

# HM Prison Inverness – Peep Progression Pathway qualifications for fathers (and their partners)

by Gillian Forbes, Highland Council Peep co-ordinator & Mairianne Nairn, CALA family support co-ordinator

“I gained useful skills through the programme that will help me day-to-day when I’ve been released from prison. It gave me a better understanding of parenting and what can help my child.”



**Staff:** Two Peep-trained practitioners, Gillian Forbes from Highland Council and Mairianne Nairn from Care & Learning Alliance (CALA); the project built on CALA’s existing Prison Service work with remand prisoners and their families, and on Highland Council’s Peep delivery in local communities over the past decade.

## Project overview (from the practitioners):

‘The course consists of 13 weekly hour-long sessions with the families, followed by an additional 30 minutes for the fathers to work on their portfolios. Each course has been run with two or three dads (who are in custody), their baby or young child and their partner. The first course went really well, and the families were really appreciative. We’re now on to our third time of running it, at the request of the Prison Governor. We’ve seen all the dads grow in confidence and get really involved within the sessions. There were obviously challenges: the prison is fairly small but overcrowded, with many prisoners being either short-term or moving to another prison, and for some mums it was too far or difficult to bring their baby or child each week.

From the start, we were keen that the fathers would have the opportunity to gain an SCQF-credited unit (level 3, 4 or 5), from the Peep Progression Pathway. This is based on the parents’ own learning and reflections on an aspect of child development, linked to play and learning activities that they do with their child during the session, then record in a portfolio. The children can be any age from 0-5 years, so the courses have used the mixed-age ‘Early Child Development’ unit. This includes Learning Together Programme topics such as Helping children feel good about themselves, Play and language, Sharing books with babies/young children, Maths in everyday routines and Food for life.

Completing the qualification unit also guarantees the fathers an interview at the local college when they leave, if they wish to do further training. The dads have all worked really hard on their credit-rated portfolios. For one dad it was his first recognised qualification, and this time one of the mums is completing a portfolio too. The dads have told us that it’s the highlight of their week – and we’ve found that it is for us too.’

## Feedback on the Peep sessions:

### Dads:

- “Peep’s had a massive impact on me and my family – without it I wouldn’t have had that opportunity to bond with my baby.”

- “I’ve really enjoyed the course, it’s made me feel more confident in being a first time dad and I have discovered lots of activities me and my son can do together.”
- “The Peep course has emphasised things, why we do activities and how it helps my child’s development. I didn’t realise the impact reading a story had on my child.”
- “It’s helped me exist, I feel more like a father. Even getting to stand up with my daughter makes a huge difference, in a normal visit session we can’t get off our seats.”

**Mum:**

“I feel that, although the circumstances in which we attend Peep aren’t the best, it has had such a great impact on us. Initially I felt it was going to be condescending, but after attending the first session I soon realised the benefit of it. I’ve seen how much it helps my partner interact with our son. The activities and tasks that fathers often don’t take part in, like crafts and messy play, he has been able to experience. I’ve also learnt from it, the in-depth details of children’s learning is really interesting. Most of all it has helped keep a bond between father and son, giving them both time to play, learn and interact, and I feel this will be very beneficial for when he comes home.”

**Inverness Prison Governor, Stephen Coyle:**

“It has given the fathers in our care the skills and confidence to shape play in a way which is fun yet maximises the benefits to their children, whilst strengthening the bonds in the wider family group. We are delighted this work will be ongoing.”

**Prison Officer:**




“This Peep project is about preventing future victims”.

**Maree Todd, Scottish Minister for Children and Young People**, visited one of the sessions in December 2018. She was very positive about the encouragement, praise, nurture and strong relationships that she saw, about the emotional literacy displayed in the fathers’ written portfolios, and about the likely lasting benefit for the families.

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To find out more about using Peep programmes to support families – in a prison or elsewhere – please get in touch:

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