Sally Neaum

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

for Early Years Students and Practitioners

3rd Edition
2 The current policy context of early years

This chapter enables you to understand:

- the political context of early years policy;
- the important policies, legislation, practice frameworks and workforce development in early years;
- how these policies and frameworks are informed by research into the best ways to support children’s early development;
- the changing emphasis and patterns of services for young children and their families;
- how the Early Years Teacher qualification has been developed to support children’s early learning and development.

Introduction

From the late 1990s onwards there was an unprecedented political focus on education; this included education and care for pre-school aged children. The Labour Party, which came to power in 1997, made it one of their priorities to increase support for young children and their families.

To achieve this there were significant changes in the way that early years was funded, organised, delivered and monitored. Government policy and legislation, supported by practice guidance and workforce development, reshaped early years provision. The government’s aim was threefold, namely:

- to meet the early educational needs of young children;
- to meet families’ needs for childcare;
- to provide wide-ranging support for parents and families.

The change to a coalition government in 2010 inevitably meant that there were changes in emphasis and approach to early childhood, and this is likely to continue following the 2015 election of a Conservative government. However, the fundamental aims of supporting the early educational needs of young children and the recognition that to achieve this the government must support families has remained in place.
Policy and legislation, frameworks for practice and workforce development

Governmental policy needs to be supported by policy statements. Policy statements say what the government intends to do. These are sometimes published as, and called, Green Papers or White Papers. Green Papers are documents in which the government set out their ideas for discussion or consultation. A White Paper contains policy proposals. Policy becomes law through the passing of legislation in Parliament. Once the legislation has passed through Parliament it is called an ‘act,’ for example, the Disability Discrimination Act. One part of policy and legislation is to ensure that workforce training and qualifications are sufficient to put the policy into practice. Therefore, both policy and legislation often establish routes for training and qualifications within a sector. Both policy and legislation are often supported by guidance and frameworks that may state the legal requirements and offer advice on how to enact the requirements in practice and provision.

Since the 1990s there has been a large number of policies, legislation and practice guidance in early years. Detailed in Table 2.1 is a timeline of influential policies and guidance between 1989 and 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Policy and legislation</th>
<th>Practice: reports and guidance</th>
<th>Workforce development</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Children Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Education Act –</td>
<td>First degree level course in</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• established OFSTED –</td>
<td>childhood studies – Suffolk</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Office for Standards</td>
<td>College and the University of</td>
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<td></td>
<td>in Education</td>
<td>Bristol</td>
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<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) – this applied to all providers of early years services from 2002</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• introduces OFSTED inspections for nurseries</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• puts in place new system</td>
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<td></td>
<td>for funding early years – the nursery voucher scheme – initially for four year olds</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Labour manifesto – focuses on reduction of child poverty and expansion of childcare and other services for children and families</td>
<td>Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) study started at the Institute of Education</td>
<td>Fifteen early childhood degree courses available in October 1997</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>SureStart trailblazers set up in 60 disadvantaged areas. SureStart local programmes introduced</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage replaced the Desirable Outcomes framework</td>
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## Chapter 2  The current policy context of early years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Policy and legislation</th>
<th>Practice: reports and guidance</th>
<th>Workforce development</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td></td>
<td>Special Educational Needs code of practice</td>
<td>Early years sector endorsed Foundation Degree</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Education Act</td>
<td>Birth to Three Matters</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Nursery education to be inspected by OFSTED</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Foundation Stage profile to be competed at end of Foundation Stage</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td></td>
<td>Children’s Workforce Development Council established to support the implementation of ECM with regard to the development of the early years workforce</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Childcare Act</td>
<td>Early Years Professional Status standards and prospectus published</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Establishes Early Years Foundation Stage Choice for parents The best start for children. Making it happen. Action plan for the ten-year strategy • Free Nursery entitlement (12.5 hours per week) extended from 33 to 38 weeks Plan to extend this to 15 hours for 38 weeks by 2010 and eventually to 20 hrs</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>The Children’s Plan</td>
<td>EYPS assessments begin</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ten years vision to improve schools and support children and families</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td></td>
<td>Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory from September 2008 Replaces Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage and Birth to Three Matters</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td></td>
<td>Next Steps for Early Learning and Childcare: Building on the 10 year strategy • Extended right to all parents of children under 16 to flexible working • Free early learning places for all 2 year olds living in disadvantaged communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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## Table 2.1  (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Policy and legislation</th>
<th>Practice: reports and guidance</th>
<th>Workforce development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Education Act 2011. Government will continue to fund non-statutory early years provision subject to guidance from the Secretary of State for Education</td>
<td>Publication of the Tickell review – The Early Years: Foundations for life, health and learning</td>
<td>EYPS revised. Different pathways, shorter timescales and revised standards Continued ambition for level 3 and graduate work force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td></td>
<td>New EYFS framework mandatory from September 2012</td>
<td>CWDC work transferred to the Department for Education EYPS now overseen by the TDA Revised EYPS standards become statutory Publication of Nutbrown review of early education and childcare qualifications ‘Foundations for Quality.’ It includes 19 recommendations to improve the skills and knowledge of those who work with young children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>April: SureStart children’s centres statutory guidance. Replaces 2010 guidance. More Great Childcare – government response to Nutbrown review • New Early Years Teacher status • New Early Years Educator status at level 3 • 15 hours early years provision funded for 2 year olds in defined areas.</td>
<td></td>
<td>EYPS becomes Early Years Teacher (EYT). Range of routes to gain the qualification</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td></td>
<td>January: Special Educational Needs Code of Practice statutory guidance final published</td>
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Creating policy to support children’s development

In the 1990s the incoming Labour government pledged to use research evidence to guide policy and inform changes in early education. They wanted to create an early learning sector based on what was known about effective early learning. This approach, of using evidence to inform what you do, is called evidence-based practice. The government wanted to use research to identify what was the most effective way of supporting young children’s development and to use this information to create policies, supported by legislation that enhanced practice and provision.

Using evidence to inform policy

At the outset of this process there was existing evidence about the benefits of early learning. The Head Start programme in the USA had shown that early support and intervention for children and families had positive effects on children’s development. This was supported by research which emphasised the importance of early learning on brain development and evidence from developmental psychology which focused on the importance of early diagnosis and intervention for children with learning and developmental needs (Anning and Ball, 2008).

Head Start

Head Start was started in the USA by President Lyndon Johnson in the early 1960s as part of the ‘war on poverty’. It continues today as a country-wide comprehensive education, health, nutrition and parent involvement service for children and families with low incomes. Studies have shown that there were a number of benefits for the children who attended the pre-school programme. All of the studies that collected data on children’s cognitive development found that the cognitive development of children who had participated in the programmes was significantly better than children who hadn’t attended programmes.

(Continued)
One study that looked at 50 other Head Start studies found evidence of immediate improvements, for children attending programmes, in their cognitive and social and emotional development and health.

One of the most influential Head Start programmes was the Highscope/Perry Pre-school programme. This programme was designed for and tracked the lives of 123 African Americans born in poverty and at high risk of failing in school. Participants in this programme have been monitored until the age of 40. It was found that those participants who attended the pre-school programme had higher earnings, were more likely to hold a job, had committed fewer crimes, and were more likely to have graduated from high school than adults who did not attend pre-school.

Taking into account what was already known about the importance of early development, and in response to ongoing concerns and recognised failures in the existing systems, a range of reforms were implemented across services for children and families. This included the establishment of SureStart and the development of the Every Child Matters framework.

**SureStart and SureStart local programmes**

SureStart emerged from increasing concern about the effects of social exclusion on children’s life chances. Evidence shows that between the age of 22 months and 48 months the cognitive and physical development of children from different socio-economic backgrounds begins to drift apart, so that by the age of six children from the most deprived backgrounds are often already caught in a cycle of low achievement (Anning and Ball, 2008). SureStart was a radical attempt to change the life chances of these children by supporting their early development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social exclusion</td>
<td>The process whereby certain groups are pushed to the margins of</td>
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<td></td>
<td>society and prevented from participating fully by virtue of</td>
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<td></td>
<td>their poverty, low education or inadequate lifeskills.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This distances them from job, income and education opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>as well as social and community networks. They have little</td>
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<td></td>
<td>access to power and decision-making bodies and little chance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>of influencing decisions or policies that affect them, and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>little chance of bettering their standard of living.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.cpa.ie/povertyinireland/glossary.htm#s">www.cpa.ie/povertyinireland/glossary.htm#s</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic</td>
<td>A way of classifying people that groups them with others of</td>
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<tr>
<td>group</td>
<td>similar social and economic status. The classifications are</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>used by the Office for National Statistics.</td>
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The SureStart initiative adopted a holistic approach. Their approach was based on the understanding that the best outcomes for children happen when families, communities and local services for children work together to support children’s early growth and development. The aim therefore was to involve all the people around a child to work
together to support their early learning and development. The theoretical model that informed this approach was Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model of child development (Anning and Ball, 2008). Bronfenbrenner’s model shows how children’s development is nested within the context of the family, community, settings and services, and wider social and historical influences. SureStart local programmes were set up in specifically targeted areas of deprivation. They were required to provide a range of services in the home and community to encourage parents to understand and support the development of their children. The programmes were given significant freedoms to design what they would offer. A key feature of the initiative was that local communities were involved in decision making, management and delivery of the services in partnership with other stakeholders such as education, health and social services. This was a new way of working. For the first time providers of services for children were required to work together in partnership, and alongside families and communities, to meet the needs of children and their families. This multi-agency approach was reflected in the ‘core services’ that the early SureStart programmes had to offer (Anning and Ball, 2008). These included:

- outreach and home visiting;
- support for families and parents;
- good-quality play, early learning experiences and childcare;
- healthcare and support for children and their families;
- support for children with additional needs and their families.

**THEORY FOCUS**

**Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model of child development**

4 Micro-system: for example, the playgroup, pre-school education, childcare or childminder setting where the child actively experiences a particular pattern of events, roles and interpersonal relationships.

3 Meso-system: interrelations between two or more settings in which the child actively participates – for example, home and nursery, childminder and playgroup.

2 Exo-system: settings that do not involve the child as an active participant but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the micro-systems – for example, local authority systems or inspection structures.

1 Macro-system: historical/social/cultural/ecological environments at national policy level.

Figure 2.1 Historical/cultural influences on services for the developing child (Anning and Ball, 2008)

Bronfenbrenner’s model (Figure 2.1) shows how children’s development is nested within the context of the family, community, settings and services, and wider social and historical influences.
It was anticipated that these programmes and services would provide well-targeted support and guidance for parents and communities and in doing so enhance the life chances of children. The National Evaluation of SureStart (NESS) ran until 2012 with the aim of assessing the work of SureStart services, including how services supported developmental outcomes for children. Overall, outcomes were mixed. Some benefits were identified but they were often disappointing in terms of child development. The reasons for the apparent lack of progress were wide-ranging and complex. Other evaluation and research continues to try and understand the processes, services and interventions for children and families that best support early development.

**ACTIVITY 1**

Look at the list of core services provided by SureStart programmes.

- How do these reflect the aspiration for services for children working together to support children’s development?
- In what ways do you think services working together will better support children’s learning and development?

**Every Child Matters**

In 2003 the government published a Green Paper called *Every Child Matters*. This was published in response to a report about the death of a young girl named Victoria Climbié. Lord Laming was appointed to investigate the circumstances leading to and surrounding her death. He was asked to make recommendations as to how such an event may be avoided in the future. The report concluded that there were gross failings of the system in place to protect and safeguard children. The inquiry made 108 recommendations which resulted in fundamental changes to services for children in England.

The Every Child Matters Green Paper aimed to address the recommendations in the report and the government consulted widely on their ideas for reform. Following consultation the necessary legislation was passed in the Children Act in 2004 and the framework *Every child matters: Change for children* was published in November 2004.

The Every Child Matters framework adopted an integrated approach to supporting the development and well-being of children and young people. The framework set out the aspirations for all children. *The five outcomes* were: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, achieve economic well-being.

All organisations that worked with children and young people, aged from birth to nineteen, were required to work together to achieve these outcomes for the children and their families. This marked a change in the way that provision had been organised. Services for children that had previously worked in different and separate ways now had to develop ways to work together to respond to the needs of children and their families. This included health, education and social services as well as the police and criminal justice system.
Following the change of governments in 2010 and 2015 this policy of working together to achieve the best outcomes for children remains an important principle underpinning work with children and families. There have been changes to how services are provided and funded, including a greater emphasis on targeted rather than universal provision, but the fundamental aim of supporting the education, health and well-being of children to enable them to reach their potential and make a positive contribution to society remains the cornerstone of provision in early years.

Creating evidence to inform policy

In addition to existing evidence on the impact of early learning on children’s development the Labour government commissioned their own research to investigate the effects of pre-school education and explore the characteristics of effective practice: the EPPE study (The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education). The study ran from 1997 to 2003. The study found that attending pre-school had many beneficial effects on children’s development, particularly for children who came from disadvantaged backgrounds. The study also found that integrated settings, those that provided education and care, were most effective in supporting development and achieving good outcomes for children. Outcomes from the study have been highly influential in informing early years policy and practice.

**THEORY FOCUS**

**The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) study**

Key findings on the effects of pre-school at age five and also at age seven:

- **Impact of attending a pre-school – lasting effects**
  - Pre-school experience, compared to none, enhances all-round development in children
  - The duration of attendance is important, with an earlier start being related to better intellectual development
  - Disadvantaged children in particular can benefit significantly from quality pre-school experiences.

- **Does type of pre-school matter?**
  - Taking account of a child’s background and prior intellectual skills the type of pre-school a child attends has an important effect on developmental progress. EPPE found that integrated centres (these are centres that fully combine education with care and have a high proportion of trained teachers) and nursery schools (who also have trained teachers) tend to promote the strongest intellectual outcomes for children
  - Similarly, fully integrated settings and nursery classes (in school) tend to promote better social development even after taking account of children’s backgrounds and prior social development.

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Chapter 2  The current policy context of early years

**THEORY FOCUS continued**

- **Effects of quality**
  - Pre-school quality was significantly related to children’s scores on standardised tests of reading and maths at age six
  - Settings that have staff with higher qualifications have higher quality scores and their children make more progress.
- **The importance of home learning**
  - The quality of the home learning environment promotes more intellectual and social development than parental occupation or qualification.

Sylva and Pugh (2005)

The children from the initial study have now been tracked across all four stages of education and post-16 years old. Outcomes are reported in two studies: The Effective Pre-School Primary and Secondary Education project 3–14 (EPPSE) 2007–2011 (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, Taggart, 2012) and EPPSE 16+ 2008–2013 (IOE, ND).

Creating policy from evidence

The policy of providing services and frameworks to support children’s early learning and development is evident in a range of initiatives in early years. These include the development of children’s centres, the establishment of the Early Years Professional Status (EYPS: now Early Years Teacher (EYT)), and a range of frameworks to support practice and monitor the quality of provision, including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and OFSTED frameworks for inspection.

**Children’s centres**

Children’s centres emerged from the SureStart model of providing targeted local services for children and families. Before the initial planned ten years of SureStart local programmes had come to an end government policy changed. The new policy was to establish a children’s centre in every community. These centres planned to bring together all services for young children and families at one point of contact. This included pre-school education, health and social care services, and training, employment and job advice. The centres were initially situated in areas with high indices of deprivation. The aims behind the children’s centres were the same as the SureStart local programmes: to provide support and advice to families to enable them to support their child’s early development and so offer them a good start in life. It was anticipated that these services would be universal by 2010: all communities would have a children’s centre.

<table>
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<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Indices of deprivation</td>
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<td>The Index of Multiple Deprivation combines a number of indicators, chosen to cover a range of economic, social and housing issues, into a single deprivation score for each small area in England. This allows each area to be ranked relative to one another according to their level of deprivation.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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The change of governments in 2010 and 2015 marked changes in policy on children’s centres. The government continued to support early years through the work in children’s centres but with a different focus. There was no longer an aim for universal provision but for more targeted support in areas judged to have the greatest need. These core purposes were developed in response to the Tickell review of early years, which reiterated the significance of the early years as a firm foundation for life. These core purposes were reflected in the revised Early Years Foundation Stage (2012) (updated in 2014) which had a new structure of prime and specific subjects, a fewer number of learning outcomes and a different assessment structure (see below and Chapter 5).

The latest statutory guidance on children’s centres (DFE, 2013) reaffirms that the support services that children’s centres provide should be targeted rather then universal. Their core purpose (p.7) is identified as improving outcomes for children and their families to reduce inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers in:

- child development and school readiness;
- parenting aspirations and parenting skills;
- child and family health and life chances.

This refocus of the provision in children’s centres is confirmed by Hall et al., whose review of the services offered by English SureStart centres concluded that:

A picture of broad stability was observed in the numbers of services that centres reported offering. However, some Children’s Centres also appeared to be changing the focus of the services that they provided. Some centres seemed to be shifting towards providing greater outreach (rather than parent-support) and services which were targeted (rather than universal).

Hall et al. (2015, p.89)

The future of children’s centres

Barnardo’s (2014) report What are children’s centres for? raises a number of concerns about the role and purpose of children’s centres. It argues that those interested in the future of children’s centres need to better define their role and purpose in order to move the debate beyond whether they are needed, towards how they can work better. It recognises that there is a risk to the continued existence of children’s centres as the political landscape changes, and funding is increasingly reduced. Barnardo’s make a number of recommendations about how children’s centres can become embedded in service delivery and secure their future. It proposes that children’s centres need to become identified as the ‘early help’ service and argue that there should be a greater focus on early intervention, remodelled and focused as the principal means by which vital preventative services can be accessed (p.6). Additionally, it suggests that children’s centres should extend their target age group from 0–5 years to conception to age five. In this way, they reclaim their core purpose. Finally, Barnardo’s argues that children’s centres should be placed on a statutory footing akin to schools to create a more integrated service delivery pattern from conception to eighteen years old.
ACTIVITY 2

Make sure that you understand the changes in the focus of funded early years services in children’s centres.

• What do you think are the benefits of universal provision? What are the benefits of targeted provision? Think about the whole range of issues involved: economic, political, social and moral.

• Why do you think Barnardo’s has proposed these changes? What are the benefits? What are the potential issues with its suggestions?

Early Years Teacher (EYT) (formerly Early Years Professional Status (EYPS))

The changing pattern of provision in early years has involved a reconfiguration of the workforce. Children’s services require a range of different roles to fulfil the aim of supporting children and families effectively and improving outcomes for children. The Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC) was responsible, until 2012, for developing the workforce in early years to match the requirements in the sector.

The EPPE study concluded that outcomes for children were best in settings led by a graduate. The aim is therefore to create a graduate-led early years workforce. A number of changes in higher education flowed from this aspiration. Early Childhood Studies degrees were designed to offer the breadth of understanding required to work with young children and their families. Early Years Teacher (formerly Early Years Professional Status) was developed as a competency-based, postgraduate qualification with candidates demonstrating their own understanding of effective early years practice and their ability to lead and manage the practice of others and the setting.

Professor Cathy Nutbrown undertook a review (2012) of early education and childcare qualifications. Nutbrown (2012, p.10) set out her vision for the early childhood education and care, namely:

• every child is able to experience high-quality care and education whatever type of home or group setting they attend;

• early years staff have a strong professional identity, take pride in their work, and are recognised and valued by parents, other professionals and society as a whole;

• high-quality early education and care are led by well-qualified early years practitioners;

• the importance of childhood is understood, respected and valued.

In line with this vision, Nutbrown made a series of recommendations to the government about changes that she regards as necessary to achieve this. It was anticipated that this would result in significant changes in the early years workforce, and proposed changes were set out in the government document ‘More Great Childcare’ (DFE, 2013). Many of the changes suggested by Nutbrown were accepted in principle by
the government, with the intention to consult, review and work towards change. Changes that have been implemented include the introduction of the early years teacher the early years Educator qualifications.

**Activity 3**

*Read through the EPPE research outcomes and the sections on children’s centres, Early Years Foundation Stage and Early Years Teacher.*

- In what ways has the EPPE research influenced early years policy?
- How might these initiatives enhance children’s early development?
- How may positive early development enhance the life chances of children?

*Read the foreword and executive summary of the Nutbrown review, available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/nutbrown-review-foundations-for-quality*

- How do her recommendations map to the findings of the EPPE study?
- How may her recommendations enhance the development of young children?
- What is your view of her recommendations? Give reasons for your view.

**An evidence base for policy and practice**

There has been a distinct move towards the notion of informing policy by research evidence. So, instead of policy makers making decisions based on ideology, their decisions can be informed by what is known about children and their families. Of course, politicians do not always choose to follow the available evidence, or they are selective about what they choose to use as evidence, but nevertheless there is an increasing body of research evidence for them to draw on. The focus of research is to provide evidence about the best way to do things. Research is undertaken predominantly in universities and research institutes, often in collaboration with people working in settings, school and children’s services. It is published online and in research journals. The studies published range from single, small-scale studies, to large meta analysis; they may be completed by a single researcher, a group within one or more universities or even a collaboration between researchers across continents. What all these studies do is contribute to our knowledge about what we do with, and for, children and their families.

**Definition**

| **Ideology** | A system of ideas and ideals, especially ones which form the basis of economic or political theory and policy. |
| **Meta analysis** | A statistical technique for combining the findings from a number of independent studies. |
This evidence is available to students, as college and university libraries will subscribe to the research journals. Some of this research evidence is also available to practitioners working in early years. For example:

- Education Endowment Foundation has an Early Years Toolkit that provides research-based evidence on a range of early years issues such as approaches to communication and language, social and emotional learning strategies and parental engagement.

- National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) has published research on effective leadership in children’s centres and narrowing the gap on outcomes for young children through effective practice in the early years. This research provides valuable evidence about ways to enhance and develop practice in the early years.

- Joseph Rowntree Foundation works for social change in the UK. They produce research across a range of issues in the early years aiming to influence policy, practice and public debate.

- National Children’s Bureau is a children’s charity that works to improve the lives of children and young people, especially the most vulnerable. They produce research across a range of areas in early years and use their research to influence government policy and be a strong voice for young people and practitioners.

- Sutton Trust aim to improve social mobility through education. They are a think tank, fund programmes, and commission research studies aiming to influence government education policy.

**Frameworks for practice**

**The Early Years Foundation Stage**

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is the statutory framework for the Foundation Stage. It became a requirement from September 2008 in all OFSTED registered settings. The initial framework replaced the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation stage, Birth to Three Matters and the National Standards for under 8s Daycare and childminding with a single framework for children from birth to five. The framework set out the legal requirements relating to learning and development and the welfare of children. This framework was replaced in 2012 by a revised framework. The revised framework emerged from the Tickell review which published its findings in 2011: The Early Years: Foundations for life, health and learning. The review made 46 recommendations which included:

- that language and communication, physical and social and emotional development should form the prime areas of learning in the Foundation Stage;

- that there should be a new assessment of a child’s learning between 24 and 36 months to identify any emerging difficulties;

- that the existing early learning goals should be reduced and simplified;

- that there should be greater emphasis on working in partnership with parents.
These recommendations were accepted and included in the revised Early Years Foundation Stage (2012). Requirements were updated in 2014.

Learning and development in the EYFS is structured around three prime and four specific areas of learning and safeguarding and welfare standards:

**Prime areas:**
- personal social and emotional development;
- physical development;
- communication and language.

**Specific areas:**
- literacy;
- maths;
- understanding the world;
- expressive arts and design.

**Safeguarding and welfare standards:**
- child protection;
- suitable people;
- staff qualifications, training, support and skills;
- key person;
- staff:child ratios;
- health;
- managing behaviour;
- safety and suitability of premises, environment and equipment;
- special educational needs;
- information and records.

The EYFS provides a framework for practitioners that outlines typical developmental progress towards a series of Early Learning Goals. The framework offers advice on how to provide opportunities to support children’s development towards these goals through the development of positive relationships and an enabling environment. Early years practitioners are required to use play as the vehicle for learning in their settings, and to use observation of children for assessing their learning and development. Practitioners are required to complete a progress check in the prime areas for each two-year-old child, and discuss the assessment with parents. There is also an Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) that settings can choose to use. This profile is non-statutory from 2016 but has proved to be a useful tool for practitioners to monitor and track children’s progress towards the Early Learning Goals.
From September 2016 schools that have opted to be assessed on progress will complete a baseline assessment in the first few weeks of a child’s Reception year (FS2). This is a statutory requirement for these schools which will monitor children’s progress to be tracked from Foundation Stage through to the end of KS2.

**OFSTED**

The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) is an independent organisation that regulates and inspects services for children and young people, and for adult learners. It publishes the outcomes of its inspections as reports that are publically available. All early years settings in the private voluntary and independent sector (PVI sector) and all childminders must register with OFSTED. OFSTED inspects these registered early years settings and make judgements on the quality of the provision. These judgements are published in its reports.

**ACTIVITY 4**

Look at the Early Years Foundation Stage (2014).

There are now three prime and four specific areas of learning.

- What do you think about the choices that have been made about which are prime areas and which are specific?
- Why do you think that these ones were chosen?
- What are the implications for practitioners of this particular emphasis on certain areas in young children’s learning?

Look at the development matters charts. Advice on what adults could do and what adults could provide is outlined under the headings of positive relationships and enabling environments.

- How could you use this information in a setting?
- What are the implications for practice and provision of providing this sort of information? How does it support practice and provision? How may it restrict practice and provision?
- What are the implications for professional development of providing such information? How may it inform professional development? How may it restrict professional development?

**CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In this chapter we have considered the policy context of early years: how governments’ focus on early years has resulted in a wide range of policy, guidance and workforce development initiatives. It is clear that these initiatives have been developed from a commitment to evidence that identifies the best ways in which to
support young children and their families. This research is published in research journals and available to early years students through college and university libraries. Some of this evidence is available online to early years practitioners. The shifting emphasis and focus in provision of services and education for our youngest children has been outlined, and the main initiatives have been identified. However, despite this strong focus on early years there are significant concerns about the direction of recent policy and practice. Chapter 10 Thinking, questioning and challenging: a critical approach to early years discusses some of these issues.

References


Chapter 2  The current policy context of early years


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