

Professionalism in the early years

A policy update

MMU Early Years Conference

Dr Gillian Pugh DBE

6th May 2006



The broad government policy agenda

- Reducing child poverty
- Improving support for families
- Reducing social exclusion
- Strengthening communities
- Improving health
- Raising educational standards
- Improving access to work
- Public service reform
- Basing services on what consumers want and evidence of what works
- Joined up thinking and joined up services
- Participation of children and young people in decision making

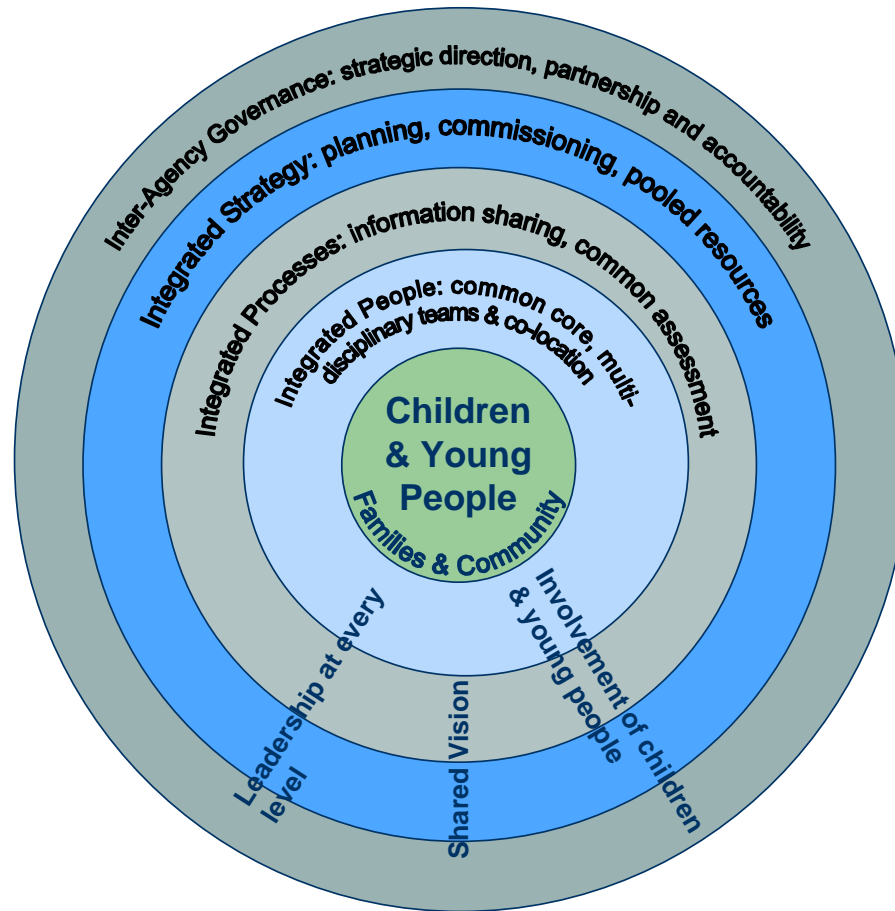
Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme

- Improving outcomes for all children, and narrowing the gap between those who do well and those who do not
 - Stay safe
 - Be healthy
 - Enjoy and achieve
 - Make a positive contribution
 - Achieve economic well being
- Improving and integrating universal services
- More specialist help to promote opportunity and prevent problems
- Reconfiguring services around child and family
- Sharing responsibility for safeguarding children

The long term vision

- Developing integrated education, childcare, health and social care, including family support services 0 – 19 through
 - Children’s centres
 - Extended schools
 - Improved services for young people
- With better support for parents
- Provided by appropriately qualified staff
- And more effective interplay between universal and specialist services

Children's trusts involve...



Source: DfES

Children's trusts as catalysts for local change

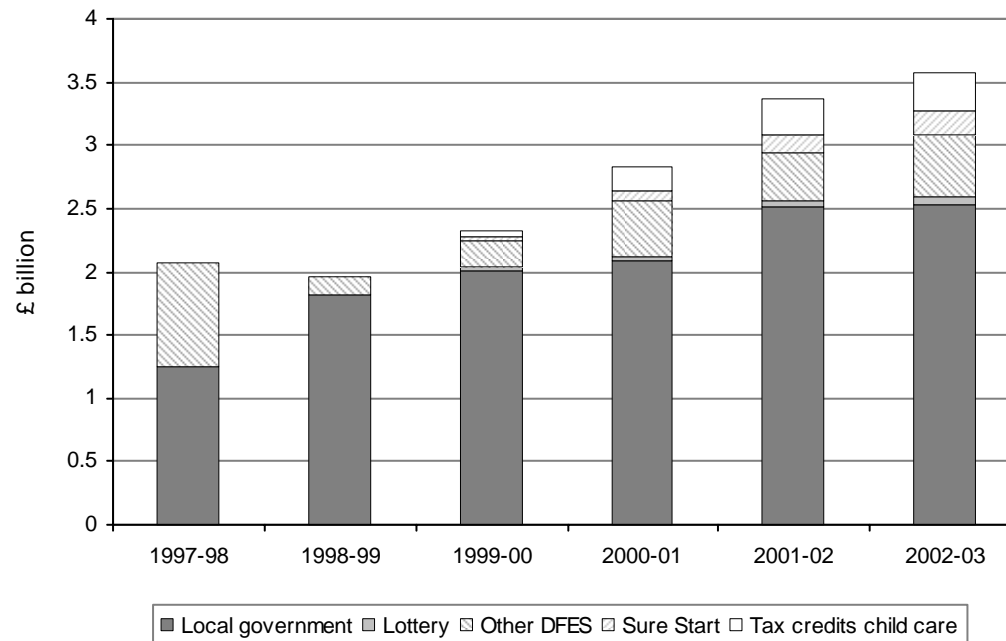
- Children and young people at the centre
- Integrated people = staff trained with a common core, multi-disciplinary teams, co-location and a lead professional
- Integrated processes – information sharing and common assessment
- Integrated systems – planning and commissioning with pooled resources
- Inter-agency governance – director of children's services and lead member for children's services
- AND integrated inspection against all five outcomes

Growth and development of services for young children

- Huge strides forward since the Rumbold report in 1990
- Importance of the early years is now recognised by senior politicians and is part of government policy
- Separate services and responsibilities for education and care have been brought together – services, curriculum, inspection
- Vision for early excellence centres was one we fought for from the 1970s
- Sure Start has been widely welcomed
- Massive expansion in provision, both free nursery education and extended day provision
- 2004 – OECD commends England for “tremendous progress”

Expenditure on early years 1997 – 2003

National Audit Office 2004



Early education is now a legal requirement

- The 2005 Childcare Bill places a duty on local authorities to secure sufficient childcare for working parents and to ensure services are integrated
- New legal framework for integrated framework for regulation and inspection of early education and childcare services

Childcare Bill 2005

- Duty on local authorities to improve well being of children and reduce inequalities
- Duty on local authorities to secure sufficient childcare for working parents and may make arrangements for others to provide it
- Duty to make arrangements to ensure services are integrated
- Duty to provide information, advice and assistance to parents and childcare providers
- All providers must be registered, must follow the Early Years Foundation Stage and must meet welfare regulations

Children's centres

- Free education/care for all 3 and 4 year olds, 15 hours a week, 38 weeks a year
- A children's centre in every community by 2010 (some virtual)
- Children's centres will include
 - Early education and childcare places in group settings, with childminders and at home
 - Parenting and family support
 - Health advice
 - Preventive services to support additional needs, including outreach work
 - Support for parents moving into training and work

Choice for parents, the best start for children: a ten year strategy for childcare 2004

Early years is central to the children's agenda

- Early years services seen as a key to reducing child poverty
- The Every Child Matters agenda, requiring integrated working and joined up services in order to improve outcomes for children, builds on good practice in the early years
- The Childcare Bill requires local authorities to improve outcomes for children and reduce the gap between those who do well and those who do not
- There is a child-centred focus on making a difference for children
- There is a legal requirement for service providers to work together

Policy has taken account of the research evidence

- Research studies have been taken into account in developing the ECM agenda, including Sure Start and children's centres
 - EPPE (Effective Provision of Preschool Education) – quality of provision, importance of well trained staff, key role of teachers, involvement of parents
 - Prevention and early intervention
 - Sure Start evaluation
 - Research into brain development and early attachments
 - Research into children's learning

Parents are seen as important

- There is now much wider recognition of the key role that parents play in bringing up their children, and of the need to provide them with appropriate support so they can do this effectively.
- Parenting Fund and the proposed National Parenting Academy bring additional funding to support parents

Quality is key

- The *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* and *Birth to Three Matters* have been developed by good practitioners and have been widely welcomed
- Staff working in early years services are seen as the highest priority in the government's workforce strategy. The common core for training, and the integrated qualifications framework will provide a much improved career pathway for early years workers to become graduate practitioners.

Proposals from the Children's Workforce Development Council – March 2006

Developing the Early Years workforce proposals from CWDC/TDA

- A new Early Years Professional, a graduate at level 6, equivalent status to QTS to lead the delivery of the new Early Years Foundation Stage
- Early years teachers and others to “top up” their current qualifications
- Early years professionals to be in all children's centres by 2010 and all full day care settings by 2015
- All staff in full day care settings to be at level 3 by 2015
- All supervisors in full, sessional and out of school care to be at level 3 in due course
- Increasing numbers of managers to qualify with NPQICL
- Transformation fund of £125m to support training

Standards for early years professionals

- Graduate level 6, equivalent to QTS
- Includes
 - Professional responsibilities – values, effective communication and engagement, working with others, improving practice
 - Professional knowledge – child development, Early Years Foundation Stage, effective practice
 - Leading practice in the EYFS – including assessing, monitoring and giving feedback, and reviewing and evaluating practice
- Out for consultation until the end of May (www.cwdcouncil.org.uk)
- Consultation meetings 9 May (Leeds) & 18 May (London)

BUT

A flawed vision, where quality is at risk

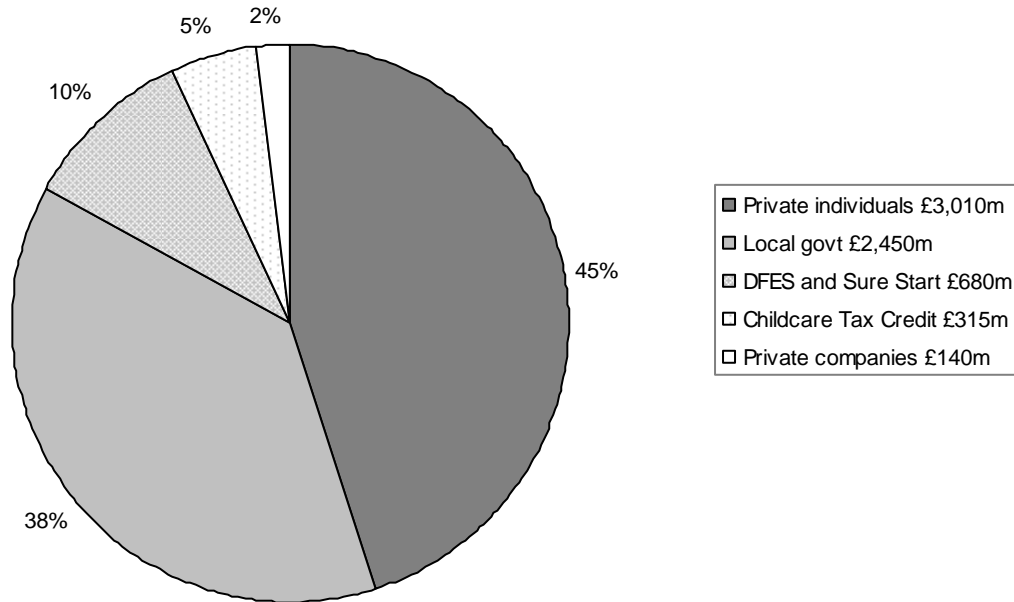
- In the rush to expand quantity, quality is at risk
- There is no coherent view about what integrated early education and care should look like and be called
- The foundation stage is to be separated off from the national curriculum, endangering continuity with key stage 1
- The literacy and numeracy strategies are pushing down into the foundation stage, and the Rose report on reading does not reflect best practice in the early years
- There is still no widespread understanding of how young children learn
- The outcomes focus on “readiness for school” is unhelpful
- How does the early years agenda fit with the schools White Paper?

Inadequate funding and poor sustainability

- Funding is still far from adequate, and parents pay the majority of the costs
- Nearly half as many nurseries close each year as the number that are opened
- Because of the challenge of sustainability, are places going to the neediest children, or those whose parents can pay?
- Despite the new requirements on local authorities, they are not expected to provide early years services themselves, nor is additional funding being made available.
- Funding for family support is at risk

How early years provision is paid for

National Audit Office 2004



Virtual children's centres

- Most children's centres will be “virtual” – providing information. Only 30% will provide the full offer, and the funding will be less than the current early excellence centres enjoy. The guidance suggests they should offer
 - Integrated care and education
 - A childminders network
 - Parenting education and family support services
 - Education, training and employment services
 - Health services

A confused view of parents

- Government policy seems to have a confused view of parents – they are to be given choice, and to be involved in planning services, but there is a strong view of parents as purveyors of better educated and better behaved children, with punishments for those who fail in this task
- Parents are feeling under pressure to return to work, but also to be better parents

Workforce issues

- The early years workforce is poorly paid and under qualified. Less than half of staff in day nurseries are at NVQ level 3, and there is minimal teacher involvement in many nurseries.
- There is a split in the workforce, reflecting the split between day care and education, with teachers being the responsibility of the TDA and other early years workers the responsibility of the Children's Workforce Development Council.
- Is there sufficient funding to roll out the proposed workforce reforms?
- Will there be any teachers left working in early years if they all have to become early years professionals?
- Will the status of EYPs be matched with appropriate pay and conditions?

In summary

- There is much to celebrate in what has been achieved over the past eight years and early years has led the way on ECM
- Much of the vision is good, and there is a real commitment to greater social equality
- But the investment is insufficient, both in provision and in the workforce
- There is lack of clarity about the foundation stage as the first phase of education and the danger that the early years could be separated off and seen as a second class service
- The child-centred Every Child Matters agenda is in danger of being hijacked by the public service reform agenda
- It is difficult to balance what is good for children with what parents need if they are to balance work and family

Some questions

- Is the focus on improving outcomes for all children going to improve services for children under five?
- Should all early years teachers become early years professionals?
- How will the Early Years Foundation Stage feed into KS1 if it is no longer the responsibility of QCA?
- How can early years practitioners know they are improving outcomes for young children? What methods of assessment are appropriate?
- Is the current emphasis on parental choice (eg over flexibility of hours) compatible with best practice for children?
- Has government struck the right balance between requiring parents to work and supporting them to care for their children?