

Early Childhood Forum response to the Ofsted consultation on Single Equality Schemes

Early Childhood Forum 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.

ECF has five central areas of work which form the basis of its policy agenda:

- Championing children's rights and entitlements
- Supporting training, development and education of early childhood practitioners and all who work with children and their families
- Working in partnership
- Addressing inequalities and valuing diversity
- Evaluating practice and ensuring quality

Please find below the following recommendations from the Early Childhood Forum

Introduction

Para 3 - pleased to see the extension to all equality characteristics, especially poverty. As you'll see in 'Celebrating Difference' leaflet, the Early Childhood Forum considers it essential to look at the socio-economic environment alongside the six other equality strands, as social exclusion and poverty greatly impacts on the well-being and life chances of children and families.

Para 12 - re. public equality duties, although there is a commitment to eliminate unlawful harassment would like to see a stronger focus on promoting anti-discriminatory practice and understanding the nature of institutional discrimination. This also links to objective 3.

Page 13 - re. inspectors skilled and confident in assessing and reporting on providers' progress in equalities, we need to reiterate the training issue - that this is not a one off session of equality training but ongoing re-evaluation of attitudes and understanding. This links to objective 1.

Page 15 - we support the introduction of a specific judgement on equality and the potentially limiting judgement and would like to see evidence of how it is used

Objectives one and two

- encourage inspectors to access good local demographic data to give them an understanding of how accessible and equitable settings are. For instance, JRF have just published a summary about the rapidly changing migrants' population in York.

- use their unique position to give us insights into equality practices by businesses not covered by equalities legislation through a thematic report.

- ensure effective training in consulting and listening to marginalised and vulnerable people, including the voices of young children.

Objective three/four

- commit to detailed and honest interrogation of staff profiles, including qualitative information as well as just numbers.

- commit to training that gives staff the time to understand, reflect and talk about how inequalities operate, how they affect individuals and communities and how staff are personally affected when dealing with these issues.

In terms of gender equality, commit to:

a) disaggregating the term “parents” into “mothers and fathers” in documents. This is because, as *Aiming High for Children*, the *Healthy Child Programme* and other government policy points out, the word “parent” is heard as “mother”, and fathers become invisible by default.

b) gather and report on information relating to “parents” by gender in Ofsted-inspected institutions. It is essential to measure father-involvement (separately from mother involvement) both in school and at home, as this has an impact independently of mothers’ involvement on outcomes for children . Furthermore, schools have a duty under the Equality Act 2006 to ensure that all public services effectively meet the needs of men and women – and without effective data collection/analysis this cannot be measured .

c) assessing institutions in relation to the quality and extent of their specific engagement with fathers and mothers, and where possible outcomes for children

d) assessing the gender balance of the workforce in inspections, including the support available to gender-minorities in workplace settings

e) assessing in inspections the extent to which the school curriculum addresses gender equality issues: this will include consideration of gender-roles and how these are changing, so that out-of-date ‘essentialist’ perceptions of mothers/fathers roles and capabilities are not perpetuated

f) measuring the extent to which institutions work alongside men as well as women in the wider community

(Please see Fatherhood Institute’s response for further details)

Finally, we would like to see the priorities when transferred to the detailed action plan.

Early Childhood Forum Members

4Children

Action for Children

Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP)

Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL)

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 Academy for Parenting Practitioners (NAPP)
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)
National Childminding Association (NCMA)
National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA)
National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)
National Literacy Trust (NLT)
National Network Of Children's Information Services (NACIS)
National Portage Association (NPA)
National Union Teachers (NUT)
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)
Young Minds