



York Childcare
day nurseries

Happy 30th Birthday York Childcare!

This year, we celebrate the 30th anniversary of York Childcare. Our three nursery settings have cared for thousands of children, and the organisation has supported the provision of numerous out of school clubs across the city. Here we explore our beginnings and find out more about the charitable aims that drive forward our organisation.

Where we began

York Childcare Ltd was incorporated in 1990 after a campaign organised by Janice Peggs, a social entrepreneur and policy reformer. Janice, a single parent from London, arrived in York with her son to find a lack of available childcare spaces, long waiting lists and the closure of York's County Council day nurseries due to budget cuts. The nurseries had offered affordable childcare and the closures affected the most needy groups. You can read more about the background to Janice's campaign at HerStoryYork.org.uk, a local online community history project. Janice identified a gap in provision and her campaign was instrumental in persuading the Council to review childcare provision.

A working group was convened, chaired by the late Colin Shepherd, with representatives of various key organisations in the city (i.e. HSBC Bank, York Health Services NHS Trust, The City of York Council and North Yorkshire County Council Social Services Department), to consider how to resolve the apparent shortage of childcare facilities in York at that time. Over several months, the group came to the conclusion that the best way forward was to establish partnerships in childcare. With a substantial grant from the City of York Council, and funding from the Department of Health to pay for a Development Worker, York Childcare was born.

These developments led to the opening of Joseph's Nursery in 1991, named after Janice Peggs' son, Joseph. Joseph's Nursery currently provides care for up to 38 children- around 12 under twos and 26 over twos.

York Childcare is a charity, established in 1990, managed by a board of voluntary trustees, who have a particular interest in supporting the childcare needs of lone parents. To support our charitable objectives by way of a financial donation please get in touch by emailing businesssupport@yorkchildcare.co.uk



The photo on the left features Joseph and Janice when the nursery was opened. On the right is a photo of Joseph today. He is quite the celebrity around here!

Building provision within the city

Janice's mission chimed in the city and in 1995 York Childcare opened its second day care setting, Heather's Nursery. It was named Heather's because the building was previously the site of the Council's Parks and Gardens department which grew the heather plants used by the Council in borders and plant tubs across the city. Heather's Nursery currently provides care for up to 36 children each day- around 9 under twos and 27 over twos.

In 2003, Scarcroft Primary School advertised the opportunity for any existing nursery providers to express an interest in taking over a disused building in the grounds of their school (the building had been used as rehearsal rooms for a children's theatre company and the upstairs floor was their performance space. Originally the 2-storey part of the building was the school science block and what is now the baby room was an open shelter in the playground). York Childcare submitted a successful expression of interest, aiming to complete a triangle of care across the city. Scarcroft Green Nursery currently provides care for up to 51 children each day- around 9 under twos and then 42 over twos across two rooms.

The Out of School Club Support Service was later formed and in partnership with the Local Authority offered support to Out of School Clubs across the city. Promoting the government initiative of creating an after-school place for every child who needed it was initially provided by one grant-funded support worker working for York Childcare. However, the need to increase support to this sector soon resulted in a partnership with the Local Authority, with York Childcare appointed to provide much needed advice and guidance to the ever-increasing amount of out of school clubs across the city. This service ran for a few

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years but due to restructures within the Local Authority was eventually taken in house. The Out of School Club Support Service operated by York Childcare continued and offered support to several clubs, helping them to recruit trustees and become sustainable. Today the service supports 6 small independent clubs, some of which are also registered as charities in their own right, offering training, HR advice, Financial Administration Services and support to ensure quality provision is offered to children and families across the city. The service is continually evolving to offer a range of specialist services to Out of School Clubs, Preschools and Schools.

A challenging, and changing world

In 1992, just 15 months after Joseph's Nursery opened, York Childcare faced a considerable challenge - a fire. Squirrels were believed to have gnawed through the power cables, sparking a blaze which destroyed the nursery's beautiful thatched roof. The nursery was relocated to Fylingdale Ward at Clifton Hospital temporarily whilst repairs were made to the building. The roof was successfully restored, and the children came back to the Joseph's they knew and loved.



2020 has brought our biggest challenge yet, one which we never expected, a global pandemic. Throughout the period of lockdown, nursery staff worked tirelessly to ensure that the nurseries could remain safely open. CEO, Karen Mawson, is incredibly proud of York Childcare's achievements.

"York Childcare has certainly stood the test of time as one of York's top providers of quality childcare. I think one of the reasons the organisation works so well is its unique positioning as both a business and a charity. The support that York Childcare gets from its trustees is

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phenomenal! When you look back over the years at the commitment from people who have taken on the huge responsibility of being a voluntary trustee in an organisation like this, it's very humbling. However, I have to say that it is our staff who are the real heroes! I was overwhelmed at the start of lockdown that so many of our staff selflessly offered their services to continue working in order to keep childcare available for the children of the essential keyworkers needing it. I think the sense of appreciation which the staff get back from the parents too helps them to keep going during times when things are difficult. Our staff really are awesome! I think most of them would say that they work in childcare because they enjoy working with children, and that should never be underestimated as it's really hard work: long hours in an ever-changing environment which can be very stressful at times— their resilience and commitment to the children and the support they give to each other makes me proud to be part of the York Childcare family”.

Our next steps

In addition to the four principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) that guides us, last year York Childcare staff began to train in the practices of Froebel, which focuses upon the role of play and creativity as central integrating elements in development and learning. Now more than ever, we are keen to look to the Froebelian principles to guide the development of our nurseries, and our children. As we move into York Childcare's fourth decade of high-quality childcare provision in York, we will be building upon our training to explore new and exciting opportunities to further develop our staff teams. The nurseries have introduced some wonderful new resources which compliment Froebelian principles, including natural objects, wooden blocks, and sensory toys. Here are some photos of some of the changes we have made to the areas of provision;





We look forward to sharing more with you over the coming months, and thank every past, present and future York Childcare family for sharing the journey with us.

Do you have a York Childcare story? Did you or one of your children grow in one of our nurseries? Let us know- we would love to share where you are now!