



Department
for Education

Early Years Workforce Strategy

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Purpose of this document

This document sets out how the department plans to support the early years sector to remove barriers to attracting, retaining and developing the early years workforce.

Who this is for

- Early years sector
- Managers of nurseries and other pre-school settings
- Early years practitioners and teachers
- Childminders
- Training providers
- Local authorities
- Academics
- Employers

Publication date

This was published on 3rd March 2017

Ministerial Foreword

I want to begin by thanking everyone who has informed the development of this strategy, which I believe is critical to supporting the early years sector to continue to grow and deliver high quality provision. People who work with our youngest children, supporting and inspiring their early development and learning, are the



focus of this strategy. The commitment, energy and passion of staff across the sector is striking. Whether I talk to staff in a day nursery, a pre-school or nursery school or chat to a childminder, I get the same sense of dedication to making children's first years of life safe, stimulating and fun.

As someone who has managed my own business I appreciate the importance of recruiting the right people with the right skills and investing in them, not only for their own development but to make sure the service offered is the best it can be. Early years providers are responsible for building and supporting their workforce, and the success of this strategy will depend on employers, as well as training providers and sector organisations, continuing to work together and with government.

But government has a role too. As the Minister for the Early Years, I am committed to supporting the development of a well-qualified workforce with the appropriate knowledge, skills and experience to deliver high quality early education and childcare for children from birth to age five. We also need to attract people into the sector with enthusiasm and dedication to working with young children and enable them to enjoy rich and varied careers with effective continuous professional development. An effective workforce drives high quality provision, which is critical to children's outcomes and is important to parents making childcare choices. As the early years sector prepares to deliver the new extended entitlement to 30 hours of childcare for working parents of three and four year olds, building on the extremely successful existing free entitlement, I want to do all that I can to remove barriers to employers attracting, retaining and developing staff.

Commitments contained in this strategy include:

- enabling staff with an Early Years Educator (EYE) qualification who also hold level 2 English and mathematics qualifications, including Functional Skills¹, to count in the level 3 staff:child ratios.
- consulting on allowing those with Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS), and its predecessor Early Years Professional Status (EYPS), to lead nursery and reception classes in maintained schools.
- working with the sector to develop level 2 childcare qualification criteria.
- improving the quality of early years training and providing access to continuous professional development (CPD).
- providing funding to support the sector to develop quality improvement support in partnership with schools and local authorities.

This strategy is wide ranging and reflects the government's commitment to supporting the early years sector to thrive in the interests of children, parents and staff themselves. I believe that if we want our children to have the best experience in their earliest and most formative years, we must invest in and value those who are shaping their early development.

CAROLINE DINENAGE MP

Minister for Women, Equalities and Early Years

¹ Functional skills qualifications are applied qualifications in English, mathematics and ICT available in England. They allow students to demonstrate that they have achieved practical skills in literacy, numeracy and IT that help them to live and work confidently, effectively and independently. The functional skills criteria set out the skills that candidates must be able to demonstrate in order to pass each subject. They are available at: www.gov.uk/government/collections/functional-skills-qualifications-requirements.

Level 2 Functional Skills English and mathematics qualifications, in particular, are important 'gateway' qualifications, used in many existing apprenticeships. Level 2 is broadly similar in demand to a GCSE grade C or above.

Introduction

1. Children develop rapidly in their early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five will have a major impact on their future life chances. Good parenting and high quality early learning, that gives children a broad range of knowledge, skills and understanding, together provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.
2. This government is committed to supporting parents to access good quality early years provision that provides a safe and stimulating environment in which children can learn and develop. That is why we have committed to investing over £1 billion more per year in the early years by 2019-20, and through this strategy are committing to support employers to attract, retain and develop good quality staff.
3. The purpose of this strategy is to support delivery of good quality early years provision for all children from birth to five years. We also want to support early years providers to deliver free entitlement places, including delivering the manifesto commitment to provide 30 hours of childcare for eligible working parents from September 2017.
4. The quality of early years provision in England is impressive with 91% of settings rated by Ofsted as good or outstanding in 2016 compared to 74% in 2012. Key to this is a well-qualified workforce with 77% of group based staff in 2016 holding at least a level 3 qualification relevant to childcare and 29% at least a level 6². Evidence clearly shows that settings which employ more highly qualified staff are more likely to attract a good or outstanding rating from Ofsted³. We also know that the quality of staff is particularly important for supporting the development of disadvantaged children. The gap between the development of disadvantaged children and their peers at age 5 is narrowing, from 19.0 percentage points in

² *Childcare and early years providers survey: 2016, 23 February 2017. Level 6 qualifications includes degrees, EYTS, EYPS and QTS.* www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childcare-and-early-years-providers-survey-2016

³ Ofsted (2015), *Inspection Outcomes of Early Years Providers by Staff Qualifications*, www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspection-outcomes-of-early-years-providers-by-staff-qualifications--2

2013/14 to 17.3 percentage points in 2015/16⁴. But there is more that must be done to make sure all children get the best start in life.

5. The early years workforce is both the biggest asset and biggest overhead for early years providers operating in a competitive jobs market. In 2015, government conducted the first ever review of the cost of delivering childcare⁵, the findings of which have informed the development of an Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF). The purpose of the EYNFF is to make sure that more government funding for early years entitlements reaches providers and that funding settlements are fair and transparent. As part of the formula, there will be an area cost adjustment that reflects variable staffing costs across the country.
6. This strategy builds on the reforms introduced through *More Great Childcare*, published in 2013, which set out government's approach to raising the quality of early years provision and a response to the Nutbrown review of qualifications. Since 2013, government has developed national Early Years Educator qualification criteria to make sure that level 3 childcare qualifications prepare trainees for a level 3 job role, and introduced early years initial teacher training. We have also funded a range of voluntary and community sector (VCS) projects to support professional development. In April 2015, we introduced the Early Years Pupil Premium that providers can use to ensure their staff can effectively support the development of disadvantaged children.
7. We want this strategy to have a practical impact for employers and staff. We have worked with stakeholders to identify the challenges in attracting, retaining and developing good quality staff that they think government could help to overcome. We have engaged with front line staff, employers, training providers and membership organisations. The strategy is also informed by a consultation on literacy and numeracy qualifications for level 3 Early Years Educator staff that attracted over 4000 responses.

⁴ Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Results 2015-16 by pupil characteristics
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/early-years-foundation-stage-profile-results-2015-to-2016>

⁵ Review of childcare costs - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-childcare-costs>

8. Publication of this strategy is not the end of the journey on workforce development. The government is committed to continuing to work with the sector to review the challenges they face, and to collaborating to identify and implement solutions. Following publication of the strategy, a series of events for employers and stakeholders will take place to discuss the strategy and next steps towards implementation.

1. Attracting staff to join the sector

9. We know that working in the early years sector is an extremely rewarding career, and the evidence is clear that a high quality workforce has a significant impact on the quality of provision and outcomes for children. During the past decade, we have taken important steps to raise the quality of staff joining the sector, for example, introducing qualification requirements, developing qualification criteria, as well as introducing Early Years Teacher Status. In the run up to the delivery of 30 hours childcare, we need to ensure the government is supporting the sector to recruit those dedicated to supporting young children's development and care.

10. Our strategy to attract more individuals to consider a career in the early years sector focuses on five areas:

- **Qualification requirements at level 2 and level 3**
- **Specialist graduates**
- **Careers advice**
- **Quality of training**
- **Diversity of the workforce**

1.1 Qualification requirements at level 2 and level 3

We want early years settings and training providers to be able to recruit people who have a passion for working with children and have the right skills and knowledge to offer high quality early education and childcare.

11. The [Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\)](#) statutory framework sets out staff:child ratios for early years settings. These ratios include qualification requirements for staff. To operate within the EYFS, early years providers must employ at least one member of staff with a relevant level 3 childcare qualification and at least 50% of other staff working with children must hold a level 2 childcare qualification.

Level 2 Qualifications

12. We do not currently set criteria for the content of level 2 early years qualifications as we do for level 3 qualifications undertaken since September 2014.

Mathematics and English Qualification Requirements

13. Currently, staff who hold a level 3 Early Years Educator (EYE) qualification must also have achieved GCSE grade C or above in English and mathematics to count in level 3 staff:child ratios. The requirement for staff to hold an EYE qualification and GCSEs came into force on 1 September 2014 and was not applied retrospectively.

14. In November 2016, we consulted on what knowledge, skills and qualifications in English and mathematics are required to perform effectively in a level 3 role. We received 4,072 responses and we have published the findings in the government's response to the consultation⁶.
15. The GCSE requirement was introduced following Professor Cathy Nutbrown's report, Foundations for Quality⁷, which highlighted the importance of early years staff having the appropriate numeracy and literacy knowledge and skills, to help them support the early learning of young children and enable them to progress to further study. The recommendation on numeracy and literacy was that level 2 English and mathematics should be entry requirements to level 3 early education and childcare courses. The coalition government decided to implement a GCSE requirement on entry to work from 2014 and signalled that from 2016 GCSEs would be required on entry to training.
16. The government understands that, in general, the sector welcomes the ambition of the GCSE requirement because of the transferable skills acquired and the career progression it encourages. However, parts of the sector have raised concerns about the impact of the GCSE requirement on the recruitment of level 2 and level 3 staff.

⁶ [web address for consultation response]

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nutbrown-review-foundations-for-quality>

The Evidence

Data on the number of people starting a level 3 childcare apprenticeship indicates that there has been a decline of approximately 40% since the GCSE requirement was introduced*.

Factors influencing recruitment and retention are complex and it is unlikely that issues are solely related to the qualification requirements.

Responses to the consultation we ran in November 2016 indicated that the GCSE requirement is impacting negatively on the size and shape of the workforce. Applicants' lack of the required GCSEs was the main recruitment difficulty, faced by two-thirds of respondents (64.9%, 2,313**).

Only a very small percentage of respondents (4.4%) stated that the requirement has led to an increase in the quality of applicants.

The literacy and numeracy skills identified by respondents as being most necessary for a level 3 practitioner can be covered by level 2 Functional Skills qualifications, along with requirements already included in the EYE qualifications criteria.

* Apprenticeship Programme Starts by Sector Framework/Pathway & Apprenticeship Standard, Level and Age (2013/14 to 2014/15). Please note that an unknown proportion of the decrease in starts is due to removal of learners on the social care pathway in 2015. It is unlikely this would account for the majority of the decrease.

** Total number of respondents to question was 3,566.

Barriers to address

17. **Recruiting level 3 staff is difficult:** Employers have told us that they are experiencing difficulty recruiting level 3 staff because there are too few candidates with the appropriate GCSEs. Given the GCSE requirement was not applied retrospectively, only to new staff, this indicates that there may be a high turnover of staff at level 3 and that employers may be reliant on newly qualified staff each academic year to fill roles. Government does not hold annual turnover data on level 3 staff to validate this, but the decline in the number of people starting apprenticeships does indicate a reduction in the supply of new staff to the sector.
18. Strong numeracy and literacy skills are essential for those working with young children at a critical time in their development. It is vital that childcare qualifications provide staff with an understanding of child development, including how children acquire language and become numerate. It is also essential that practitioners are able to model good language, communication, mathematical and problem solving skills, and have the appropriate level of ability and confidence in their skills to communicate with a wide range of audiences, such as parents, health workers, local authority staff and other professionals. We therefore believe that it is essential for staff to hold an English and mathematics qualification in addition to a childcare qualification.
19. **Recruiting and retaining level 2 staff is difficult:** Employers have also told us that recruiting and retaining level 2 staff has become more challenging because the GCSE requirement is discouraging people from entering the sector and preventing those already working in settings from progressing. We do not hold data on level 2 turnover or progression and cannot validate this, but employers consistently raised this issue as part of the level 3 consultation.
20. **The content of level 2 qualifications does not always give the trainees the knowledge and skills they need to practise effectively:** A recurring message from stakeholders is that there are many level 2 early years qualifications available but some of these do not prepare trainees for their job role or for progression to a level 3 qualification. It is, therefore, difficult for employers to recognise a suitable qualification.

Action we will take

- We will broaden the current English and mathematics requirement for level 3 Early Years Educators (EYE), including for apprenticeships, to level 2 qualifications, including Functional Skills. We will amend the EYFS, with effect from 3 April 2017, to enable staff with an EYE qualification and level 2 English and mathematics qualifications to count in the level 3 staff:child ratios. This change will impact anyone who already holds an EYE qualification, began studying an EYE since September 2016 or takes up an EYE in the future. This will help recruitment and retention of the workforce, including childcare apprentices, whilst ensuring that staff have skills they need to support children and communicate effectively. Employers who wish to continue to apply the GCSE requirement for their staff will still be able to do so.
- The English and mathematics qualifications will continue to be required on entry to employment. This will align the childcare English and mathematics requirements with other apprenticeship routes and increase their appeal. Training providers will still be free to set their own selection criteria should they choose to do so.
- We will work with the sector and awarding organisations to develop criteria for the content of level 2 childcare qualifications. These criteria will help level 2 workers to gain the knowledge and skills they need to progress and enable employers to recognise suitable training and qualifications more easily. The criteria will be developed to support progression to level 3 study and with a new level 2 apprenticeship standard in mind. This development will be undertaken within the context of the government's Skills Plan⁸ (see career pathways section, page 29). We would expect new qualifications to be available for delivery from September 2019.
- We are aware that our current workforce data can be improved to help us to understand the impact of the policies being implemented through this strategy. We are reviewing and will, where necessary, revise our existing data collection.

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-skills-plan-and-independent-report-on-technical-education>

1.2 Specialist graduates

We know that graduates with specialist early years training make a positive impact on the quality of settings and ultimately improve children's outcomes. We want to support the sector to grow the graduate early years workforce.

21. Early years initial teacher training was introduced in September 2013 and built on the achievements of its predecessor, Early Years Professional Status. Early years teachers meet the same entry requirements as trainee primary school teachers and successful trainees are awarded Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) once they have demonstrated that they meet the Teachers' Standards (Early Years). Early years teachers are specialists trained to deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage for children from birth to age five and provide pedagogical leadership in early years settings. To date over 16,000 specialist graduates have been trained.
22. Early years teachers bring knowledge, skills and experience and contribute to improving outcomes for young children. Settings that employ an early years teacher can choose to operate a 1:13 staff: child ratio for three and four year olds in recognition of the additional training and expertise these graduates have in leading the learning and development of young children.
23. Achieving EYTS can give a real feeling of professionalism to nursery staff, increasing their confidence, giving them the ability to promote excellent practice and the authority to share knowledge and good practice with colleagues. Early years teachers inspire and encourage learning and provide children with the best possible educational start, ensuring that they are prepared for their transition to school.
24. There are currently four early years initial teacher training routes available, including a route for graduates already employed in an early years setting. Funding is available for training course fees, with additional funding for nursery employers to help them support graduates in their settings to become early years teachers. To encourage the best graduates into the early years workforce we provide bursaries to eligible trainees.
25. Training providers market their courses through their own channels. We also promote the benefits of early years teachers and the routes and funding available to

graduates and employers. We developed a specific early years area on the *Get into Teaching*⁹ website, which provides information for employers and potential trainees and includes promotional videos featuring early years teachers. We have also marketed early years teaching via social media, sector publications, marketing channels and by hosting online events to support those considering early years initial teacher training.

Barriers to address

26. Recruiting and retaining graduate staff is difficult: We know that many employers are recognising the value that specialist graduates bring to their settings. However, some employers have told us that they find it difficult to attract and/or retain specialist graduates and would like more opportunities to develop the staff already in their workforce to become pedagogical specialists.

The Evidence

Research has shown that the quality of early education and care for pre-school children is higher when practice is led by specially trained graduates. Settings which gained a graduate leader with EYPS (the predecessor to Early Years Teacher Status) made significant improvements in quality for pre-school children compared with settings which did not. Improvements were seen in overall quality and individual dimensions of practice including positive staff-child interactions, support for communication, language and literacy and reasoning/thinking skills and scientific understanding (from '[Evaluation of the Graduate Leader Fund Final Report](#)', 2011).

Within the private, voluntary and independent sector, settings with a graduate member of staff scored more highly on all quality measures. Graduate leadership was also associated with a narrower quality gap between settings located in deprived and more advantaged areas ('[Quality and inequality](#)', 2014).

27. Early years teachers have limited career choices: Many graduates welcome the opportunity to undertake specialist early years training and enjoy the rewarding work

⁹ <https://getintoteaching.education.gov.uk/explore-my-options/become-an-early-years-teacher>

that they do. Early years teachers can be pedagogical leaders in a range of early years settings including private, voluntary and independent providers (PVIs), free schools and academies. However, their role is currently restricted in maintained settings as regulations do not allow them to lead nursery or reception classes. It is likely that some graduates are choosing to take initial teacher training leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) rather than early years initial teacher training because it allows them to work in both maintained schools (with the associated school teachers' pay and conditions) and early years settings.

28. We need more specialist graduates in disadvantaged areas: In 2014 research led by Sandra Mathers for the Nuffield Foundation¹⁰ looked at provision for disadvantaged three and four year olds. This research showed that, where settings employ specially trained graduates, quality is higher and the quality gap between settings in disadvantaged and more affluent areas is narrower. It is important, therefore, that we seek to maximise the number of specialist graduates employed in disadvantaged areas.

¹⁰ Mathers, S *Quality and Inequality: do three-and four-year olds in deprived areas experience lower quality early years provision?*, Nuffield Trust, 2014

Action we will take

We will seek to enhance the status of early years teachers to encourage recruitment by:

- Consulting on amending regulations to allow those with EYTS, and its predecessor EYPS, to lead nursery and reception classes in maintained schools. We want to make sure that the specialist training and status of early years teachers are recognised in all types of early years settings.
- Reviewing the early years initial teacher training routes in 2017 to make sure we are maximising the impact of the programme.
- Conducting a feasibility study by March 2018 into developing a programme that specifically seeks to grow the graduate workforce in disadvantaged areas, to narrow the quality gap between settings in disadvantaged and more affluent areas. We will engage the sector in exploring ways to target support where it is most needed.
- Considering how wider work on strengthening QTS could offer positive opportunities for raising the status and parity of early years teachers.

1.3 Careers advice

We want the early years to be a career of choice and for careers advice to reflect the diversity of roles available, providing information to students and career changers to help them make informed decisions about routes into the sector.

29. There are a number of different career paths within the early years sector as provision is diverse and there are many different staffing models in place. We want careers advice to reflect this diversity and the breadth of opportunities, from working directly with children as an Early Years Educator or pedagogical leader, to managing and leading an early years setting/s. The sector also includes Childminders who are self-employed, working from their own homes and setting their own hours. The sector can inspire people to specialise further in the early years and become inspectors, training providers, quality advisers and academics in the field of early education.

30. Schools, sixth forms and colleges all have a statutory requirement to provide

independent careers guidance to twelve to eighteen year olds. Careers advice is also provided at universities and adults can access it through Jobcentres and the National Careers Service. Government provides a range of support to help schools and other education institutions provide good quality careers advice.

31. The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) is an employer-led organisation set up by government to take a lead role in transforming the provision of careers, enterprise and employer engagement experiences for young people, to inspire them and prepare them for the world of work. CEC strengthens the links between employers, schools and colleges to work together to open young people's eyes to choices and opportunities. The CEC has set up an Enterprise Adviser Network - a network of employer volunteers working in schools and colleges - to support their careers and enterprise strategies and increase the number and effectiveness of employer-school interactions.
32. Government also works with the National Careers Service (NCS), which provides free, up to date, impartial information, advice and guidance on careers, skills and the labour market in England. NCS provides advice via its website, contact centre, web chat and area-based advisers who can offer face to face and telephone support.
33. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) helps people to move [from benefits into work](#) and make work pay. A key priority for DWP is to enable people to achieve financial independence by providing assistance and guidance into employment.
34. DWP's Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches support their claimants to identify work opportunities available to them through regular meetings and conversations in order for them to move off benefits and achieve a career. Work coaches are able to promote to their claimants the wide range of career options available in the childcare sector including self-employment.

The Evidence

The quality of careers advice provision is checked by Ofsted as part of school inspections. Ofsted has reported that many schools could improve the support they provide to students by proactively making connections with local employers. Giving students the opportunity to hear first-hand from someone who is passionate about their job is a powerful way to help them understand what a job role or profession involves. This approach, combined with information and advice about qualifications and career routes, helps young people make important choices about their futures.

Barriers to address

35. **The early years sector does not have a strong reputation for offering good career progression or varied career opportunities.** Currently most advice focuses on those roles related to the statutory qualification requirements in the EYFS such as the practitioner role at level 2 and level 3, early years teachers and setting managers. These roles are not usually well understood by those outside the sector and advice does not tend to cover wider opportunities that early years staff may consider as part of their career path. For example, the sector offers area wide, regional, national or even international management opportunities, specialist roles such as working with children with severe special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and even opportunities for budding entrepreneurs to start their own childcare business or as a childminder.
36. It is important that young people and adults have access to information and advice about the full range of possibilities in the early years sector. It is also important for early years employers to influence the provision of careers information and advice in their local area to inspire young people and career changers to explore the opportunities that the sector can offer.
37. Childcare apprenticeships are currently available at levels 2 and 3. As detailed in section 1.1 above, the English and mathematics requirements for level 3 staff are being broadened to level 2 qualifications, including Functional Skills. It is essential that careers advice includes information on apprenticeships.

38. It is also important that employers understand the benefits apprenticeships can bring to their organisation and how reforms to apprenticeships are increasing the quality of training, and the choice available to employers. The reforms include putting employers in the driving seat in developing new apprenticeship standards that meet their skills needs, and a new apprenticeships funding system from May 2017, including the apprenticeship levy, which will fund the step change needed to achieve 3 million high quality apprenticeship starts by 2020. The new Institute for Apprenticeships, being launched in April 2017, will underpin this by overseeing quality across the apprenticeship system.

Action we will take

We want to encourage more employers to engage with schools and colleges and talk directly to students about working in the sector. This provides an opportunity for students to talk to someone about their day-to-day working life and the realistic career prospects in the sector. For local businesses, this approach provides an opportunity to influence students' career choices early.

- We will continue to work directly with careers organisations to encourage more volunteers from the sector to work with schools and colleges to promote careers in the early years.
- We will work with the Education and Employers Charity to promote opportunities in the early years sector through a series of events that bring employers and people working in the sector together to talk about their work at schools and colleges.
- We will make sure that the information and advice provided through the National Careers Service reflects a wider breadth of roles across the sector. We will make sure that career pathways, developed in partnership with early years employers through implementation of the [Skills Plan](#), including apprenticeships, are reflected in careers advice.
- The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will promote childcare as an employment option via their Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches. DWP will work with sector experts to develop resources to support the knowledge development of Work Coaches around the Childcare Sector.
- DWP Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches will also promote childcare as a self-employment opportunity for people claiming Universal Credit or an existing benefit, when establishing a sustainable childcare business is the best way to provide them with a route towards financial self-sufficiency.
- We will work with the National Apprenticeship Service to raise awareness of the early years apprenticeships, including funding and recruitment support systems, among early years employers and careers organisations and schools, for example, via the [Amazing Apprenticeships](#) website.

1.4 Quality of further education training

We want those who deliver training to staff and new entrants to the sector to inspire their students and provide a high quality learning experience.

39. Further education tutors who deliver early years training and apprenticeships play a critical role in preparing new entrants, and existing staff, to deliver high quality early years provision to children and their families. We recognise that when statutory requirements that apply to the early years sector change or when qualification requirements change, tutors must adapt so they can deliver training that reflects the current realities of the job.

40. Ofsted is responsible for inspection of further education (FE) and skills institutions, which includes consideration of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Ofqual is responsible for the regulation of qualifications, examinations and assessment. Awarding organisations design, develop and certificate qualifications. They make sure that training providers award qualifications appropriately and carry out regular checks on the methods and standards of assessment used.

41. The Education Training Foundation (ETF) was established in 2013. ETF is owned by the FE and training sector, and its purpose is to improve the quality of FE and training in England and support workforce development. The ETF has developed professional standards for the FE workforce.

The Evidence

The most recent Ofsted statistics, at 31 August 2016, showed that inspection outcomes for general further education colleges were 71% judged “good” or “outstanding”, a decline from 77% “good” or “outstanding” the previous year. Data specifically on the quality of early years teaching is not available, but stakeholder feedback on the strategy included concerns raised about the lack of knowledge, and recent experience of the childcare sector amongst some tutors.

Barriers to address

42. **The quality of training is not consistent, resulting in some staff being unable to perform the role they are certificated to deliver.** Training organisations have

told us that it can be challenging for tutors to keep ahead of the curve when statutory requirements change and/or where tutors have not worked in the sector for a period. If tutors are not able to maintain up to date knowledge and sector experience it can directly influence the learning experience of students and result in them not being fully able, despite their training, to excel in their job. We want tutors delivering early years training to deliver high quality learning experiences for future early years professionals and experienced staff.

Action we will take

- We will conduct a training needs analysis for early years tutors and trial a Professional Exchange for this part of the FE workforce to enable tutors to share challenges and effective practice.
- We will work with early years tutors to design and implement support from September 2019 that meets their development needs in relation to keeping their practice relevant and effective.

1.5 Gender diversity of the workforce

We want children in early years provision to have both male and female role models to guide them in their early years, and we want more men to choose to work in the early years sector.

43. A diverse early years workforce, which better reflects wider society, helps to enhance children's experiences. Encouraging increased gender diversity amongst those joining the early years sector would have two main benefits; an increased pool of applicants for the sector to recruit from and male role models for young children.

44. Male practitioners can be positive role models for boys, especially if their own father is absent. Research carried out by the Children's Workforce Development Council in 2008 reported that 17% of children from lone parent families had fewer than two hours a week of contact time with a man, whilst 36% had under six hours. Male early years workers are therefore vital in making sure young children have quality contact time with men.

45. The Fatherhood Institute has initiated a campaign to attract more men into the sector and the first conference on men in the early years was held in 2016. A network for men working in the early years has already been established by male staff in the sector to promote early years as a rewarding career choice for men and to provide peer support. The department supports these initiatives and wants to support their objectives further.

The Evidence

From 2008 – 2013, the proportion of male staff in the workforce has remained consistently low at 2% (Provider Survey, 2013).

A survey conducted in 2012 by Pre-school Learning Alliance and other major providers showed that 98% of parents wanted men to be involved in childcare.

Barriers to address

46. **Recruitment and retention of men is difficult and childcare is seen as a female occupation.** We recognise that recruitment and retention of men is a challenge for the early years sector and that childcare is seen as a predominantly female occupation, which limits the recruitment pool for employers.

Action we will take

- We will set up a task and finish group of early years sector stakeholders to consider gender diversity in the sector in more depth. The group will:
 - Report to the department by the end of 2017 on the factors influencing the number of men in childcare and present possible solutions to increase this number.
 - Work with the department and sector stakeholders to promote career opportunities for men in childcare.
 - Link with existing, and support the development of, networks for men working in childcare.
- We will review data collections with the aim of improving our understanding of overall diversity in the early years workforce, across all groups. We will also review demographic data to monitor the impact of our gender initiatives.

2. Retaining and developing staff

47. We have heard a strong message from the sector that difficulties retaining staff have a big impact on settings. The latest data on turnover of staff showed that it varied across different types of providers and is highest for sessional care at 18%. Turnover in full day care is 12%¹¹. The actions outlined in this strategy seek to identify ways to improve staff retention. We want all staff working in the sector to understand how they can develop a fulfilling career in early years, and we want to support employers to ensure their staff can access informative and engaging CPD. We want CPD to enable staff to acquire new knowledge and skills that support their professional development and, ultimately, provide even better learning opportunities for children in their care.

48. Our retention and development strategy focuses on four areas:

- **Development of career pathways**
- **Continuous professional development**
- **Supporting children with SEND**
- **Sector-led quality improvement**

¹¹ [Early years and childcare provider survey 2013](#), page 169

2.1 Developing career pathways

We want to support the workforce to develop, both professionally and personally, and want staff to understand how to achieve their career goals.

49. No early years business is the same and, beyond the minimum requirements in the EYFS, employers staff their settings in order to meet the needs of children and families. Wide variation in staffing structures makes it challenging to develop a single career pathway for staff in the sector, yet this could provide a helpful tool for staff to plan their career and for those interested in working in the sector to see the range of job roles and opportunities on offer.

50. Opportunities to be promoted or to develop personally and professionally are key factors for people deciding on a specific career path and choosing to stay within that sector. To support the retention of staff within the sector we need to ensure there are clear opportunities for career progression, which are accessible and result in professional and/or financial benefits. This government is committed to social mobility, which means enabling individuals to achieve their potential, and we want all early years practitioners to have the opportunity to progress.

51. Since the publication of the Skills Plan¹² and The Sainsbury Review of technical education¹³ in July 2016, the department has been working to map occupations within the early years sector so that career pathways are clear to employers and employees. The government's role is that of facilitator and we will continue to work with the sector to support the development of new qualifications and apprenticeships.

52. The ambition of the Skills Plan for technical education routes is to prepare individuals for employment in occupations, which require the acquisition of both a substantial body of technical knowledge and a set of practical skills valued by the sector. The new system should become the pathway of choice for students aspiring

¹² www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-skills-plan-and-independent-report-on-technical-education

¹³ www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/536046/Report_of_the_Independent_Panel_on_Technical_Education.pdf

to a career in these occupations. Roles in the early year's sector are clearly aligned with these aspirations.

53. These reforms mark a fundamental shift towards a simplified, high status system. There will be a common framework of 15 technical education routes, which encompass all employment-based and college-based activity. Each route will be underpinned by occupational standards, which set out the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for full occupational competency. College-based technical qualifications will be aligned with these standards. For each route, panels of professionals will advise on the knowledge, skills and behaviours to be acquired in order to be competent in an occupation. Through these panels, employers, supported by professional bodies and education experts, will have a strong role in setting the standards of technical education.

The Evidence

The early Years and Childcare Provider Survey in 2013, showed turnover in the sector to be at 12% for full day care providers.

Stakeholders have told us that there is confusion and a lack of knowledge about training pathways and that there are too many qualifications at level 4 and 5 in particular. We have also heard there is a lack of understanding outside the sector about what practitioners do and the level of qualification required.

Barriers to address

54. There is an absence of clear career routes in the sector. This is because settings have different staffing structures depending on their size and business set up. There is not always a clear connection between staff qualification levels and job roles.

Action we will take

- As part of the implementation of the Skills Plan, we will establish a panel of professionals, including employers from within the early years sector, to advise on the development of the childcare and early education occupational route.

2.2 Continuous professional development

Acquiring new skills and developing yourself as a professional can lead to a more fulfilling career, as well as increasing the quality of early years provision. We want to support employers and self-employed childminders to access good quality, affordable CPD.

Bringing schools and childcare providers together to learn from each other can bring a range of benefits as a result of collaboration, including better transition between early years and school.

55. Government knows that CPD is important for enhancing practice, acquiring new skills, and keeping up to date with requirements and approaches. We also recognise that CPD is essential to providing good quality provision, developing as a professional and supporting individuals to fulfil their potential and pursue their chosen career path.

56. Through the EYFS, providers are required to support staff to undertake appropriate training and professional development opportunities to ensure they offer quality learning and development experiences for children. Providers must ensure that staff have up to date knowledge of safeguarding and child protection, health and safety, paediatric first aid, food hygiene and the administration of medicine.

57. The government has supported CPD in the sector through a number of VCS grants in recent years including supporting staff to increase children's numeracy and literacy, and sharing effective safeguarding practice. To support introduction of the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP), the Education Endowment Foundation produced an [early years toolkit](#) that brings together the evidence on what works in the early years to help providers decide how to spend their EYPP funding in impactful ways. One of the most powerful approaches is investing in programmes and activities that improve early language and communication including supporting staff to acquire the skills to enhance children's early language development.

The Evidence

The study of early education and development (SEED) found that high quality settings prioritised on-going CPD to develop professional practice; to keep up-to-date with new research on effective practice; to build networks and share good practice and to support staff retention.

The Graduate Leader Fund Evaluation reported that staff with EYPS would likely have greater impact on the quality of provision if they had access to CPD to support their specialist knowledge and skills.

The 2013 Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey reported that 38% of full day care settings received funding from the local authority to support CPD activity. We expect the percentage of settings receiving such funding to have decreased in recent years as many local authorities tell us they have either reduced their CPD offer to make savings or charge for their services.

Barriers to address

58. **Some settings, particularly smaller providers, struggle to afford good quality CPD for staff. This is also true for self-employed childminders.** The training and staffing costs associated with some forms of CPD, such as formal training courses, can be prohibitive for some providers.
59. Professor Nutbrown, in her report Foundations for Quality, stated that 72% of respondents to her call for evidence identified cost (both of training and for cover whilst staff are away from the setting) as the main barrier to accessing CPD.
60. A recent national workforce survey shows that this picture has not changed and that access to sufficient high-quality affordable training is a concern to employers and practitioners¹⁴.

¹⁴ NDNA workforce survey, 2016

61. Many local authorities have stopped offering free CPD to early years settings.

Local authorities have either reduced their offer to cover mandatory training only or have retained a wider range of training for which they apply a charge.

62. We understand that, in a challenging economic climate, employers want to ensure they get value for money and that staff can receive high quality training at low cost. CPD need not be expensive. As well as formal training, there are other opportunities to support practitioners to update and develop their knowledge and skills. Professor Nutbrown advocated a 'blended approach' to training which included work-based learning and support, mentoring and visiting other settings. The SEED report¹⁵ supports this picture and sets out some of the ways in which settings are trying to overcome the lack of free or low cost CPD available to them locally, including:

- internal training and development activity, for example, twilight sessions delivered by managers and pedagogical leaders for other staff
- learning through experience and observing other colleagues
- maintaining good practice networks
- using online courses that are cheaper and more convenient to access

It is important that creative ways of accessing CPD are identified, developed and promoted across the sector.

Action we will take

- We will develop, through a voluntary and community sector grant, an online portal that sets out career paths, brings effective online CPD together in one place and provides online training modules. This will include support for staff already in the workforce to improve their English and mathematics.
- We will provide training through voluntary and community sector grants on SEND, speech and language development and effective business management.

¹⁵ Study of Early Education and Development <http://www.seed.natcen.ac.uk/professionals>

2.3 Supporting children with SEND

We want all early years staff to feel confident that they can support a child with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to access and enjoy their early years setting. It is also important for staff to have the ability to work effectively with other professionals to meet a child's needs and engage parents positively.

63. We want all early years provision to be inclusive and we already have clear requirements in the EYFS, as well as the Equality Act, for providers to support the needs of all children, including those with SEND. All early years providers in the maintained, private, voluntary and independent sectors that are funded by the local authority must have regard to the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice. Maintained nursery schools must identify a member of staff to act as Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) and other providers (in group provision) are expected to identify a SENCO.

64. Many organisations provide training for early years staff to help them fulfil their role in offering tailored support to all children and meet the needs of children with more specialist needs. For example, the online portal or [SEND gateway](#) funded by the Department for Education, and developed by *nasen*, provides free, easy access to high quality information, resources and training on meeting the needs of children with SEND. The [Council for Disabled Children](#) (CDC) brings together a wide range of organisations involved in supporting children and families with SEND. Its website provides access to helpful resources and a training hub where staff working with children can access information about training provision.

65. We recognise that providing good quality provision for children with SEND can attract a higher cost than care for other children. That is why, in April 2017, through the Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF) we will introduce the new, targeted early years Disability Access Fund of £12.5 million. The fund will enable a fixed lump sum payment of £615 per eligible child per year to be paid to early years settings that are providing a free entitlement place for three and four year olds.

66. The EYNFF also requires local authorities to set up a Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund, which aims to support local providers to address the needs of individual children with SEN. The EYNFF also contains an additional needs factor that takes account of children with disabilities.

67. Funding for providing ongoing support for disabled young children is available from the high needs block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), including for children with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans.

The Evidence

A lower proportion of children with SEN and disabilities achieve the expected levels of development in the EYFS than children with no additional needs. In 2016, 72% of children with no identified SEN achieved expected levels of development in all five areas of learning compared to 25% who were accessing SEN support and just 5% of those with Education, Health and Care plans in place*. Although this represents a modest increase from 2015 (69%, 22% and 4% respectively), it is clear that there continues to be a significant development gap.

A survey of parents with disabled children* conducted in 2015 found that take up of free entitlements amongst this group is much lower than parents whose children have no additional needs. Parents not taking up entitlements reported that they had concerns about the safety of their child (38%), the training of staff (30%) and the inclusivity of settings (28%).

*Early years foundation stage profile 2016 by pupil characteristics

** Based on 268 responses from parents with 291 disabled children to an online survey 'Young disabled children's experiences of early education and childcare' between 6 July and 21 Sept 2015. Full survey results available at www.cafamily.org.uk

Barriers to address

68. **The parents of children with SEND can experience difficulty in accessing a suitable childcare place for their child.** There are many skilled practitioners in the sector who are experienced in working with children with SEND and with professionals who specialise in this area. We want to make sure that all staff have the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of all children in their care and support their development and early learning. Equipping staff with appropriate skills is essential to narrowing the development gap between children with SEND and their peers.

Action we will take

We will support staff to offer good quality provision to children with SEND by:

- Funding a range of training and development opportunities through VCS grants including development of training and online resources.
- Working with organisations specialising in SEND to develop a qualification for early years staff who want to specialise in SEND. We will work within the context of implementation of the Sainsbury Review of technical education and aim to deliver a new qualification in 2018.
- Developing guidance for local authorities and early years providers on how an inclusion fund and a targeted disability access fund can be used to support workforce development and SEND specialism. We will make this available by September 2017.

2.4 Sector-led quality improvement

A sustainable approach to quality improvement in the sector is vital to provide a continuous focus on quality and to meet the needs of children and families in the most effective ways.

69. In the EYNFF consultation response, government announced £5m a year up to 2020 to support quality improvement in the early years and a quality funding supplement for local authorities. We are committed to helping the sector develop sustainable ways to continually drive up quality.

70. Local authorities have a legal duty to provide information, advice and training (IAT) to early years providers judged less than 'good' by Ofsted and to newly registered providers who have not yet had an inspection report published. Local authorities can provide support on meeting the requirements of the EYFS, effective safeguarding and child protection and meeting the needs of children with SEND. Local authorities can charge for these services.

71. The quality of early years provision is high with 91% of providers rated good or outstanding in 2016. All settings, regardless of their Ofsted rating should be thinking about ways to improve their provision to deliver better outcomes for children in their care. Effective sharing of good practice and embedding a culture of continuous improvement is vital to achieving this.

72. The sector is predominantly made up of private businesses, many of whom will be competing with other local providers to attract parents to their setting. Despite this, there is already a wealth of collaborative quality improvement activity taking place between different types of providers and organisations such as PVI, schools, local authorities, colleges and training providers.

73. There are currently 32 early years teaching schools whose role is to actively spread good practice and support continuous improvement amongst early years providers. In 2015 the government provided £5 million of funding to support 77 nursery, primary and secondary teaching schools across the country to bring schools and early years providers together to learn from each other and establish sustainable early years

quality improvement networks. The Teaching Schools Council reported a range of benefits as a result of collaboration, including improved assessment of children's early development, better transition between early years and school and more frequent and meaningful communications between early years settings and schools. The Teaching Schools Council also noted benefits for schools in terms of primary teachers developing an improved understanding of the early years.

The Evidence

There is limited evidence on the availability of quality improvement support. Local authorities are required to support those rated less than 'good' by Ofsted but there is no such requirement for those above this threshold. A study by the Family Care Trust* reports that the majority of local authorities focus their efforts on meeting their statutory requirements and are not able to offer wider support to settings who may be at risk of declining quality between Ofsted inspections. The report also noted that local authorities are maintaining a core offer of support and training, although there were significant differences in the level of subsidy available and the types of training to which it is applied.

** Butler, A and Hardy, G. (2016) Driving high quality childcare: the role of local authorities. Family and Childcare Trust*

Barriers to address

74. The provision of quality improvement support across the country is variable.

Some local authorities continue to provide free support whereas others charge for their services. There is also variability in the type and level of support offered to settings rated good or outstanding given that local authorities are not required to support them.

Action we will take

- We will expand relationships between schools and early years providers via the teaching school network. Up to £3 million funding in 2017/18 and 2018/19 and up to £1.5 million in 2019/20 will be allocated to meet local needs.
- We will support the development of 'buy back' models for quality improvement services in some local authority areas, whereby early years settings purchase support. We will seek to support the development of models that can provide sustainable quality improvement services for all types of early years providers, particularly in those local authority areas facing different challenges, such as rurality. We will work with local authorities and childcare providers to do this.
- We will seek to achieve a geographical spread when identifying teaching schools and local authorities to take part in the quality improvement work described above. We will make sure that areas of disadvantaged are covered as a priority.



Department
for Education

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