advocate for improvements in early years policy and practice. By evidencing the impact of our innovative programmes, this role will help us secure future funding to sustain and expand these initiatives across Scotland.

The role

This is a unique opportunity for a passionate and driven research intern to contribute to real-world policy impact. As a Research & Impact Intern, you will evaluate and evidence the effectiveness of two key EYS programmes:

Off to a Good Start (OTAGS) – A long-standing initiative promoting physical activity, healthy habits, and early movement-based learning for children aged 0–5.

Creating Caring Connections (CCC) – A new pilot programme supporting neurodiverse children and their families through sensory-based approaches.

Your research will directly influence EYS's policy engagement, funding applications, and strategic priorities—ensuring these programmes continue making a difference in communities across Scotland.

Main duties & responsibilities

1. Research & Data Collection (40–50 hours)

- Conduct a literature review on child healthy weight, movement-based learning, neurodiversity in early years, and early childhood physical health.
- Review existing EYS reports and Scottish Government policy documents to contextualise programme impact.
- Gather qualitative data from EYS Family Engagement Practitioners and families (e.g., structured interviews, surveys, or focus groups).
- Map OTAGS activities to the Scottish Government Child Healthy Weight indicators and Creating Caring Connections to most relevant ASN/neurodiversity strategies.

2. Impact Report Development (60–70 hours)

- Write two structured impact reports (one for OTAGS, one for CCC), identifying key themes, trends, and measurable impacts.
- Include case studies, qualitative insights, and policy alignment to demonstrate programme effectiveness.
- Draft executive summaries for funders and policymakers, making research findings accessible and actionable.

3. Advocacy & Marketing Materials (30–40 hours)

- Working alongside EYS colleagues, develop a set of key materials to support policy engagement and fundraising, including:
- Briefing Papers & Reports – Summarising research in ways that align with government priorities (e.g., why OTAGS supports the Child Healthy Weight 2030 strategy).
- Infographics & Data Visualisations – Translating impact data into digestible, shareable formats for policymakers and funders.
- Case Studies & Testimonials – Showcasing real families' experiences to highlight the need for continued funding and expansion.
- Presentation Decks – Supporting EYS's engagement with government bodies, NHS partners, and funders.
- Social Media & Website Content – Communicating research findings in accessible, engaging formats for public awareness.

4. Stakeholder Engagement & Presentation

- Present key findings to the EYS team, demonstrating how their work contributes to national policy objectives and funding priorities.
- Support EYS in communicating research insights to external stakeholders, including funders and policymakers.

Why join us?

- Real-World Impact – Your research will directly shape national policy, funding applications, and early years services across Scotland.
- Professional Development – Gain hands-on experience in impact evaluation, policy research, and stakeholder engagement.
- Support & Wellbeing – Enjoy access to EYS's employee benefits, including BUPA's confidential helpline.
- Influence Change – Work alongside experienced practitioners and senior leaders in the early years sector.

If you are passionate about making a difference in the lives of Scotland's youngest children and want to develop research skills that influence real change, we'd love to hear from you!

What makes this internship stand out? (training, benefits etc)

This is a unique opportunity to contribute to research that will directly influence national policy and early years practice in Scotland. Early Years Scotland (EYS) is a key voice in early childhood development and early learning and childcare (ELC), regularly consulted by the Scottish Government and sitting on multiple national steering and strategic working groups.

With a membership of over 650 ELC settings across Scotland, our research informs not just our own work, but the wider sector. Many of our members have voiced a clear need for greater knowledge and resources on neurodiversity in the early years and physical early development. Your impact reports will provide crucial evidence to shape policy discussions, secure funding, and develop future resources for the sector.

By undertaking this internship, you will gain real-world research experience with a leading national charity, contribute to high-profile projects, and see your work influence decision-making at the highest levels. If you're passionate about early years development, neurodiversity, and public health, this is an opportunity to make a meaningful difference.

You'll gain hands-on experience in impact evaluation, policy research, and stakeholder engagement, working alongside experienced practitioners and senior leaders in the sector.

If you're looking for an internship where your research drives real change, this is the perfect role for you.

You will also gain access to Early Years Scotland's employee benefit package including free BUPA confidential helpline.

Length of Internship (in weeks)

8

Starting month

June

Paid or voluntary

Paid

Is the internship part-time or full-time?

Part-time

For part-time roles, how many hours will the student work per week?

20

Required Year Group

Postgraduate researcher

Postgraduate taught

Targeted College

College of Social Sciences

Required Degree Discipline

Any within the targeted college.

The essential criteria for the role are

E1. Currently studying in a relevant field (e.g., Social Sciences, Public Health, Early Childhood Studies, Education, Psychology, or a related discipline)

E2. Strong research and analytical skills, with experience in reviewing academic literature, policy documents, or impact evaluation

E3. Excellent written communication skills, with the ability to produce clear, structured reports

E4. Ability to synthesise complex information into accessible, compelling reports and summaries

E5. Strong organisational and time management skills, with the ability to work independently and meet deadlines

E6. Interest in early childhood development, neurodiversity, and public health policy

The desirable criteria for the role are

D1. Experience in qualitative or quantitative research methods (e.g., conducting interviews, surveys, or focus groups)

D2. Familiarity with Scottish Government policies on child health, ASN, neurodiversity, or early years education

D3. Experience creating infographics, policy briefs, or funding application content

D4. Previous experience working with charities, education, or community projects