

## **Early Childhood Forum response to the Tickell Review of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

The Early Childhood Forum (ECF) is a voluntary organisation hosted by the National Children's Bureau (NCB). It is a coalition of 61 professional associations, voluntary organisations and interest groups united in their concern about the well-being, learning and development of young children from birth to eight and their families. Its vision is to bring together partners in the early childhood sector to promote inclusion and challenge inequalities, and to champion quality experiences for all young children from birth to eight and their families.

### **Summary of key issues**

- ECF strongly welcomes the EYFS in providing a coherent and consistent universal framework that supports young children's learning and development, irrespective of the type of setting they attend. We support its play-based approach and focus on listening to children.
- The EYFS is based on the best evidence we have from research and experience about what is most effective in helping children develop physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially.
- The EYFS must be an inclusive framework that caters for the needs of all young children, including those with special educational needs, English as an additional language, or who are from disadvantaged communities.
- There should be a greater emphasis on equality and inclusion within the EYFS, with good practice exemplified and high quality training provided for all practitioners, including child development.
- The EYFS should be provided by high quality, well trained practitioners, both men and women.
- We believe the EYFS should remain mandatory. However, some flexibility should be offered to secondary providers, such as play and out of school settings, in relation to observation, assessment and reporting.
- ECF proposes extending the EYFS from birth until the end of Key Stage 1 to provide children with integrated and balanced learning experiences, relevant to their stage of development, a vital foundation for their future.
- ECF is very concerned by the focus on school readiness as an overall aim for early education; the EYFS is a framework which provides for children's learning throughout life.

- The welfare requirements must be retained, and improved with regard to ratios and access to onsite outdoor play provision.
- ECF proposes that Ofsted continues to inspect the EYFS as a single framework covering both welfare and learning and development requirements.
- ECF would like to see more references to joint working with health visitors, speech and language therapists and Area SENCOs, as well as mothers and fathers, as a partnership approach based on an understanding of mutual rights and responsibilities, is essential in providing high quality provision for young children.
- ECF wants to see clearly stated a reference to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in the EYFS framework.

**12 Many people have views about the EYFS. Many think that it has been very successful and would like it to remain unchanged. Others think parts of it need changing, or that there shouldn't be a mandatory framework at all. What is your overall view of the EYFS?**

The Early Childhood Forum welcomes the Early Years Foundation Stage in providing a coherent and consistent universal framework that supports young children's learning and development from birth to five.

The EYFS has grown out of a long tradition of providing education and care for babies and young children up to 5 years old. (*Please see early years time line [http://partner.ncb.org.uk/dotpdf/open\\_access\\_2/ecu\\_earlyyearstimeline1999-dec2008.pdf](http://partner.ncb.org.uk/dotpdf/open_access_2/ecu_earlyyearstimeline1999-dec2008.pdf)* ) For the first time, parents and families can expect the same standard of education and care for their children, whether they attend a children's centre, PVI setting, reception class or are cared for by a childminder. The EYFS brought together three previous sets of separate guidance and regulations that covered early years education and childcare (but which did not apply to all settings<sup>1</sup>), so that all early years settings and services are working within the same overall statutory framework and practice guidance.

The EYFS is based on the best evidence we have from research and experience about what is most effective in helping children develop physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially. For example, it is established that children learn best when they are engaged in play and real activities – playing, talking and thinking with adults and other

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<sup>1</sup>The Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage (2000) was statutory and applied to all settings providing education and care for 3 and 4 year olds – including children in reception classes. Birth to Three Matters (2003) was non-statutory guidance for those working with under 3s. Ofsted National Standards for Full Day Care (2001) were the minimum welfare requirements for day nurseries including space, staff qualifications, health and safety and other matters

children. It is the first phase of education – from birth to five (end of reception class) and recognises that children learn from birth.

As we will outline in answers to subsequent questions, we have collected case studies and research, which identify how the EYFS has contributed to improving learning and development opportunities for young children as well as raising the quality of provision as a whole. As with the implementation of any new legislation, it takes some time to adjust to changes and to embed good practice.

Evidence tells us that practitioners, including childminders, value the EYFS in providing a structured methodology for working with young children and their families.

Childminders have improved under the EYFS. This is demonstrated by comparing the overall inspection outcomes across the period from April 2005 to August 2008 and August 2008 onwards:

Ofsted Grade	April 2005 – August 2008	August 2008 onwards
outstanding	4%	9%
good	55%	58%
satisfactory	39%	31%
inadequate	2%	2%

The Daycare Trust recently commissioned its London Providers' Survey which identified that 70% of providers felt that the EYFS had improved practice.<sup>2</sup>

A survey<sup>3</sup> of National Day Nurseries Association members found 83% felt the EYFS supported children to get the best start.

Therefore, we are proposing some improvements be made whilst keeping the overall ethos of a mandatory integrated play-based learning framework.

**One of the aims of the EYFS was to bring together learning and care requirements, because the evidence suggests that this helps to raise the quality of early learning and childcare provision. It was also felt that it would be easier for practitioners and parents/carers if all the guidance on early years services was brought together in a single framework.**

**13 Do you think there should be a framework that covers both welfare requirements and learning and development requirements? If you have views on the content of the welfare or learning and development requirements, note there are specific questions on this later on in the questionnaire.**

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<sup>2</sup> Daycare Trust London Providers Survey 2010

<sup>3</sup> NDNA Member Survey 2010

There should be one single framework, covering both welfare and learning and development requirements for all young children. This enables practitioners to see the EYFS as an integrated document covering all aspects of young children's well-being, and to understand how keeping a child safe and happy can positively impact on their learning and development.

ECF proposes extending the EYFS from birth until the end of Key Stage 1. It is essential that the ethos of the EYFS continue up to the age of seven and that a play based learning forms the basis of a framework across this age range. This would bring England in line with Wales and a number of European countries. The flexibility offered within the EYFS needs to underpin Key Stage 1 as this will provide children with integrated, broad and balanced learning experiences relevant to their stage of development, rather than those more formal approaches appropriate to learners in Key Stage 2.

ECF feels that how practitioners implement the EYFS is key. All practitioners need to have a good working knowledge of child development across all stages of the EYFS to develop effective practice. This will assist them in observing children and appropriately relating their experiences to the areas of learning. Children learn in a variety of ways, including importantly through child initiated play based activities, and their first hand experiences allow them to develop an understanding of themselves and the world around them. Practitioners should be strongly encouraged to engage with mothers and fathers and to support children's learning in the home learning environment. Equality and inclusion must be embedded in practice.

Having the EYFS in one document also makes it more practical for practitioners to access and carry around. We are supportive of current Ofsted regulations and propose that the EYFS continues to be inspected as a single framework.

### **CASE STUDY FROM NDNA**

#### **Little Chatterbox, Chesterfield, Derbyshire**

Little Chatterbox Day Nursery is an award-winning nursery based in Chesterfield, Derbyshire. The nursery has fully embraced the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to deliver high-quality care and early learning and exciting opportunities for the children in its care.

The nursery team use the EYFS at all ages and stages to support children's development. For example, whilst babies are being changed they enjoy staff talking about the colour, texture and shapes of the home-made mobile above them. For older children, staff log what children do on a daily basis, enabling resources to be renewed or extended. All of these observations reflect areas of learning, how it relates to the child's development and the proposed next steps.

However, the team still recognise the flexibility behind the EYFS. When new opportunities for learning arise and children are interested staff quickly adapt to these, for example during a bout of heavy rain children enjoyed dressing for the weather and playing with relevant resources such as umbrellas. A confident understanding of the EYFS means that staff can adapt to new interests and developmental areas as appropriate.

Little Chatterbox also understands how parents can be involved in the EYFS as their child's first educator. Regular reports and a home diary keep parents updated and information sheets show the child's next steps. The nursery also helps parents to encourage the development of their child with special workshops, simple activity ideas and resource packs around the child's interests that can be taken home and used.

The nursery is excelling, and all staff use the EYFS to deliver the highest possible standard of care and early learning. Overall, the team feel that they have really embedded the framework and do not wish to see major changes in the future.

**14 Some providers argue that they should not have to deliver the learning and development requirements of the EYFS - for example, independent schools, parts of the play sector/out of school care, and some childminders. What are your views on moving away from a single framework and having different or lighter touch requirements for some types of provider?**

**What providers, if any, do you think should have fewer learning and development requirements?**

ECF insists that there should be one single framework for all providers that work primarily with children aged birth to five. However, we would propose developing lighter touch reporting and assessment requirements for settings catering mainly for children over 5 – specifically outdoor play provision, after school clubs and extended services.<sup>4</sup>

We would propose some flexibility in reporting and assessment for playworkers who provide out of school provision, such as adventure playgrounds, for children aged 5-11. Children attend these settings for relatively short periods of time and their main reason for going is to play freely. Play England report cases where playworkers have had to focus their attention on a small number of children under 6 so as observe and record their learning experiences according to the EYFS, which can be detrimental for older children who receive less staff support. We support Play England's recommendation that there should be more flexibility to observe and record in a way that best suits individual play and out of school providers and that further training on this is provided.

NCB is currently undertaking a study of childminding practice in England. The project is due to be completed in summer 2011 and outcomes will include recommendations on how childminders can work within the EYFS in a way that is more reflective of the service they provide. NCMA, who is an ECF member, proposes keeping the learning and development requirements as they are for childminders.

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<sup>4</sup> We would also include within this four year old children attending full day-care settings for a limited amount of hours.

## NCMA case study

### **Karen Stewart from Crayford has been childminding for 12 years.**

#### **She said:**

“Things have improved since I first registered, we really are gaining professional status now. I work with a childminder friend and we have the same ethos. We have a great relationship with the nursery in our area who values our work. We provide them with records of transfers for the children who attend our setting and information sharing. The nursery leader treats us with the respect we deserve.

“I work closely with a fellow childminder and we provide emergency cover for social services between us. I can provide care for disabled children and have a signing diploma and currently care for a deaf child.”

Karen gets referrals from Social Services through the Bexley childminding network and also receives support and relevant training.

She has achieved an NVQ Level 3 in Early Years.

Karen is proud to be a childminder and feels that it is a career she will stick with.

#### **Karen said:**

“We are now qualified professional people and we do like to be treated as such. The EYFS has put us on a level footing with other childcare providers. I had my Ofsted inspection in April 2010 and I only had half an hour’s notice. I had nothing to hide so I wasn’t worried. I got an Outstanding and this is an improvement from a Good in my last inspection. I was so pleased as it meant the work I had put in with Tracey the network coordinator to ensure my paperwork was in order was worth it.

“I’d already started my SEF form because I knew I was due an inspection soon. I keep all my paperwork up to date. If you want to be a childminder you have to think about it as a professional career choice. The paperwork I do is very easy, just pictures and weekly diaries. Then I do next steps plans and tracker books to prove where the children are developmentally. I would like us to continue the way we are with EYFS. I would like the respect we deserve, it’s a profession not just something you can do on the side.”

Karen works long hours opening for 11½ hours a day five days a week but find it easier because her own children are 15 and 17. She feels it might be harder for people with young children at home.

#### **Karen wants to stay in childminding, she said:**

“I want to continue as a childminder, I can work with a variety of families and have the flexibility to do what I want to do or what the children want to do. We always go outside, I have a large garden and my childminding colleague and I take the children on outings to the park or soft play areas, what ever takes our fancy that is the best bit about childminding. You can be spontaneous but still have a routine, you can plan your activities for the children and provide them with wonderful life experiences.”

“Anyone who loves children and wants to become a childminder should think hard about it first, it is certainly not the easy option, you have to be committed 100 per cent.”

The number of childminders has decreased over the last few years, but this is more likely due to retirements and people who are no longer childminding removing themselves from the register.

Independent schools including academies should follow the EYFS to ensure that all children receive high quality early education and care, and that there is continuity for children moving between settings.

We would like to add that there should be ongoing and effective communication between all settings that children attend, as well as between and with their parents and practitioners, to ensure continuity of provision and ensure that any additional needs are catered for quickly and appropriately.

**16 It could be argued that if providers receive government funding - for example for delivering free nursery education for 3 and 4 year olds - then they should be required to deliver the things that Government thinks are important and sets out in the EYFS. What are your views on this?**

ECF believes that the focus should be on providing what is best for each child.

Providing the EYFS should remain statutory for all settings, whether they are maintained, private, independent or voluntary, to ensure that all young children have access to high quality learning and development opportunities. ECF agrees that the EYFS should be linked as a condition to the free nursery entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds to enable a consistent, high quality approach across the sector.

All settings offering the free entitlement should be encouraged and supported to engage in quality improvement processes, as evidence from Ofsted has shown that those who have been accredited by a QA scheme receive better judgements in inspections.<sup>5</sup>

**17 Do you have any other comments you'd like to make?**

### **The themes and objectives of the EYFS**

**18 The EYFS is currently based around four themes that are designed to provide a context for the EYFS requirements, and describe how practitioners should provide good quality and consistent support for the learning, development and care of young children. These themes are:**

- **A unique child**
- **Positive relationships**
- **Enabling environments**
- **Learning and development**

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<sup>5</sup> Ofsted analysed inspection data between April 2005 and December 2007 and found that 14% of settings that had completed a QA scheme were rated outstanding as opposed to 3% of settings who hadn't.

**Would you take a different approach to these themes and underpinning principles? If yes, please specify what approach you would take.**

ECF proposes that the four themes and underpinning principles remain as they are. Anecdotal evidence tells us that practitioners like the simplicity and holistic nature of the themes with the focus on the ‘unique child’ being at the centre. The themes can be readily linked to practice, as outlined in the National Strategies publication ‘*Learning, playing and interacting in the Early Years Foundation Stage*’

## Practitioners build conditions for learning across the EYFS themes

A Unique Child	Positive Relationships	Enabling Environments	Learning and Development
Children develop at different rates, have different interests, come from varied cultural backgrounds and unique families  <b>Practitioners</b> Ensure provision reflects and supports all children	Respectful and caring interactions are the basis of emotional security which supports learning  <b>Practitioners</b> Give priority to a key person, and respect feelings and opinions	Children need time, space and materials to play, investigate and explore  <b>Practitioners</b> Observe, then organise spaces, materials and the flow of the day	Experiences offer stimulating opportunities to explore, be active, and think creatively  <b>Practitioners</b> Ensure challenging opportunities across all six areas of learning

**19 The overarching aim of the EYFS is to improve children's developmental outcomes and to reflect that it is every child's right to grow up safe, healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and with economic wellbeing. Do you think the EYFS should have a different aim? If yes, please specify what aim you would have.**

ECF proposes that the aim of the EYFS should stay as it is, with an additional reference to addressing inequalities. The Every Child Matters outcomes are recognised by practitioners and embedded across the 0-19 age range. They support smooth transitions between the EYFS and Key Stage 1 and beyond.

Children’s experiences during their first few years make the biggest difference in later life. A recent report by the New Economics Foundation ‘*Backing the Future: why investing in children is good for all of us*’ highlighted the economic and social benefits of early investment. Using a Social Rate of Return on Investment model, the report concluded that for every £1 invested in a Sure Start Children’s Centre, £4.60 of social value is generated<sup>6</sup>. It also explained the enormous savings investing in parenting

<sup>6</sup> Action for Children & New Economics Foundation (2009) *Backing the Future: why investing in children is good for all of us*. London: nef

support can have on the prevention of conduct disorder and other behaviour problems. Evidence from Sure Start clearly showed that children's centres led by health were more effective than those led by other organisations, particularly in reaching children and families who do not usually access these services. In Brighton and Hove all children's centres are led by health and have health visitors as children centre managers.

ECF recognises that the aim of the EYFS is underpinned by children's rights in providing young children with an entitlement to high quality learning and development opportunities. However, it has been a disappointment to members that no explicit reference to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has been made within the EYFS. Our policy agenda states that all children are entitled to participation, provision, play and protection, as outlined in the convention.

The needs of the child must be placed at the centre of the planning and provision of high quality services. For instance, Wales has developed 7 core aims for children and young people developed from the UNCRC, which underpin all the activities of their Department for Children and Education, including the Foundation Phase.

**20 a) Underneath this overarching aim, the objectives of the EYFS are to:**

- **Objective 1: Set the standards for early years providers**
- **Objective 2: Provide for equality of opportunity**
- **Objective 3: Create the framework for partnership working**
- **Objective 4: Improve quality and consistency**
- **Objective 5: Lay a secure foundation for future learning.**

**Do you think these objectives are the right ones? If no, please specify what you think the objectives of the EYFS should be.**

All five of these objectives are important, however enabling equality and inclusion is key as its ethos underpins the other four. It would be helpful if there could be some clarity on what is meant by 'equality of opportunity'.

ECF welcomes the promotion of its definition of inclusion in the EYFS resource *Effective Practice: Inclusive Practice (2007)* - '*Inclusion is a process of identifying, understanding and breaking down the barriers to participation and belonging*'. We recognise the work of the National Strategies early years team in developing a range of materials to promote equality and inclusion and support practitioners to work with disadvantaged children. e.g. *Inclusion Development Support Programme (2010)*, *Building Futures: believing in achievement (2009)*, *Confident, Capable, Creative: Supporting boys' achievement (2007)*

For the EYFS to promote inclusion, ECF members feel that policy, procedure and practice should be anti-discriminatory, challenge stereotypes and positively value

cultural and physical diversity. Members would like to see the explicit recognition in the EYFS that inequalities are embedded in society and that practitioners should be supported in knowing how to counter them and to;

- understand how to avoid stereotyping, cultural bias and assumptions in all aspects of work with children and their families, including any assessment processes
- understand anti-discriminatory legislation and its implications for children's services.
- use monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to identify and remove any discrimination in all aspects of the services
- plan how to support children and workers in learning positive attitudes and unlearning any negative attitudes to differences between people

The introduction of the Equality Act provides an opportunity to explicitly strengthen the link between EYFS and the early years services providers duties in respect of combating discrimination and promote equality in relation to people with the specified protected characteristics.

The Independent Inquiry into Health Inequalities in 1998<sup>7</sup> identified the importance of supporting parents (especially mothers) and babies, specifying that the health visitor role should be strengthened to achieve this. A decade later, the updated, independent Marmot Review<sup>8</sup> pointed out that: 'A key challenge is the recruitment of appropriately skilled and qualified staff in the context of critical shortages of some professionals, such as health visitors.' A Parliamentary Health Committee Inquiry<sup>9</sup> into health inequalities also identified the need for health visiting-type of services, stating: 'We have been told repeatedly that the early years offer a crucial opportunity to 'nip in the bud' health inequalities that will otherwise become entrenched and last a lifetime. The numbers of health visitors and midwives are falling, and members of both those professions report finding themselves increasingly unable to provide the health promotion services needed by the poorest families, at the same time as the Government reiterates its commitments to early-years' services.'

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_4097582](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4097582)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.marmotreview.org/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmhealth/286/28611.htm>

## CASE STUDY FROM BLACK VOICES NETWORK

The following is a brief overview of an action research project from a Sector Endorsed Early Years Foundation Degree student, entitled:

*“How can I, as a Monolingual Practitioner, support the settling in needs of children aged 2.5 years to 4.5 years old within my setting who have English as an additional language?”* By Liz Iannucci.

Within this study academic research was used to address why children with EAL appear to do less well within the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum. During this work EYFS PiP cards were used to guide practice:

For example:

*“Display lists of words from home languages used by children in the setting and invite parents and practitioners to contribute to them”.* 2.2 PIP Parents as Partners

*“When the setting values the local community it can encourage the different community groups to work together for the benefit of all”.* PIP 3.4 Enabling Environments the Wider Context

This guidance, along side current government initiatives, had a direct impact on practice i.e.:

- Using the 2010 FIFA World Cup as an incentive to celebrate where the children came from and to engage with parents.
- The development of a visual timeline book created to support the “Settling In” policy and procedure.
- The Every Child A Talker initiative gave the setting the impetus to develop further resources for children with EAL.

### 20 b) Which of these objectives do you think is the most important of all?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Objective 1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Objective 2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Objective 3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Objective 4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Objective 5	

### 21 Do you have any other comments you'd like to make?

#### Enjoying, learning and developing

**22 The six areas of learning and development are well established areas that are intended to provide a structure for young children's development and learning. Do you think they achieve this? If no, please specify what structure you think should be used.**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mostly yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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We are happy with the structure of the six areas of learning. However, we would like to suggest that the length of the learning and development grids are slimmed down so the list of suggested activities for different ages/stages is not so exhaustive.

As we mentioned previously, interpretation by practitioners is important and a working knowledge of child development essential. This should be provided within initial training and CPD. As practitioners become more attuned to working within the EYFS, we would expect them to become more confident at devising developmentally appropriate and creative learning opportunities for the children in their care.

**23 One of the aims of this review is to identify the knowledge and skills that are most important for young children to develop and thrive, particularly so that when they move into Year 1 they will continue to make good progress and achieve well in later school life. What do you think are the most important skills, knowledge, attitudes and dispositions that children need to develop from birth to five years?**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All of the current six areas of learning	<input type="checkbox"/> A subset of the six areas of learning - please specify	<input type="checkbox"/> Other - please specify
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The EYFS is the foundation for children’s development through life. In addition to cognitive development children in their earliest years need to have the opportunity to develop: social skills including confidence and self esteem; the ability to build relationships and friends; a positive attitude; curiosity; and an inclination for learning in its broadest sense.

ECF is concerned by the focus on school readiness as an overall aim for early education. Early years should not purely be seen as a precursor to school but as a vital stage of learning and development in its own right. Being ready for schools means different things to children, parents and practitioners. Primary schools should ensure that they are ready for the arrival of all young children by: providing specific EYFS training for staff; meeting with the key workers at the nursery schools and settings the children currently attend; liaising with the child’s health visitor; communicating effectively with both parents, and ensuring that there is an appropriate learning environment for the children in terms of rooms, furniture and equipment.<sup>10</sup> All this will facilitate and enable a smooth transition for the child. Ensuring that where a child may have a special educational need or be disabled that there is a shared and proactive commitment to working in partnership to provide appropriate and inclusive experiences throughout the EYFS.

A play based learning framework is essential in early childhood. Play, both indoors and outdoors, is also important for older children and all schools should support and facilitate children’s play. Children need opportunities to initiate their own learning, learn

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<sup>10</sup> TACTYC will be publishing a paper reviewing research on school readiness in the autumn.

from each other and pursue their own interests. Play based learning opportunities, both indoors and outdoors, enable children to learn with both challenge and enjoyment, and improve their physical and mental health and development.<sup>11</sup>

Play has long been known to have a significant role in building communication and social skills, aesthetic appreciation, creativity and problem solving. It plays a significant factor in brain and muscle fibre development and is vital in developing empathy, social altruism and coping with stress. Play Wales has outlined the impact of play deprivation on children who do not have access to play opportunities; This includes aggression, repressed social and emotional skills, depression and an increased risk of obesity<sup>12</sup>. Play can also prevent children from ‘growing up too soon’.

**Case study from ‘Learning, playing and interacting in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

The interweaving of learning through play, adult-led and child-initiated activities is seen in five-year-old Ella’s growing knowledge and use of numbers.	
Ella is interested in numbers and numeracy, which she shows during daily adult-led routines when the children count the number of boys and girls, identify the numerals, and work out whether there are more boys or girls.	adult-led
Ella continues her interest during child-initiated activities. The teacher observes her sorting, matching and counting plastic figures, where she uses numeracy concepts in context. Ella counts accurately up to 20, sorts according to colour, counts on (‘Five red dolls, and five more – six, seven, eight, nine, ten – ten altogether.’), adds and subtracts (‘Five add two more is seven, take away two and it’s five again. See!’).	child-initiated
During outdoor play at lunchtime, Ella announces that she is going to ‘make a hopscotch’. She uses the large chalk to mark out a grid, and writes the numerals. An adult is watching and Ella talks through her activity, asking for support when necessary: ‘This is my hopscotch. I’m starting backwards – 15, 14, 13. What comes next?’ She writes some numerals correctly, but 4, 5, and 7 are reversed. The adult chooses not to correct Ella at this point in order for her to sustain her own purposes and enjoyment. She makes a note to support Ella in recognising and writing numerals in adult-led activities.	outdoor play  (adult-led)
During role-play, Ella uses her knowledge to enforce the rules: ‘Only five children are allowed in here. There’s too many – one, two, three, four, five, six. James, you’ve got to go out ‘cos you haven’t got a band.’	child-initiated

<sup>11</sup> OMEP has developed a World Declaration about the right to learn through play and the joy this brings. This has been signed up to by 72 countries across the world.

<sup>12</sup> Play Wales. Play Deprivation briefing. <http://www.playwales.org.uk/downloaddoc.asp?id=1&page=42&skin=0>

**24 Currently, the EYFS says that children should be supported to develop equally across all six areas of learning at all ages. Neurological evidence suggests that there are some things it's important for young children to learn when they're very young - for example emotional control - and other things that they can pick up at an older age - for example peer social skills. Should the areas of learning be tailored for specific ages and stages?**

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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We are somewhat frustrated by this question as it is poorly phrased. Policy makers should be considering all evidence relating to young children and not just neurological evidence.

There is an accumulated range of knowledge from decades of research in the fields of early childhood development, neuroscience, psychology and biochemistry such as gene expression which is expansive.<sup>13</sup> There are specific areas of knowledge which are critical for practitioners working with children from 0-2:

- First few months of development
- Attachment, relationships and the Key Person
- Brain development in the first year
- Tuning in to babies
- Early social and communication development

These should be well understood and embedded as part of practice in services which offer childcare to children between 3months -2 years.

The EYFS Effective Practice documents and supporting research in relation to the key Person, brain development, early communication, being safe and protected as well as positive relationships and working with parents should have a higher profile within the EYFS.

'The essence of quality in early childhood services is embodied in the expertise of the staff and their capacity to build positive relationships with young children.'<sup>14</sup>

It is important to recognise that every child is an individual and should be encouraged to develop at his/her own speed. ECF agrees that children should be supported to develop equally across all areas of learning to enable them to acquire a broad range of skills and interests. However, taking on board that children develop at different rates, guidelines in

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<sup>13</sup> National Scientific Council on the developing Child(2007) The Science of Early Childhood Development; Closing the Gap Between What We Know and What We Do. Harvard

<sup>14</sup> National Scientific Council on the developing Child(2007) The Science of Early Childhood Development; closing the Gap Between What We Know and What We Do. Harvard

terms of the skills level a child should reach by a particular age should be purely a suggestion. This will then prevent practitioners from asking children to undertake activities that are inappropriate or too advanced for them at a specific chronological age.

Oxford University and Oxford Brookes University undertook a literature review<sup>15</sup> in 2009 to consider an evidence base for the EYFS from the perspective of early years learning and development.

Key findings from the Review included:

- Children establish a sense of self through interactions with others and with their culture
- Children thrive in warm, positive relationships
- Play is a prime context for development across domains, but there are different kinds of play
- Conversation is another prime context for children's language, thinking and emotions
- Narrative enables children to create a meaningful personal and social world, but it also is a 'tool for thinking'
- Deep understanding is more important than superficial coverage
- Opportunities for problem solving to develop logic-mathematical thinking
- Importance of both vocabulary as well as phonological skills in learning to read
- Recognising the sequential nature of the development in learning to talk and read.
- Findings from neuroscience are still sparse;
- Promising research is emerging on the infant's capacity to recognise similarity between their own actions and those of others
- Tendency of the child's brain to generate rules based on small datasets
- Children's self-regulation requires the development of effortful control

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<sup>15</sup> Evangelou, M., Sylva, K., Wild, M., Glenny, G. and Kyriacou, M. (2009). Evidence Base for the 2010 Review of the Early Years Foundation Stage: Early Years Learning and Development. London: DCSF  
<http://publications.education.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-RR176.pdf>

- Increasing focus on the concept of children's 'voice'

The EYFS provides the environment for many of the above aspects to be achieved.

**25 The early learning goals (ELGs) set out the things that most children should be able to do by the age of 5. The goals provide a structure for early years practitioners to work towards, but some people have told us that there are too many goals, with some duplication, and that some of the goals are too hard for some 5-year-old children. Do you think there should be a structure for practitioners to work towards?**

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree or disagree
<input type="checkbox"/> Partly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	

Currently there are 69 early learning goals, which is more than most practitioners are able to manage to work with effectively. We would suggest combining some of these, removing those that duplicate and reducing them in total to 5 for each area of learning.

We in particular feel that the following two literacy early learning goals are too advanced for most 5 year olds. We would like to propose these goals being moved into Year 1 or made more age appropriate.

*Write their own names and other things such as labels and captions, and begin to form simple sentences, sometimes using punctuation*

*Use their phonic knowledge to write simple regular words and make phonetically plausible attempts at more complex words.*

Developing spoken language and a wide vocabulary first is more important.

EYFS profile data for 2008-9 identified that only 62% of children are working securely within the Communication, Language and Literacy area of learning. In terms of writing, 13% are at levels 1-3 and for linking sounds and letters 9 % are at levels 1-3.

A recent Department for Education study<sup>16</sup> has shown that summer born children are particularly disadvantaged in terms of reaching early learning goals compared to older autumn born children, and whilst the gap narrows as children progress through school, it fails to close completely.

We would like to reiterate our support for extending the EYFS to the end of Key Stage 1 to provide continuity and smooth transitions across the birth to seven age range.

<sup>16</sup> Department for Education (2010) Attainment and Finance data for Primary Schools. London: DfE

### **AN ACCOUNT FROM A RECEPTION CLASS TEACHER**

Generally likes the EYFS profile and doesn't find it overly time consuming, but feels that the weighting needs to be looked at of the Early Learning Goals. Some things that children are asked to do to reach a score of 6 or 7 are much easier than others. For instance, most children come into the reception class being able to '*select and use activities and resources independently*', whereas only the most academically able children can confidently write simple sentences at age 5.

### **26 If you think there should be a structure for practitioners to work towards, what do you think this should include?**

Practitioners should receive high quality training at an appropriate level, both initial and CPD, to provide them with the skills to enable them to observe children during day to day activities within the setting and record how they have working towards the early learning goals. ECF is supportive of the methodology for practitioners outlined in 'The Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundations Stage'.

Practitioners should:

- make systematic observations and assessments of each child's achievements, interests and learning styles;
- use these observations and assessments to identify learning priorities and plan relevant and motivating learning experiences for each child;
- match their observations to the expectations of the early learning goals.

Materials published by National Strategies provides detailed guidance and case studies.

**By the end of the EYFS, significant gaps in development emerge between the most disadvantaged children and their peers from more affluent families, and this gap widens as children grow older. One of the aims of this review is to identify what practitioners could do to help narrow this gap.**

### **27 What do you think are the most important areas to focus on to support disadvantaged children to progress? Please tick your most important 3.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Personal, social & emotional skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Communication, speaking & listening skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Reading & writing
<input type="checkbox"/> Problem solving & numeracy	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge to make sense of the world	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical development
<input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities to explore creativity	X Other - please specify	

The EYFS was developed for all children and works for all children. Developing skills across all 6 areas of learning is important for all children, irrespective of whether they are disadvantaged or not.

Factors such as unemployment and poverty are more prevalent in families with a disabled child and there is evidence of difficulties for these families in accessing services<sup>17</sup>. Other research has shown that the combination of disadvantaged circumstances and difficulties in securing access to appropriate services, which are found for the majority of families with a disabled child, are particularly acute for families from minority ethnic groups<sup>18</sup>.

Consequently, support services require a high degree of specialist knowledge and flexibility in structure to meet the diverse needs of individual children and families within their cultural community.

Beresford, B, Rabiee, P, Sloper, P (2007) identified that parents of disabled children and young people and the children and young people themselves consider that communication is central to achieving all other outcomes relating to the Every Child Matters outcomes.<sup>19</sup> Their research also indicates that the interpretation of outcomes for disabled children may be different. This reinforces the importance in equity in providing services to children with SEND.

Feinstein (2003)<sup>20</sup> identified that there is already a social class differential at 22 months between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and children from advantaged backgrounds in the UK. The gap widens as the children get older. However, this does not seem to be the case in mainland Europe. What is not always taken into consideration is that a high proportion of disadvantaged children live in relatively affluent areas. Disadvantaged children from workless families or in temporary accommodation are under-represented in accessing early years services. Effective and integrated outreach work between health visitors, family support workers, community groups and other practitioners is essential.

During the Early Childhood Forum's recent campaign '*Addressing inequalities and valuing diversity*', members explored the consequences of the inequalities that still exist in society and how developing greater understanding about equality and inclusion

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<sup>17</sup> Daycare Trust (2001) *Ambitious for all: rising to the childcare challenge for children with disabilities and special needs*. Childcare for all Thinking Big 5. London: Daycare Trust

<sup>18</sup> Fazil, Q, Bywaters, P, Ali, Z, Wallace, L and Singh, G (2002) *Disadvantage and discrimination compounded: the experience of Pakistani and Bangladeshi parents of disabled children in the UK*. *Disability and Society*, 17 (3): 237-53.

<sup>19</sup> Beresford, B, Rabiee, P and Sloper, P (2005) *Priorities and Perceptions of Disabled Children and Young People and Their Parents Regarding Outcomes from Support Services*. The Social Policy Research Unit. York University

<sup>20</sup> Feinstein, L (2003) *Inequality in early cognitive development of British children in the 1970 cohort*. *Economica* 70.

supports the well-being of children and their families. In their leaflet 'Celebrating Difference' members explained that:

*'There is a moral imperative that all children have access to equal opportunities in life, which impacts on the well-being of society and goes beyond policy and legislation. Good equality practice must be at the heart of practitioners' relationships with children and their families. It also means continuous scrutiny of the practices and policies in each and every setting by local authorities as well as by managers themselves. Community cohesion means respect for others, whatever their background, culture or situation, and an understanding that difference is essential for a rich and diverse society.'*<sup>21</sup>

The Spirit Level<sup>22</sup> identified how equality is better for everyone and that it is the most unequal societies (not just the disadvantaged), such as the UK, that experience the most problems.

## **CASE STUDY – CHILDREN CROSSING BORDERS**

Children Crossing Borders is an international study of how the early childhood education and care systems of five countries are serving the children of recent immigrants and of what parents who recently have migrated from another culture want for their children in ECEC settings..

The project is examining the practices, values and expectations of pre-school practitioners, and the aspiration, expectations and views of parents from 'immigrant generation' communities, in multiracial cities in five countries, with the intention of producing training materials aimed at improving the quality of preschool experiences for these children.

The study parents are primarily 'newly arrived' and are based either in:  
Berlin, Germany and of Turkish origin  
Milan, Italy and born in the Philippines  
Paris, France and of Algerian descent  
Phoenix, USA and of Mexican heritage  
Birmingham, UK with family members from Afghanistan and Pakistan

Themes arising from the project include:

- Identities – practitioners and parents were found to have a different approach in terms of developing children's identity and sense of belonging each country had its own distinct early childhood education and care systems
- the inclusion of language – the UK, US and Germany provide bilingual support services, but this is rarely offered in France
- pedagogy – there is a dichotomy between parents' expectation of children's learning and those of practitioners, with the former expecting a more formal based approach
- communication with parents – in all the countries involved there was found to be a need for better communication and dialogue between settings and families to support inclusion and integration.
- There are big legislative difference between all the countries involved in the project  
<http://www.childrencrossingborders.org>

<sup>21</sup> Early Childhood Forum (2010) Celebrating Difference. London: NCB

<sup>22</sup> Wilkinson, R and Pickett, K (2009) . The Spirit Level: Why equality is better for everyone. London: Penguin

## CASE STUDY FROM ECF LEAFLET 'CELEBRATING DIFFERENCE'

### Case study 5: Religion or belief

People often find religion hard to talk about as it is a very personal issue that is deeply rooted in history, culture and family background. We may make assumptions about people from faiths and belief systems that are different from our own, or hold strong views about faith that may impact on how we view others. We may also worry that some interpretations of some religions may contradict equality legislation, particularly around sexual orientation and gender. Our personal views are essential to who we are, but settings managers are responsible for creating an ethos that gives all children the opportunity to explore the diversity of the world around them.

*'Nowadays Jim likes Rangers and Tom likes Celtic but they are still friends.'*

During the Troubles in Northern Ireland, it was rare for Catholic and Protestant children to live in the same street, to play together or to go to the same school. The Ulster children's charity, Early Years, felt the peace process created an opportunity to promote a more explicit anti-sectarian approach that encouraged respect for diversity.

They developed the Media Initiative for Children Respecting Difference programme to enable young children to recognise when other children feel excluded and to be more inclusive of children from different cultures and backgrounds. It also aimed to raise the confidence of parents and teachers in dealing with diversity issues and reduce prejudice.

The programme was informed by the Too Young To Notice research project, which demonstrated that:

- children can develop prejudices on the basis of physical and racial differences from the age of three
- children are already learning the cultural and political preferences of their own community by the age of three
- by the age of six, a third of Ulster children recognise that they are a member of either the Protestant or Catholic communities and one in six are making sectarian statements.

The Media Initiative for Children programme focused on growing respect for all forms of difference, not just sectarian difference. Practitioners and teachers participated in training and then implemented the programme in their settings, using customised resources. Children, aged from three to six, engaged with the issues through Persona Dolls, DVDs, jigsaws and activities. Parents and management staff attended



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workshops to reflect on their own attitudes and behaviour and to support the work with children, so that there was a shared approach between home and the early years setting. In addition, supportive media messages are broadcast on television several times a year.

After just three weeks' participating in the programme, the children were more willing to play with others, including those who were different from themselves, and to understand when someone is being excluded and how it makes them feel. Parents were delighted to attend the programme: 'I am happy I came tonight because maybe we can change our children's upbringing from that of our own.'

See <http://www.early-years.org/mifc/> for more information.

**One in four young people from across all religions have been bullied, often violently, because they have a faith or are perceived to be a member of a particular faith community.**

**Beatbullying, 2008**

**76.8 per cent of adults in the United Kingdom identify themselves as having a religious faith**

**UK Census 2001**

*If you grow up in mixed society then you can get to know other people's culture and can understand each other better. If you stay only with one type of people then you will always have a small mind and will never learn about other cultures*

**12-year-old girl, from 'A special gathering, a delightful place' by Patrice Lawrence.**

**28 Parents have the biggest influence on their children's learning and development. Do you think there's a role for early years practitioners to work with parents to help improve children's learning and development at home?**

X Yes

No

Not Sure

We strongly agree that developing strong working relationships between practitioners and families has a positive impact on young children's learning and development, both within settings and the home learning environment. It is already part of the EYFS.

Many researchers have evidenced this over the last few years:

Blanden (2006)<sup>23</sup> - 'parental interest in children's learning enables some children to buck the trend and do well despite disadvantage'

Ball (1994)<sup>24</sup> – 'parents are the most important people in children's lives. It is from parents that children learn most, particularly in the early months and years.'

Siraj - Blatchford I, Siraj -Blatchford J (2009)<sup>25</sup> \_ 'Some early childhood disadvantages (or risk factors) have the potential to lead either directly or indirectly to underachievement, whereas other resilience factors provide a child with the resources to overcome these risks. Parents can pass on risks and resilience to their children, thus emphasising the need to support families, not just children, and for the integration of adult and child interventions.'

EPPE (2004)<sup>26</sup> – 'what parents do is more important than who they are'.

Desforges and Abouchaar (2003)<sup>27</sup> – 'at-home good parenting has a significant positive effect on children's achievement and adjustment even after all other factors shaping attainment have been taken out of the equation.

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<sup>23</sup> Blanden, J (2006) Bucking the Trend: What enables those who are disadvantaged in childhood to succeed later in life? Working paper no 21. London: DWP

<sup>24</sup> Ball, C (1994) Starting Right: The importance of early learning. London: Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Arts.

<sup>25</sup> Siraj - Blatchford I, Siraj -Blatchford J (2009) Improving children's attainment through a better quality of family-based support for early learning. London C4EO

<sup>26</sup> Sylva, K et al. (2004) The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education Project. London: DfES

<sup>27</sup> Desforges, C and Abouchaar, A (2003) The impact of parental involvement, parental support, and family education on pupil achievements and adjustments: A literature review. London: DfES

Sutherland (2006)<sup>28</sup> – explored the long-term effects of child / parent interaction on the brain.

Morrell (2008)<sup>29</sup> and Knapp identified that if health visitors are trained to identify depressive symptoms then these interventions would greatly enhance the post-natal care of many women and positively impact on the relationship with their children.

The recent Oxford literature review identified that there are particular elements of parental engagement that are paramount:

- Taking culture into account
- Parental interest and involvement in education with clear and high expectations
- Parents as positive role models
- Active involvement in family, school and community life
- Recognition, praise and feeling valued
- Practitioners and parents should share knowledge about a child regularly in order to promote learning and development

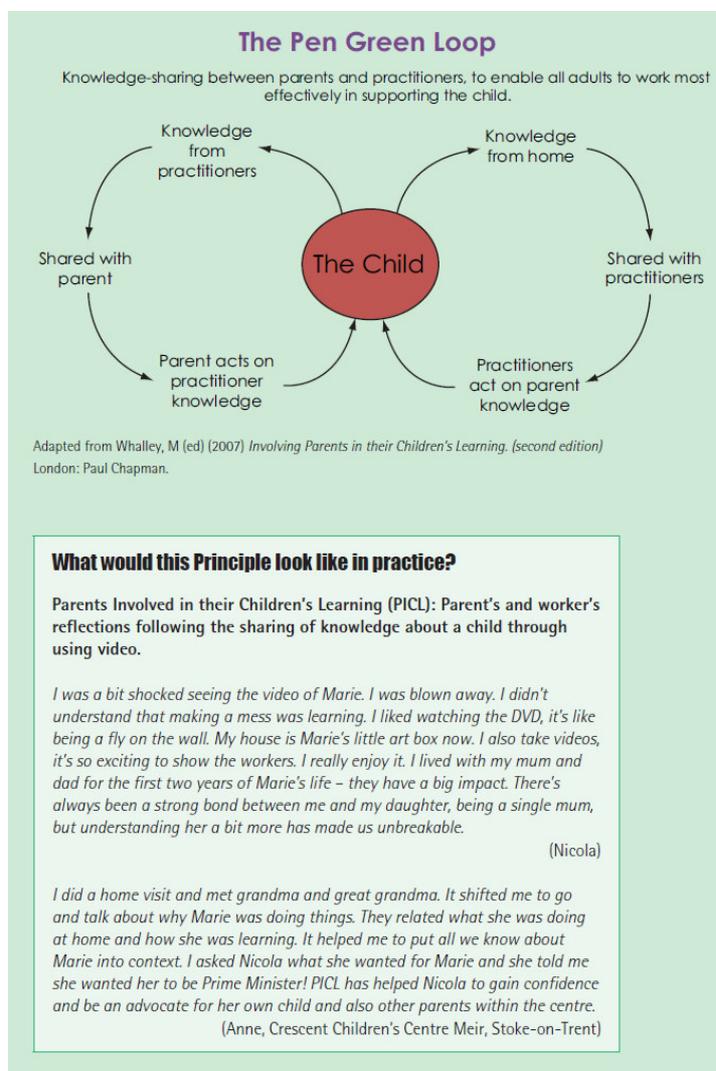
The National Quality Improvement Network recently published 'Principles for Engaging with Families' which identified how partnership working between parents and practitioners should be based on an approach that recognises and builds on parents' expertise, and where professionals and parents really listen to and learn from each other. [www.ncb.org.uk/nqin](http://www.ncb.org.uk/nqin)

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<sup>28</sup> Sutherland, M (2006) *The Science of Parenting*. London: Dorling Kindersley

<sup>29</sup> C Jane Morrell et al (2008), Clinical effectiveness of health visitor training in psychologically informed approaches for depression in postnatal women: pragmatic cluster randomised trial in primary care, *British Medical Journal* online.

## CASE STUDY – FROM PRINCIPLES FOR ENGAGING WITH FAMILIES



**29 Learning and development in the early years is complex. Do you have any further comments on the current six areas of learning and development, ELGs and educational programmes in the EYFS?**

### Assessing children's progress

**30 It's an integral part of caring for young children that practitioners should, on an ongoing basis, observe and understand what children are capable of and enjoy, and tailor what play and activities they do with them to reflect this. This cycle of observation and assessment, known as formative assessment (or 'Listen, Look and Note') informs or guides everyday planning. What do you think of this approach?**

The assessment during children's earliest years should be based on a cycle of observation, documentation, reflection and planning. By observing and actively listening to young children, practitioners are able to tune into children's individual needs and plan activities which best suit their interests and abilities.

The duty for each child to have a key person must be retained. The role of the key person is to undertake most of a young child's daily physical care and to help each child feel safe, secure, understood and responded to by a well known and trusted practitioner, and to communicate regularly with mothers and fathers. When a key person is working with a small group of children and their parents then there is much more opportunity/likelihood that they may form professionally intimate relationships that are attuned to a family's race, culture, home language, abilities and preoccupations and special needs. It is then more likely that they are able to really listen to their children and families so as to be emotionally available and accessible in this two way relationship/secondary attachment.

The Young Children's Voices Network has recently launched '*Let's Listen: Young Children's Voices – profiling and planning to enable their participation in children's services*', to support early years settings and local authorities to evidence and plan listening to young children, and enable young children's participation in developing and improving children's services. This resource uses the themes and principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the YCVN Listening Cycle and demonstrates clear links with formative assessment.

#### **Listening is an ongoing process**

The process starts with listening within a respectful relationship. Children's perspectives are documented and adults engage in reflection about what has been shared. Practitioners take appropriate action and feed back to children and parents. This continuous cycle enables young children's participation in children's services.



## Case study: from YCVN leaflet – Developing a listening culture

Case study 3 highlights one of the ways in which local authorities can work towards improving outcomes for children by placing listening at the heart of quality improvement plans.

### Case study 3: A strategic local authority approach



Kirklees local authority set up a local Young Children's Voices Network in 2007, building on a strong quality improvement network and a number of years of

effective listening practice. The network brings together a group of practitioners – from a range of private, voluntary and community settings across Kirklees – to support them in developing and embedding listening in their everyday practice.

Through network meetings led by the quality assurance manager, the group produced a *Listening Book* (Butterfield 2008). The book is part of an easy-to-use pack for practitioners and contains examples of a range of activities and ways of 'tuning in' to young children and enabling participation. The examples have been provided by practitioners and aligned with the quality framework used in Kirklees. The activities are set out in a way that links them to the settings' policies and to EYFS and ECM outcomes. The *Listening Book* comes with a DVD for practitioners that is designed to raise awareness about the importance of listening and to generate further interest in network membership.

By placing listening at the heart of quality improvement and linking good listening practice with the quality framework used in the authority, practitioners are able to see clear benefits to listening and its contribution to children's learning and development outcomes.

The network is beginning to operate in each area locality and will expand to include children's centres and schools, with the ultimate goal of providing ongoing support to all settings in Kirklees.

The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education study (EPPE 2004) identified 'sustained shared thinking' as crucial in enabling learning and development, a process dependent on listening to young children. Listening and responding is essential to 'tuning-in' and the basis for developing attachment and respectful relationships.

**31 Summative assessment is a summary of all the formative assessment done over a long period and the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) is a way of capturing this at the age of 5. It is intended to provide Year 1 teachers with each child's level of learning and development as they reach the end of the EYFS, so that they should be able to tailor learning to individual children's abilities, and to inform parents/carers how their child is developing.. However, some practitioners tell us that this takes up too much time, and that not all Year 1 teachers find the EYFSP useful. What are your views on the EYFSP?**

<input type="checkbox"/> I like it as it is	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I think it should be slimmed down - please specify how	<input type="checkbox"/> I think it should be non-statutory
<input type="checkbox"/> I think it should be got rid of completely - please		

## specify why

The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile should be used as a continuous assessment process across the whole of the EYFS and to the end of Key Stage 1. It should not be used as a summative assessment by which to make judgements on local authorities, which can lead to a target setting culture for 5 year olds. Currently, attainment in the EYFS profile is linked to the following National Indicators:

National Indicator 72 - Achievement of at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage with at least 6 in each of the scales in Personal Social and Emotional Development and Communication, Language and Literacy

National Indicator 92 - Narrowing the gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest.

Teachers should be encouraged to develop ongoing dialogue with mothers and fathers regarding their children's learning and to actively engage them in the assessment process. To compile fair and accurate EYFS profiles, children's and parents' perspectives need to be taken into consideration, alongside the teacher's.

The EYFS profile is intended to bring together a holistic picture of children's interests, preferred ways of learning and their development. This information is essential, particularly at transition points, and local authorities should be required to ensure that settings share information with other settings. It is not possible to improve continuity and progression for children from EYFS into KS1 without much stronger and effective links between all early years providers in a locality who work with children in the EYFS and Key Stage 1.

If the EYFS profile is used as continuous assessment, rather than a summative target, it would help plan for children's development into Key Stage 1 and reduce the emphasis on outcomes at age 5. Summer born children would not be disadvantaged if all children were taught in a developmentally appropriate way and their progress took full account of their birth date. A number of children enter Key Stage 1 without having met the Early Learning Goals and therefore the EYFS needs to continue well into Key Stage 1, at least to the end of Year 1.

It is important that all children can have their progress and attainment recognised in the EYFSP. Currently, a number of children score zero. Whilst this is now recorded as AA (indicating that the child has been assessed using alternative assessment methods) the EYFSP should include all children. The profile should be extended to ensure that the attainment of all children can be recognised. The framework provided by Development Matters suggests a way of doing this.

EYFS is an inclusive framework and its assessment should be too. The formative assessment which underpins EYFS should inform the summative data required for EYFSP. It must show how provision has made a positive difference to children's lives in all aspects of learning and development and to do that we need to know and represent the child in the round.

We are concerned by the quality and quantity of training provided for reception class teachers. Often NQTs or teachers more used to working with KS2 children are allocated reception classes with minimal training on how to work within the EYFS. We would like to propose that all teachers taking reception class for the first time are provided with a minimum of three days EYFS training and that all other teachers in the school, including head teachers, receive a minimum of one day's training.

Partly the reason why Year 1 teachers do not always find EYFS profile scores helpful is because of their own lack of understanding of the EYFS. Reception and Year 1 teachers need to work closely together to ensure smooth transitions for children between the end of the EYFS and the beginning of Key Stage 1. Clear and detailed training will help reception teachers to understand, for example the difference between child initiated and adult led activities, and to recognise the importance of play-based learning for young children.

**32 a) Young children go through a number of transitions. As well as the transition from early years provision to Year 1, other examples of transition are between different early years providers, and into nursery classes in schools at the age of 3. Do you think there should be a summative assessment of a child's learning and development to help inform parents and to help support transition?**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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**32 b) If yes, when do you think this should take place?**

We would suggest that a brief summative report takes place when a child leaves the early years setting where they currently spend the most time, irrespective of their age.

**33 If you think there should be a summative assessment of a child's development, what do you think this should cover? Please tick your most important 3.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Personal, social and emotional development	<input type="checkbox"/> Communication, speaking & listening skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Reading & Writing
<input type="checkbox"/> Problem solving, reasoning & numeracy	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge & understanding of the world	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical development
<input type="checkbox"/> Creative development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other - please specify	

This should be a short report detailing current abilities and interests relating to the EYFS themes and 6 areas of learning, based on practitioner's observations and actively listening to the child. This would enable the child's key worker at their new setting to best plan for their arrival. However, written reports should not replace conversations between parents and practitioners (all of those in their child's life including health visitors), which we would expect to take place to ensure a smooth transition for the

child.

## PEAL CASE STUDY RE. WORKING WITH PARENTS ON HOME VISITS<sup>30</sup>.

At Konstam Children's Centre, London Borough of Camden, relaxed meetings are organised for parents, so that they can talk together and express any concerns they have about their child moving on to primary school. Reflecting on memories of their own first day at school is popular and can be helpful. Parents are often worried about the care of children, whether they will manage to cope with routines like playtime and using the toilet. Talking with children about the process of moving on to Reception is positively encouraged. In nursery, School Leavers' Groups are set up and children can talk and think about going to school in the context of story sessions, some with puppets. A puppet can tell the children what worries her about going to school and ask them to discuss some solutions. This helps children to express and work through their fears. The children are also taken to a lunchtime and two playtimes at the local school. Practitioners from the nursery will also accompany parents to meetings at the new school, if they feel the need for a little extra support.

*Mummy won't know which black gate to come and pick me up.*

**34 Adults who work with young children are uniquely placed to recognise and understand how children are developing. Many practitioners work closely with other agencies to help to identify children with special educational needs (SEN) before they reach compulsory schooling in Year 1. Do you think that identification of possible SEN could be integrated more explicitly into the cycle of early years observation and assessment? If yes, how do you think this should work?**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes in principle but not in practice		

The Early Years Foundation Stage is an inclusive framework. Meeting the individual needs of all children lies at the heart of the EYFS. One of its stated aims is to provide for equality of opportunity for every child. An understanding of early childhood development is key to this.

<sup>30</sup> Parents, Early Years and Learning (2006) Practice examples. London: NCB

The EYFS confirms that it is important to identify the need for additional support as early as possible. Without it children will not get the help they require at the right time, in the way that is right for them. This involves careful tracking of development through continuous practitioner and parent observations, and enabling young disabled children and children with special educational needs to be actively involved in decisions that affect them by offering choices and supporting their interests.

For very young disabled children and those with SEN, inclusion starts in the home with the inclusion of the whole family. The EYFS confirms that early support for children includes listening to families and taking part in a sensitive two-way exchange of information. EYFS also confirms that, for children with the most severe and complex additional support needs, adults should work together to plan jointly with everyone who is in contact with the child. This will co-ordinate support through early years consultants and area SENCOs and promote learning as effectively as possible. Knowing when and how to call in specialist help, such as that provided by specialist support services, is another important element of inclusive practice. This means providing any additional support required to include children with known or emerging SEN, using a graduated response through early years action and early years action plus.

The role of the SENCO in the early years setting should be highlighted and considered one which can offer all practitioners support and opportunity to share effective methods of observation and assessment to inform early identification. Through strong partnership with parents and others offering support to the setting such as Early Years Area SENCOs personalised approaches can be designed implemented to support the on going development and progress of all children.

The importance of having highly skilled SENCO's in Primary and Secondary education has been recognised and supported to develop leadership in providing better outcomes for children and young people at school.

The EYFS and associated guidance could provide a significant and necessary emphasis of the skills and knowledge of Early Years SENCO's in leading practice amongst providers in the sector.

The Early Years Foundation Stage makes strong connections with Early Support, the national programme for families with disabled children under five to ensure that they are kept at the heart of discussion and decision-making about their child.

The Early Support materials provide a more finely grained approach to Development Matters, Look Listen and Note, and Effective Practice. These materials (including the use of materials for specific groups provided by the Journals) assist practitioners in promoting the learning of young children who may be developing more slowly or who may have individual patterns of development for whatever reason. By extending ways of working through additional or different approaches, and planning for smaller steps with longer periods of consolidation, young disabled children and children with SEN can experience a rich and challenging learning environment through the EYFS.

Documentation which makes these ways of working explicit for all involved in the early years would be welcomed.

A partnership approach within and between policymakers, service providers, organisations, parents and children, based on an understanding of mutual rights and responsibilities, is essential in all aspects of provision for young children. Members would like to see more references to working with other practitioners including Health Visitors, Speech and Language Therapists and Area SENCOs.

### **35 Do you have any other comments you'd like to make?**

#### **Safe, happy and healthy children**

**36 The welfare requirements in the EYFS currently cover a lot of things, from child protection, to supporting children's health, to the safety of premises and equipment. The five areas under which the welfare requirements are grouped are safeguarding and promoting children's welfare, suitable people, suitable premises, environment and equipment, organisation, and documentation. Which of the welfare requirements do you think are essential?**

The current welfare requirements should remain as they are with improvements relating to outdoor play and staff ratios (See also response to Q39). We feel particularly strongly about ensuring that strong and effective child protection policies and arrangements are in place to keep young children safe and happy.

We propose an amendment to the welfare requirement to ensure that all settings, with the exception of home based childminders, have on site access to outdoor play provision. In statutory guidance it states, "*Wherever possible, there should be access to an outdoor play area, and this is the expected norm for providers. In provision where outdoor play space cannot be provided, outings should be planned and taken on a daily basis (unless circumstances make this inappropriate, for example unsafe weather conditions).*" We recognise that a limited number of nursery settings currently do not have on site access to outdoor play provision due to their location and therefore take the children off site to play. However, continuing this practice negatively impacts on the quality and safety of play based learning environments for young children.

NDNA has suggested the following for consideration with its members - DfE could assess the impact of introducing a requirement in future for outdoor space for newly-registered settings. Meanwhile, existing settings would insist on robust, detailed plans for outdoor access at least twice a day to ensure opportunity for the majority of children who will be attending part-time.

Children should be entitled to an outdoor play environment in their setting and that this is necessary for their physical, spatial and cognitive development. Research into young

children's views (Clark et al 2005<sup>31</sup>) informs us that outdoor space is incredibly important to children. We recognise that in urban areas in particular, availability and affordability of suitable sites for childcare premises present obstacles to the development of new provision and that the EYFS and previous National Standards took this into consideration by making exceptions to the provision of outdoor space as long as children are taken to local parks regularly. However, local parks and playgrounds are not always within walking distance, do not allow children freedom of movement, nor provide a range of learning opportunities that a secure onsite space does. Many small public parks do not have park keepers, any urban traffic on route may be very busy and pose risks to children, and play spaces may be littered with broken glass and dog excrement. Staff ratios needed to take children out are greater than day to day operational ratios and it is often the case that even planned outings cannot take place if staff are off sick for example.

**37 Some providers have told us that certain welfare requirements are overly burdensome, and that there's too much paperwork and box ticking included in the EYFS. Do you think any of the welfare requirements should be removed or simplified? If yes, please specify.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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No, robust and secure welfare requirements are necessary to ensure the well-being and safety of young children. Practitioners should be encouraged to see how the welfare requirements fit together with the practice guidance to support the development of high quality EYFS provision for young children.

Many settings are asked to complete additional paperwork on behalf of their local authority and we would suggest that LA development officers take into consideration the welfare requirements of the EYFS when requesting written information to avoid duplication.

In terms of collecting ethnicity data, we would like a national proforma with extended ethnicity categories to be used within settings. The current ethnicity categories used to detect patterns of inequality are no longer appropriate.

Setting managers have been encouraged to complete quality assurance schemes for many years to ensure that they are providing high quality services above and beyond Ofsted minimum standards. Many are now working with early years consultants to embed guidance such as the Early Years Quality Improvement Support Programme (EYQISP), NQIN's Quality Improvement Principles or schemes developed by national

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<sup>31</sup> Clark A, Kjørholt A T, Moss P (2005) Beyond Listening: Children's Perspectives on Early Childhood Services. London: Policy Press

organisations or LAs, to support them to plan for continuous quality improvement within their setting.

## CASE STUDY FROM LONDON AND SOUTH EAST REGIONAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT NETWORK

London Borough of Camden
<p><b><u>Principle 6</u></b></p> <p><b>Promote integrated working within and amongst settings</b></p>
<p><b>Executive Summary</b></p> <p>We promote integrated working <b>within</b> settings through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The introduction of the Camden Early Years Foundation Stage Record.</li> <li>• Integrated working in the Children’s Centres is also promoted through the Teachers’ Performance Management process and Teachers’ Professional Development Group.</li> </ul> <p>We promote integrated working <b>amongst</b> settings through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Termly locality based Early Years Network Meetings for PVI’s, Children’s Centres and schools</li> <li>• Cross sector training and conferences e.g. SEAD Conference</li> <li>• The Quality Improvement Cycle</li> <li>• The Movement Play Project</li> <li>• Alignment between Early Years and School Improvement Advisors</li> <li>• Children’s Centres Teachers’ Professional Development Group</li> </ul> <p><b>Context</b></p> <p>Integrated working <b>within</b> settings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There had previously been a Foundation Stage Record for 3 -5 year olds (primarily, a transition document). It had not been particularly valued by schools and with the EYFS was no longer valid. We set up a working party with representation from all sectors and LA and then ran a pilot. We are currently rolling out the new record. There are 4 versions of the record: baby, toddler, nursery and reception class. They follow the same model except for the content of the 6 areas of learning where the descriptors from ‘Development Matters’ included for reference are age appropriate.</li> <li>• We now have 17 teachers in our Children’s Centres with a variety of experience and backgrounds. The performance management cycle enables them to identify their own continuous professional development (CPD) needs within the context of the needs of the centre and children. The professional development group supports the teachers to consider their role within the centre and their interactions and relationships with other staff.</li> </ul> <p>Integrated working <b>amongst</b> settings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During EYFS training for leaders and managers it became apparent that many settings were unaware of their locality neighbours. The network meetings provide a</li> </ul>

forum to share information, training sessions, meet other early years practitioners, discuss concerns and visit other settings.

- Social and Emotional Aspects of Development (SEAD) Conference included early years settings and Childminders. Feedback showed that more of these opportunities were desired.
- Following on from our Quality Assurance Scheme we are currently introducing a Quality Improvement Cycle for all PVI's and Children's Centres. As well as individual objectives identified, there will be local authority objective for all settings that will provide opportunities for professional dialogue throughout the year.
- Many settings have taken part in Movement Play training and we have a project based in our newest Children's Centre.
- Termly alignment meetings allow us to identify and plan joint training and support for PVI's, Children's Centres and schools.

Children's Centre teachers were really keen to meet professionally with each other asking to meet half termly rather than termly as envisaged.

### **Evaluation/Next Steps**

Integrated working **within** settings:

- The pilot of the record and the training for the record has gone well. We will need to monitor the implementation in baby and toddler rooms as this is new to those staff. There has been a good response from schools with a third of them asking to use it. It should provide a fuller and more accurate multi purpose record for each child. There has been training on the use of the record and we will be planning in review meetings throughout the year to evaluate it and provide opportunities for moderation. By having a consistent model of interaction with parents, record keeping and transition, staff will have a shared language and understanding. Because the model is the same, staff should be able to move from room to room and still be able to track children's progress effectively and meaningfully so that it feeds into planning to meet the individual needs of the child. Widespread adoption of it will support integrated working amongst settings.
- The network meetings have all been successful, there have been some good relationships formed, visits to each other's settings arranged but attendance has been variable and we have not always timed them well (clashing with open evenings/other training). The dates are now included in the Training Programme but we need to have venues mapped out earlier and encourage more schools to act as venues.
- Following the success of the SEAD Conference we are aiming to provide a cross sector conference as part of the universal offer for ECAT (Every Child a Talker).
- As part of the Quality Improvement Cycle there will be a Register of Good Practice set up to acknowledge and share best practice amongst settings. Settings included on the register will be asked to offer dates to accommodate visits from other settings, visits will be coordinated centrally and settings will receive funding to pay for staff cover during visits.
- We are filming a DVD for parents in Camden about Movement Play which involves 3 of our settings. The Children's Centre where the project is based will provide an exemplar for other settings. We are also looking to develop training for the family support workers to develop movement play in drop-ins.
- At our first alignment meeting we identified communications, language and literacy

development (CLLD) and outdoor environments as areas to develop shared training for early years settings and schools. We held a successful conference for children's centres and schools and will be adapting that as a training day for PVI's. Our next joint working will be focused on introducing the use of the well-being and involvement scales and we will be collaborating with Colleen Marin from Kent on that.

- The teachers' professional development group are currently trialling a self evaluation tool looking at quality of teaching. We will be looking at Child Development and CLLD in future meetings.
- The ECAT cluster groups will provide further integrated working amongst settings and we will also link them in to the CLLD cluster group.

**38 Currently, the EYFS sets out only very high level requirements on supporting children's health - for example it says that children should be given nutritious meals and snacks, but doesn't include nutritional guidelines. What do you think the EYFS requirements should be in relation to children's health?**

Firstly, we propose that there should be an Early Learning Goal relating to children's understanding of healthy food.

Health and nutrition should be covered in detail during all initial early years training, including QTS, EYP, and NVQ, as well as continuous professional development. A recent study by Liverpool University found that nurseries often struggle to provide nutritional food due to a lack of specialist training, limited guidance and tight budgets<sup>32</sup>.

The School Food Trust has created an early years food and nutrition panel<sup>33</sup> to support the improvement of nursery food and build on the guidance already available. It is anticipated that the panel will emphasise the importance of staff understanding that feeding children is not just about re-fuelling but about a whole host of social, cultural communication and inclusion issues

The School Food Trust has a remit to improve the quality of school food in primary and secondary schools and to encourage children and staff to develop healthy eating habits. We would like to propose that similar support is provided to pre-school settings. Research shows that children are most likely to keep healthy eating habits if they are taught about the benefits from an early age. Parents should also be encouraged to provide healthy food for their children, for instance through sessions provided at children's centres or discussions with their health visitor or outreach worker.

The Soil Association is running a campaign called *Better Nursery Food Now* asking the Government to put in place clear, legally-enforced standards for the quality of food served in all nurseries. ECF supports this campaign and believes it would be

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<sup>32</sup> <http://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/news/1005541/Nurseries-need-advice-healthy-eating-study-finds/>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/research/advisory-panel-on-food-and-nutrition-in-early-years>

beneficial to provide nutritional guidelines outlining what a young child should consume each day to support settings to provide nutritional meals and snacks for children in their care. This should include the amount of calories and the proportion of protein, carbohydrates, salt, and sugar.

**39 The staff to child ratio and qualification requirements are included within the welfare requirements. How have you found implementing the ratio and qualification requirements?**

ECF represents a spectrum of opinion, but members broadly agree that ratios should follow the child, so that we move towards a position where there is more uniform ratios across settings.

We are concerned that reception class ratios are the same as for Key Stage 1. i.e. 1 qualified teacher for 30 children. Reception classes are firmly within the EYFS and should be under the same regulation as nursery classes for 3 and 4 year olds. Therefore, we propose an amendment that for reception classes a 1:13 ratio is put in place with the class teacher supported by a suitably qualified staff member, ideally an early years teacher or Early Years Professional.

In maintained nursery schools, presently the ratio is current 1:13 with a welfare requirement of 2 trained adults for 26 children - one of the adults to be a teacher and the other to be qualified to level 3. We propose that the ratio should be improved to 1:10. This allows settings to staff both indoor and outdoor provision with scope for meeting all children's needs and interests, and to enable children to play outdoors all day.

In terms of children aged three to five in registered provision, ECF is concerned that the ratio required can be increased from 1:8 to 1:13 where a Qualified Teacher or Early Years Professional is working directly with the children. Lowering the ratio of staff to children does not take account of what is required of staff in full day care settings that is not required in school.

In terms of childminding ratios, ECF is supportive of the current stance, but would like to enquire about the arrangements for ratios where a childminder is supported by an assistant.

**40 Do you have any other comments you'd like to make?**

We need a well qualified diverse early years workforce to provide the best start in life for all children. A diverse workforce, including at management levels, will have a greater number of men, be multi-ethnic, and include people from a range of backgrounds such as faith communities, disabled people, lesbian, gay and transgendered people. There must be a commitment to ongoing national monitoring, including recruitment, retention and career development.

The EYFS should support and enable practitioners to provide the quality of experience that is expressed in the underpinning principles. As such, access to appropriate and relevant high quality EYFS training is essential for all those working with young children, including those inspecting and planning for services. Training courses should include compulsory modules on: child development; children's rights; equality and diversity; inclusion of children with additional needs such as SEN and EAL; health and nutrition; and working with parents. EYFS training should be accredited and linked to sector qualifications and the Integrated Qualifications Framework.

Currently, EYFS welfare requirements state that setting managers need to be qualified to level 3 and at least half the practitioners be qualified to level 2. ECF feels that it is unacceptable to have up to 50% of the workforce within a setting unqualified. In place of this, we propose that all practitioners should hold or be working towards a level 3 qualification, and that managers be encouraged to work towards a level 5/6 qualifications such as the Early Childhood Studies Degree or the Early Years Professional Status. This is a reasonable request given that 70% of practitioners are already at level 3 or above.

According to the OECD Report *Starting Strong*, 'quality in early childhood education and care depended on high quality staff training and fair working conditions across the sector; and strategies were needed to recruit and retain a well-qualified, diverse and mixed-gender workforce to ensure a satisfying, respected and financially viable career in this field'<sup>34</sup>

Children in Scotland has written a briefing paper 'Working for Inclusion: an overview of European Union early years services and their workforce'<sup>35</sup> with partner organisations, which researched:

- How early childhood education and care services (ECEC) can support social Inclusion
- The benefits of a holistic approach to the child and engaging effectively with children, families and communities
- The needs of the working poor, single parents, migrant families and families with Disability
- The early years workforce as a source of good quality employment

It identified that countries which have consistently the highest levels of early childhood care and education provision have low levels of child poverty and high child well-being.

Raising qualification levels within the workforce will encourage more men to become practitioners, which is stated as an aim in the Coalition Government's Agreement.

We fully recognise that upskilling the workforce further may lead to raising costs for parents. As Daycare Trust outlined in its recent research report, *Quality costs*<sup>36</sup>, high

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<sup>34</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2006) *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care*. Paris: OECD

<sup>35</sup> [http://www.eurochild.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Info%20Flash/2010/1January2010/WFIBriefingpreview.pdf](http://www.eurochild.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Info%20Flash/2010/1January2010/WFIBriefingpreview.pdf)

quality childcare and early years provision is expensive, as it involves employing highly qualified staff and paying them at a decent level to ensure consistency and a highly motivated staff team. However it is only through the provision of high quality early education that we will be able to improve children's outcomes and ensure positive attitudes to lifelong learning, particularly those children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. Daycare Trust estimates that the government currently spends around £4 billion on early childhood education and care (plus additional spending on Sure Start Children's Centres), compared to £30.1 billion on secondary schools in England.

### **ECF members**

4Children  
Action for Children  
Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP)  
Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL)  
Black Voices Network  
British Association of Community Child Health (BACCH)  
British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF)  
Campaign for Advancement of State Education (CASE)  
Children in Scotland (CiS)  
Children's Society  
Children in Wales (CiW)  
Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE)  
Council for Disabled Children (CDC)  
Community Practitioners and Health Visitors Association (CPHVA)  
Daycare Trust (DCT)  
Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network  
Early Education  
Early Years (formally NIPPA)  
Early Years Equality (EYE)  
Fatherhood Institute (formally Fathers Direct) (co-opted member)  
Full Time Mothers  
Forum for Maintained Nursery Schools  
High/Scope UK  
ICAN  
KIDS  
Learning Through Landscapes (LTL)  
Local Authority Early Years Network (LAEYN)  
Mencap  
Montessori Education UK  
National Association of Education Inspectors, Advisors & Consultants (ASPECT)  
National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)  
National Association for Primary Education (NAPE)  
National Association of Nurseries in Colleges & Universities (NANCU)  
National Autistic Society (NAS)  
National Children's Bureau (NCB)  
National Campaign for Nursery Education (NCNE)

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<sup>36</sup> Goddard, K., and Knights, E. (2009), *Quality costs: paying for high quality early education and care* Daycare Trust: London

National Childminding Association (NCMA)  
National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA)  
National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)  
National Literacy Trust (NLT)  
National Network Of Family Information Services (NAFIS)  
National Portage Association (NPA)  
National Union Teachers (NUT)  
Out for Our Children  
Parenting UK  
Parents for Inclusion  
Play England (formally Children's Play Council)  
Preschool Learning Alliance (PLA)  
REU (formerly Race Equality Unit)  
Refugee Council  
Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)  
Save the Children (SCF)  
Scope  
Special Educational Needs Joint Initiative for Training (SENJIT)  
Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship (SWSF)  
Trade Union Congress (TUC)  
Training, Advancement & Co-operation in Teaching Young Children (TACTYC)  
UNISON  
Voice - Union for Education Professionals (formally PAT / PANN)  
What About the Children (WATCH)  
World Organisation for Early Childhood Education (OMEP)

## References

ECF has developed a set of extended leaflets, which we have enclosed with this response.

- Championing young children's rights and entitlements
- Working for Children
- Working in Partnership
- Celebrating Difference
- It's All About Play

The can be downloaded from [www.ncb.org.uk/ecf](http://www.ncb.org.uk/ecf)

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