The Nurture Room
Where miracles can happen

This resource pack is intended to be used in conjunction with the film “The Nurture Room”. The film is for use in training and education settings. It is not for public screening.

The film was produced in 2010 by True Vision North.
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Filmed over a year, with unprecedented access, three troubled Glasgow school children have their lives completely transformed under the careful and patient nurturing of their dedicated staff.

The Nurture Room is a bridge between home and school; a safe place where children can be children. In these small, special classrooms children can re-visit early “nurturing” experiences that they missed or didn’t get at home.

Children like Jason (8), who had previously been taught in isolation due to his violent and disruptive behaviour; and Jordyn whose boisterous personality and lack of self-control made her uncontainable in her mainstream class.

We follow their incredible journey.
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What the film makers and viewers thought

“As the year went on and the Nurture Rooms began to work their magic it was really rewarding to be able to start to have conversations with the kids and eventually be able to get some of what they were saying on camera. Knowing the difficulty they had had in expressing themselves through words made the moment that those words finally did come all the more special. You just got the sense that these children might actually have a chance now.”

“Simply the loveliest ninety minutes of true education happening I have yet seen.”
“Heart warming to see what a huge effect nurture can have on a child.”
“Brilliant powerful piece of material. Proof that nurture is so important.”

“I felt that I had to put ‘pen to paper’ following the above programme on More4 last night. I was so blessed at seeing the positive impact that nurturing can have on children and young people who are, in turn, given a sense of worth with this heralding an increase in self belief and self confidence. The positive attitude of the teaching staff was nothing short of miraculous.
   Well done Glasgow City Council!!
   Well done for investing in the next generation
   You are a beacon in the darkness of ‘special needs education’.
   Thank you.”

Billy McClung, Social Worker Glasgow Drug Court Team

“And what we were able to capture over the course of the year is nothing short of a miracle. To witness first hand the incredible journey that these kids have been on was a privilege that will stay with me forever.”

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The film “The Nurture Room” features three Glasgow schools, who were happy to support this film’s production and allow the school and children to be filmed. This was due to their utter conviction that children and families’ lives had been transformed with the nurture group approach.

The film tells the story through the eyes of the children and young people.

Few words are required to demonstrate the effectiveness of the approach, as the film speaks for itself.

The intended audience is staff in Early Years Centres, Primary and Secondary schools, but is also applicable and relevant to:

- Healthcare professionals
- Health Visitors
- SLTs
- OTs
- PACT and PPP Teams
- DCFP and psychiatric nurses
- Social Workers
- Educational Psychologists
- Counsellors & therapists
- LAC Teams
- Children’s Units
- Foster Carers
- Specialist education settings
- Voluntary Organisations
- Youth offending teams etc.

The Nurture Room was awarded Best Long Documentary at the Scottish Mental Health Art and Film Festival 2010
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The film covers the individual stories of children who received a nurture group input in three different schools in Glasgow. They were at different ages and stages.

It films their behaviours and barriers to learning evident prior to input, some of the strategies used and the amazing results following six months of part time intervention. One child had had three moves of school and was on the waiting list for a specialist SEBD placement. This was not required following a nurture group input.

Viewing the film works best when there is an opportunity for discussions and questions afterwards.

To optimise its potential plan some questions in advance and do contact NGN for answers before or after the screening, for example

• What was your response to the film?
• What elements could be incorporated easily into your own settings?
• How could you achieve this?
• What steps, short and long term are required?

NGN offer a range of training opportunities. Visit www.nurturegroups.org
Some example questions for audiences:

1. What was your overall response to the film?
2. What feelings did watching the film invoke in you?
3. Were you surprised by what you saw and what could be accomplished?
4. What results did you note were achieved?
5. How did staff achieve these results?
6. What elements could be incorporated easily into your own settings?
7. How could a nurture group approach work within your setting?
8. If additional funding or resources would be required, then are there avenues / sources you could apply to?
9. Can local Social Work or Health Services support you?
10. Any voluntary organisations available locally or nationally for advice and support?
11. Is training from NGN a useful route to progress?

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What is a nurture group?
A nurture group is a small group of six to twelve children, whose origins started in mainstream primary school settings but are now located within a broad range of educational establishments and alternative settings. The children/young people spend part of each week in the group but remain on the register of their mainstream class and join in with planned activities. It is absolutely essential that all school staff understand the nurture group and how it works, in order to provide each child with the consistent and holistic support that they need, whilst also ensuring that nurture is part of a whole school approach. Full access to the curriculum is the ultimate aim where the barriers to learning can be eliminated or considerably reduced in order to maximise potential.

The Nurture Area
Nurture rooms are set up to be a bridge between home and school or nursery, where missed learning opportunities are addressed according to the individual profile of needs. Nurture rooms are warm and welcoming places, with time to play within a highly structured and planned learning environment. The room is divided up into different areas to facilitate varying purposes with time to sit down to eat which is core to the whole approach. Nurture rooms don’t need to cost the earth to furnish, but it is important that the room is appropriately comforting and welcoming in order to provide a consistent, predictable and safe place for the children and young people.

Nurture Staff
Nurture staff work in twos, usually a teacher and teaching assistant. The importance of the relationship of these two staff cannot be understated. They model for the nurture children and young people a happy, healthy, adult relationship, and the interaction between teacher and teaching assistant, staff and children is invaluable in showing the children and young people what constitutes appropriate behaviours. Relationships and consistency of approach are core to the whole nurture group approach. Nurture staff are extremely supportive and patient, working as a team to make the children feel accepted and valued. Great emphasis is put on getting the students to engage with class life, encouraging students to relate to each other, and on fostering good relationships between peers and adults. As the children become more self-confident, they begin to respond to teaching and learning which is both aimed at their level and hits target levels within the national curriculum.
Communication and Language Skills
Effective communication is vital for academic progress and social acceptance. Many nurture group students have difficulty with receptive and expressive language often just through the lack of appropriate experiences. They are often anxious about talking when they enter a nurture group, which further inhibits their ability to make personal progress on a social, emotional, behavioural or intellectual level. Using a range of strategies, including games and songs, staff engage students’ attention and encourage them to want to listen and talk. The approach has proved to be very successful, enabling one 6 year old girl who’d been electively mute to take the starring role as the Virgin Mary in her school nativity play, after just 3 months in the nurture group. A core principle of nurture groups is that all behaviour is communication and this aspect is fully addressed within the approach.

Staff also listen carefully to students, and repeat and rephrase their articulations in order to broaden the vocabulary of the student as well as to enhance their understanding of their own emotions. If there are arguments within the group, staff encourages the students to use the opportunity for growth by discussing alternative coping strategies for similar situations in the future. The students grow in self-control and self-respect as they improve their ability to talk clearly and confidently be able to express their needs.

Food
The group share breakfast every morning with a formal routine, which provides a wealth of learning opportunities for children (letting others go first, turn taking, empathy, learning acceptable ways of behaving, expressing likes and dislikes, having everyday conversations, setting the table, serving each other and encouraging good manners as well as experiences of healthy foods, food preparation, language of Maths, foods from other countries etc).
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Development & Outcomes
The evaluation evidence on the outcomes for children and young people is amazing across all age groups. Parents also often benefit from their child’s participation in a nurture group. Although it can be very difficult to engage parents in school for a number of reasons, the nurturing and supportive attitude of the staff make them very approachable and non-threatening to parents. A no blame approach is always taken. Further, the huge leaps and bounds their children make in terms of progress mean that a lot of parents are excited about their child’s education and, perhaps for the first time ever, feel empowered to assist in it.

Quotes from students:
“I don’t wreck the classroom any more because I am gooder but I still nag my teacher and staff at the Home but I do it in a polite way. I mean I say “please may I” loads of times.”

“The group helps me and I like it. You have to work hard. Miss makes you, even if you don’t want to. But most kids try in here. If you have a question; if you want some help, you get it quickly. It’s good.”

“I like talking to my teachers, getting stars, they don’t give you them for nothing. You have to say if you really deserve it. I like my work. I get lots of help if I can’t see how to do it.”

“Before I came into nurture I was always in trouble. The teachers have taught me to control my anger. We have done lots of fun things, food tasting, breakfast club, lunch club and learned lots of new games. If it were not for Mr W and Mrs S I would still be in trouble. They say nurture groups taught them how to be kind to children so THANK YOU.”

“Before I came to nurture it wasn’t very pleasant being me because I felt unwanted and abandoned. My behaviour was provoking my mum but I did not realise it until now. Nurture is for me one of the most memorable things I have done and since I have been here I have learnt to find myself. I found out what I could do, things I couldn’t do like cook and play an instrument. In my cooking the most exciting thing was well…cooking. In my music it was the sound of me playing it and thinking to myself….WOW!”
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Quotes from parents:
“I don’t mind coming to the gate to collect him now because other children no longer tell me how badly he has behaved.”

“I’m more able to help him now, I’m more confident. Before I couldn’t get him to read, now it’s a pleasure to help him.”

“I don’t have a problem getting him to school now. Since he’s been in the group he wants to come.”

Quotes from teachers:
The Estyn Inspector said, “Whatever you are doing I would like to bottle it and spread it around”.
“It has brought the fun back into teaching. The staff as a whole became more aware of how children develop, which helps curriculum development for the whole school.”

“Our school recently had an excellent Ofsted report commenting on the very positive relationships across the school and the high priority given to meeting the needs of every child. The nurture group is at the very heart of this. It achieves significant change in the attitudes and behaviour of the pupils placed there. But in addition its ethos permeates the whole school. Its impact on families is significant. One parent said “I can’t thank you enough, not only for the support you have given my child but for the support you have given me... I was worried and unsure but you reassured me, kept me involved and you have changed our family for the better.”

“The HMIE Report we had recently commented on the excellent pastoral care throughout the school. Much of this is due to the nurture principles which have become the mainstay of all our inclusion work with children and parents throughout the school. The impact of the nurture class practice in shared assessment and target setting cannot be overstated. Our Nurture Room will be featured on the HMIE website of excellent practice.”
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What nurture groups achieve

Support vulnerable children and young people at risk of:
• Social exclusion
• Educational failure
• Antisocial and criminal behaviour
• Poor mental and physical health

Nurture Groups:

• Offer a short term, focussed intervention
• Benefit the whole school community
• Empower staff, pupils and parents
• Address legislative requirements
• Are non judgemental
• Intervene early, preventing later problems
• Raise attainment, attendance and self confidence
• Demonstrate through evaluations, clear benefits for the child, family and school

For further information please visit
www.nurturegroups.org or phone Irene Grant, National Director on 0141 233 0471
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Further information

There are over 1500 known nurture groups currently running in the UK in various different establishments, including Early Years, Primary, Secondary Schools and alternative provisions. There are many more using a nurturing approach.

There are also nurture groups in Canada, Malta, New Zealand and Australia, with interest being shown in Japan Romania and Portugal.

To date over 100 establishments have been awarded the Marjorie Boxall Quality Mark Award, for excellence in nurture group practice.

Currently in progress is the development of a training DVD using clips and additional material from this film, on how to address challenging behaviour.

These include topics such as assessment, identifying and meeting needs, strategies, resources & approaches, whole establishment nurturing approaches, involving other agencies, policy development, transition, resilience, establishing a nurture room etc.

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