



Trainer of the Year

Marie Richardson, training and operations director, Experiential Play

'Convincing and rigorous training for a wide range of students'
 Judge

Testimonies to Marie Richardson praise her ability to marry practical pedagogy with robust research, ensuring her content is up to date, inspiring and challenging, and making sure every learner engages, feels valued and contributes.

One student said, 'Marie always puts the candidate before the qualification. Her sensitive but firm approach ensures that each person is celebrated for who they are and what they bring to their learning but also allows them to find their own aspirations through hard work, focus and determination.'

Marie has led every aspect of Experiential Play's qualifications portfolio for 12 years, and is

responsible for qualifications and professional development training, specialist courses and in-service development for local authority, private settings and independent schools.

She ensures all staff have access to national and international training, has introduced a reference library to update and expand periodicals and core texts, and in particular promotes her passion for current issues, new theory and especially Scottish law, legislation and policy.

Marie was Experiential Play's representative on a Glasgow City Council project to expand the early years sector by identifying and supporting employees to move into a childcare post. She designed the way participants would

access qualifications, and put measures into the programme to ensure the level of teaching and support was relevant and appropriate.

Marie has also led her staff team in a variety of projects. Over the past six years the company has offered enriched approaches to Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs), with Marie researching and devising programmes within the qualification framework as well as enhancing the content through teaching, seminars, speakers and visits, including taking a group of students to visit the school and early years setting on the Scottish island of Iona to offer an insight into different children's lives, and other ways of engaging and learning through play.

Marie has been invited to participate in a variety of writing groups with the Scottish Qualifications Authority, and most recently was involved in developing 'Building the Ambition', a new Scottish early years policy document. She is involved every year with storytelling sessions at the AyeWrite festival for children, and has recently been invited to co-author a book on early years pedagogy.

In the last few years Marie has developed and delivered 'First Steps' and 'Approved by Dads', courses delivered to disadvantaged parents to work towards a qualification in early years. She has also co-ordinated the set-up of Experiential Play's practice nursery.

Students describe Marie's 'bubbly personality and infectious smile', and say if she sees them struggling or unsure in class, she offers all the support she can. One student had only one piece of advice for Marie: 'Never change.'

Criterion

Open to anyone responsible for training in colleges, training companies or in-house nursery groups

Highly commended Rebecca Martland and Alison Featherbe, Minding The Gap

Rebecca and Alison are co-founders of Minding The Gap, the first national conference aimed primarily at childminders. After months of planning, Minding The Gap welcomed 150 delegates for a day of high-quality, affordable training.

Childminder Rebecca is also an associate trainer for the NDNA, delivers training on behalf of West Sussex Early Childhood Service, and is currently a member of the West Sussex Early Innovator Team for 30-hours delivery. She has her own training service Children at Heart. Alison has worked in many roles in the early years sector, is an associate trainer for a safeguarding charity and has her own company Orange Caterpillar.

Sue Nichols Quality manager and senior tutor, Professional Training Solutions (PTS)

As part of the senior management team, Sue is responsible for qualifications compliance across PTS and ensuring staff meet funding requirements. She also tutors childcare apprentices, and by continuing to teach maintains her understanding of the reality of teaching young people.

Sue has supported learners through Level 2 and 3 qualifications, accommodating a variety of learning needs in her classes, from educating learners on the risks of buying online diet pills to referring any deemed to be at risk. She keeps her occupational expertise up to date with voluntary work at a local pre-school. She is passionate about playwork and speaks at conferences and consultations on the subject.