

The Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments



Background Information

The Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments, based at the Craighalbert Centre, is one of Scotland's Grant Aided Special Schools. It provides day school education for nursery, pre-school and school age children with motor impairments (for example, cerebral palsy). The Centre also provides outreach services, family support and periodic placements to children from across Scotland, as well as those who have attended the Centre and are making the transition to mainstream schooling.

The Centre caters for children with motor impairments, which are often caused cerebral palsy. Cerebral palsy is an umbrella term used to describe a wide range of difficulties with balance, posture, movement and co-ordination. These difficulties are the result of damage to the brain, which can occur before or during birth, or in the first two years of a child's life, when the brain is developing.

The Centre was established in 1991 by the then Scottish Executive to combine the Scottish curriculum with the principles of Conductive Education, to allow children to achieve their full potential, developing independence and life skills. The Centre is family-focused and works closely with parents, siblings and other relatives.

The Centre came into being as the result of parent demand and the recognition that alternative provision would be beneficial to children with motor impairments in Scotland.

In 1986, BBC television broadcast the documentary 'Standing Up for Joe,' telling the story of 5-year-old Joe Horsley, who had cerebral palsy, and his parents' search for a system of education that would allow him to develop to his full potential. The family discovered the Peto Institute in Hungary, whose methods, known as Conductive Education, had remarkable benefits for Joe.

As a consequence, a number of Scottish families, and families from across the UK, took their children to the Peto Institute, which at the time was virtually the only source of Conductive Education in the world.

Subsequently, a number of organisations involved with children affected by cerebral palsy began to explore this system, sending staff to the Peto Institute in Budapest and beginning to introduce Conductive Education into their regimes. Queen Margaret University brought staff of Peto Institute to Scotland to demonstrate this work and conduct seminars with academic and external staff, as well as organising two national conferences on Conductive Education. The university also awarded an honorary doctorate to Ester Cotton, a physiotherapist and pioneer of Conductive Education in the UK.

The gathering momentum associated with the increasing awareness of Conductive Education and growing pressure from parents for Conductive Education to be made available, led the then Scottish Office Education Department to establish The Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments (SCCMI) in 1991. The Centre subsequently moved to its purpose-built home at the Craighalbert Centre in Cumbernauld in 1993. The Centre uses the principles of Conductive Education in conjunction with the Scottish curriculum, and does not attempt to replicate Conductive Education in its Hungarian form.