

# Growing Leaders Through Play: Supporting Staff and Children in School-Age Childcare *with* Louise Kilbane



Leadership is not only about formal roles—it is about encouraging initiative, responsibility, and confidence in everyday life. In School-Age Childcare (SAC), both staff and children can benefit from opportunities to practice leadership in a playful, inclusive way.

For children, this means being given choices, responsibilities, and a voice in shaping their experiences. For staff, it involves modelling leadership behaviours, creating space for child-led activities, and fostering environments where everyone feels empowered to contribute.

This workshop uses playful, practical approaches to help staff recognise and nurture leadership skills in children while also building their own confidence as leaders and mentors.

## **Objectives**

Participants will:

1. Explore the concept of leadership as a shared, playful, and inclusive process.
2. Experience hands-on activities that promote child-led play and decision-making.
3. Learn strategies to give children responsibility, voice, and ownership in SAC settings.
4. Reflect on their role as facilitators of leadership and role models for children.
5. Create action ideas to integrate playful leadership opportunities into daily practice.

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## Growing Leaders Through Play: Supporting Staff and Children in School-Age Childcare *with Louise Kilbane continued*



### Workshop Content:

- 1. What Does Leadership Look Like in SAC?**
  - Leadership as confidence, teamwork, and decision-making
  - Children as active participants and co-creators
- 2. Playful Leadership for Children**
  - Games and activities that build responsibility and problem-solving
  - Encouraging group decision-making (e.g., planning play, setting up routines)
  - Supporting children to take turns leading
- 3. Staff as Role Models and Mentors**
  - Leading by example in a playful, approachable way
  - Coaching children gently through challenges
  - Reflective practice: identifying leadership moments
- 4. Creating Leadership-Friendly Environments**
  - Building routines that allow for choice and child voice
  - Shared responsibility (children helping with setup, activities, peer support)
  - Inclusion: ensuring every child has a chance to lead
- 5. Practical Toolkit and Action Planning**
  - Sample games for leadership development
  - Ideas for staff-child co-leadership projects
  - Action plan for embedding playful leadership in the service

Presented *In Person in Niagara*  
(ECCDC Conference Room, Thorold)

**Tuesday October 28, 2025**

10:00 am to 1:00 pm

Cost: No charge, a pizza lunch will be offered (*this session has been generously sponsored by Atlantic Technology University*)

Please register by **October 23, 2025** by visiting [www.eccdc.org](http://www.eccdc.org), emailing [eccdc@eccdc.org](mailto:eccdc@eccdc.org), or calling 905.646.7311 ext. 304



### **Louise Kilbane, MA, PGDipT&L, BA (Hons)ECEC, Mont Dip, LINC Dip**

Louise Kilbane is a lecturer at Atlantic Technological University (ATU), an experienced Early Years Educator and School-Age Childcare Leader, as well as a researcher with over 20 years of experience in the early years and School-Age Childcare (SAC) sectors. She owns and manages childcare services in the west of Ireland, blending her practitioner expertise with academic leadership and involvement in national policy.

Louise has worked with the Government of Ireland on developing sectoral policies and professional frameworks. She contributed to the authorship of key national documents, including the Code of Professional Responsibilities, the Code of Ethics, and Nurturing Skills: The Workforce Development Plan. Her research on SAC qualifications, leadership, and professionalisation has been presented at both national and international levels, including at the European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA) Conference.

As a lecturer, researcher, and policy contributor, Louise is dedicated to raising professional standards, enhancing workforce capacity, and advocating for children's rights to play, wellbeing, and inclusion. She adopts an engaging and reflective approach in her teaching and facilitation, empowering practitioners to develop their leadership abilities while fostering leadership among children.