

Playbase put it all online

✘ Leith-based charity, Playbase Training, specialists in early years childcare courses introduce an online learning platform and new free app to help students gain qualifications and help with digital skills.

Chair, Freda O'Byrne, said: "Two years ago we decided that we needed to explain to others what we did in a clearer way. We also knew we needed to respond to the changes in the digital world by improving our own skills and finding ways to help our students improve theirs."

Freda continued: "A report by the Royal Edinburgh Society told us that one in five adults in Scotland do not have basic digital skills. We felt that, if we could help our students improve their digital skills and awareness *at the same time* as they were attending our courses then we would be truly helping them on the path to further education, training or employment, to accessing services, to finding out about jobs, to becoming fully digital citizens."

Since 1999 the charity has provided local training to parents, carers and those with an interest in working in childcare and recently received Enterprise Ready Funding to embrace digital technology for online learning. The new digital platform will be available to existing students immediately and new students can also apply to study purely online extending the charity's reach beyond Edinburgh. The Playbase 3 Course is newly accredited and offers students a better chance to access further learning opportunities and enter a career in childcare.

Many of the current students have not studied since school, are new to Edinburgh and do not have the confidence or digital skills to enter further education. With the guidance of experienced tutors, the students will be supported in online learning and the website will allow students to access coursework, upload assignments and engage with other students and tutors to improve the learning process.

Development Manager, Maria Sherrington, said: "Courses are open to everyone with an interest in young children. We are excited by the diversity in our classrooms. A typical class of 12 students regularly has as many as nine nationalities. We actively encourage different communities to share their

culturally diverse experiences and approaches to parenting and working with young children as part of the learning process. We believe this support can also be provided online as students have the opportunity to engage with others in chat rooms and form an online community. Many people are used to communicating by email or on Facebook so it's just a progression to online learning."

Freda added: "And we asked ourselves how could we be playful at the same time? How could we create something that was helpful to people and might make them use a digital resource more frequently? Something that would help build their confidence around using a smartphone or the web? So just in time for the summer holidays we are piloting an app called 'What will we do today?'; an app that suggests a quality play activity that parents, grandparents and carers could use to explore different activities that would help them to help their children learn through play."

Playbase Training engaged with members of the Creative Exchange in Leith consisting of Starbit (web developers) Cathy Tingle (copywriter) Designers on the Run (graphic designers) and Ann Robb (marketing consultant) to develop all the elements of the re-launch. The team were briefed to focus on the 'user' designing a brand and website that looks and feels intuitive, uncomplicated and easy to use for people new to the digital world. Designers On the Run, proposed the idea of Froebel Gifts as imagery for the new logo.

Friedrich Froebel (1782 – 1852), the German educationalist, is best known as the originator of the 'kindergarten system' and the Froebel Gifts are educational materials developed for his original Kindergarten. Perhaps the world's most intricately conceived playthings, these materials appear deceptively simple, but represent a sophisticated approach to child development. The Gifts are arguably the first educational toys.

For more information visit the [website](#).