

Our manifesto



Who are we?

A group of dedicated professionals

TACTYC was founded in 1978 by a group of lecturers on postgraduate Early Years courses who recognised how isolated they were feeling in their work and how supportive and developmental it could be to come together with others in a similar position on a regular basis. Today, TACTYC has broadened its base to welcome a diverse range of ECEC professionals who are 'Together And Committed To Young Children'. Our mission is to offer professional support and guidance to all those who work with young children: researchers; education consultants; professionals working with children and families in day-care, education, health, play work and social service contexts; and students studying at all levels.



Why a manifesto?

To inform policy makers

A highly skilled, highly qualified workforce can have a significant impact on children's long-term outcomes and on the economic wellbeing of the country (DfE, 2023). However, England has one of the least qualified Early Years workforces in the developed world (Christie & Co, 2019). Successive studies have noted that the isolation that led to the foundation of TACTYC is still very much a part of the everyday experience not only of lecturers but of people at every level of the profession (Moyle, 2001, Allingham 2009, Veale 2023).

As members of a professional organisation concerned with the development of the Early Years workforce, we know that professional development underpins provision of the best possible early educational experiences for young children. The aim of this manifesto is to inform policy related to ethical, inclusive professional practice with young children.



An Overview of our Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Acknowledge the importance of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and appreciate the value of investing in the ECEC profession.

Recommendation 3

Recognise that professional development is a continuum, from support for unqualified assistants to doctoral level study.

Recommendation 2

Acknowledge and celebrate the specialist knowledge base which underpins high quality professional practice.

Recommendation 4

Celebrate and promote diversity at all levels of the ECEC workforce

Recommendation 1

Acknowledge the importance of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and appreciate the value of investing in the ECEC profession.

Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support needed to reach their full potential (DfE 2024). The Royal Foundation (2024:12) recognises that this critical stage of development shapes future success in learning and life. Nobel-prize winning economist James Heckman found that ‘the highest rates of return in education can come from the earliest investments.’ The Royal Foundation (2024) calculates that investing in early childhood in the UK could generate an extra £45.5 billion for the national economy each year but that the full range of benefits is much broader, accumulating over time with transformative intergenerational impact.

Research from the OECD (2011) shows that staff with higher level qualifications are more able to deliver the high-quality provision that leads to improvements in children’s wellbeing and their social and academic outcomes This has also been acknowledged by Ofsted (2023). There can be no doubt that an investment in the ECEC workforce is not just a way to support working parents today, but an investment in our nation that will pay dividends in the future.

Even the most competent and well qualified practitioners can only offer high quality education and care to a limited number of children and the ratio of adults to children is a crucial factor in enabling effective interactions to take place (DfE 2024). We would urge the incoming government to review ratios alongside levels of qualifications in order to ensure the best possible start for all children.

Recommendation 2

Acknowledge and celebrate the specialist knowledge base which underpins high quality professional practice.

Pascal et al (2020:3) point out that “a knowledgeable, capable and stable workforce, supported by strong leaders, is crucial in delivering quality provision.” Appropriate training and professional development not only deepens understanding of how to provide effective support for early learning and development, but also promotes professional confidence and autonomy (Bamsey et al., 2020: 8). However, this professional development must be informed by the specialist knowledge which underpins Early Years pedagogy.

There has been little progress towards the ambition to make Early Years a graduate led profession, which was expressed in the 2017 Early Years Workforce strategy (DfE 2017). While Early Years specific degree level qualifications exist, these are not awarded with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and those who achieve them are not permitted to lead provision in Maintained Early Years settings. As a result, the majority of Nursery and Reception teachers will have followed Primary Education pathways which may not have contained sufficient focus on early childhood development to fully prepare teachers for professional practice in ECEC (Nutbrown, 2012). The need to review how graduates are prepared for professional practice in ECEC remains pressing.

Unfortunately, funding issues continue to mean that, while the impact of well qualified adults on the quality of ECEC is well documented, many settings are forced to continue to employ unqualified staff to remain financially viable. Alongside a commitment to grow and develop a graduate led ECEC workforce, our recommendation is that all those who work with young children should have a sound understanding of the theory and research which underpins the statutory framework, regardless of what level of qualification they are working towards. This requires a commitment to investment not only in ECEC as infrastructure to support the employment of qualified staff, but also to funding accredited qualifications designed to enhance sector specific professional development at all levels.

Recommendation 3

Recognise that professional development is a continuum, from support for unqualified assistants to doctoral level study.

The DfE's statutory framework (DfE, 2024) states, that providers must support their staff in undertaking appropriate training and professional development opportunities, to ensure the continuous improvement in the quality of learning and development experiences for children. The Early Years Inspection Handbook (Ofsted 2024) notes that, in outstanding settings, 'Practitioners' subject knowledge and pedagogic proficiency consistently builds and develops over time, and this consistently translates into improvements in teaching. Indeed, PACEY (2018) found that those working in outstanding settings were likely to have had over 20 hours of continuing professional development (CPD) each year.

Opportunities for CPD not only enhance practice but also increase job satisfaction and support retention (Enser and Enser, 2021). Through these opportunities, ECEC professionals are able to keep up-to-date with new research on effective practice; build networks and share good practice (Callanen et al, 2017).

Mathers et al. (2024) argue that CPD for those working with children under three is most effective when it is closely linked to actual practice. On-site support, coaching and mentoring are more effective than more generalised taught sessions which practitioners are then expected to adapt to their own contexts. Young (2010) insists that professional development should be seen as an ongoing reflective process which builds expertise. and, as professionals gain experience, opportunities for them to engage as active and reflexive agents in collective reflection and professional dialogue are likely to be more effective than 'training' focused on compliance with external directives (Simpson, 2010, Carruthers, 2024).

Recommendation 3 continued...

Reflective practice supported by experienced mentors is pivotal in the development of expertise (Shanks, 2017; Siraj and Hallet, 2013; Aubrey, 2011; Moyles, Adams and Musgrove, 2002; Schön, 1983). Just as with other esteemed professions like medicine and law, teachers in the first years of their career require high quality, structured support in order to begin the journey towards becoming an expert. Developing an inquisitive mindset and regularly questioning practice are essential. Engaging with and in research as part of reflective practice enables those working with young children to develop their expertise (Pascal and Bertram, 2012, Carruthers 2025) and to initiate transformative changes which improve the way individual children experience ECEC.

Promoting professional autonomy must be a priority for the future development of support for professional learning. More emphasis and future funding would be best placed in supporting ECEC professionals as researchers, learning from their own practice and with their colleagues and, as a result, refining their ability to make professional decisions about what is best for the particular children they are working with. This approach can be described as praxeology: an ongoing engagement in practice led research (Pascal and Bertram, 2012). This of course is a challenge as it requires a slow form of professional development (Carruthers, 2024) the results of which may not be quickly realised but which may have longer lasting benefits.

Funding for CPD is crucial, as it allows professionals at different levels to share their expertise and experiences, enabling settings to develop into vibrant communities of practice committed to developing quality and expertise. Our recommendation is that all ECEC professionals should be supported in practice by mentors with recent, relevant experience and encouraged to engage with funded professional development projects that allow them to continue to develop their expertise. We would strongly recommend that the framework of continuing professional development should include study accredited at masters and doctoral level, to raise the status of the profession while ensuring the knowledge base available for future policy is grounded in critical, informed professional practice.

Recommendation 4

Celebrate and promote diversity at all levels of the ECEC workforce

We live in a diverse society but this diversity is not reflected within the Early Years sector (Merrick 2022). Nutbrown (2012) has insisted that further research is needed to address this, but this has not been forthcoming. The statutory framework (DfE, 2024) explicitly acknowledges the importance of building strong partnerships between children and parents. This is particularly important in order to bridge cultural gaps for children and families from minority ethnic communities and, while the racial background of staff is not an issue in terms of the quality of care they provide, Merrick (2022) notes the importance of representation in ensuring a sense of belonging for children, families and professionals.

The importance of interaction and debate in the development of a strategy to encourage racial and cultural diversity has been understood to provide a valuable first step in exploring ethnicity in maintained nurseries (Tafeli, 1969). Significantly, Sakr, Dujczynski and Santos Pinto, (2022) highlight that when ethnicity is examined alongside levels of qualification, issues of representation and inequality become more marked, and they again identify the need for further research.

We urge the incoming government to review the data they collect about the early years workforce and how this is reported, while also drawing on research from within the sector which explores the lived experience of underrepresented groups. This evidence must inform strategies, policies and programmes to support the recruitment, retention and continuous professional development of underrepresented groups of practitioners. Extending the diversity of the ECEC workforce at all levels will contribute to the enrichment of our understanding of the richness and complexity of what is involved in working with a wide range of families and young children in a diverse society.

References

- Allingham, S. (2009). Early Years: Lost in translation? Available at: <https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/10337/> Accessed: 10/2/22.
- Archer, M. (2007). Making our way through the world: Human reflexivity and social mobility. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Baard, P. Deci, E. and Ryan, R. (2004). Intrinsic Need Satisfaction: A Motivational Basis of Performance and Well-being in Two Work Settings. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*. (34). pp.2045-2068)
- Bamsey, V., Georgeson, J. Healy, A. and Breandán ÓCaoimh, B. (2020) Mapping the landscape: practitioners views on the Early Years Foundation Stage. Watford: Early Education.
- Bonetti, S. (2019). The Early Years Workforce in England: A Comparative Analysis Using the Labour Force Survey. London: Education Policy Institute.
- Bolton, G. (2005) *Reflective Practice: Writing and professional development*. Second edition. London:Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Callanan, M., Anderson, M., Haywood, S., Hudson, R. and Speight, S. (2017) *Study of Early Education and Development: Good Practice in Early Education*. Research report. NatCen Social Research. Available at:https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a8061f4ed915d74e622e223/SEED__G_ood_Practice_in_Early_Education_-_RR553.pdf [Accessed 8-6-2024]C
- Carruthers, E. (2024) *Leading Organic Research and Enquiry in Schools and Early Years Settings: Teachers Reclaiming Pedagogy and Professionalism*. London:Routledge.
- Christie & CO. (2019) Early Childhood Education and Care: Workforce Trends and Associated factors. available at: [https://www.christie.com/getattachment/NewsResources/Publications/September-2019-\(1\)/Early-Childhood,-Education-Care-Workforce-Trends-A/C-Co-ECEC-Report-\(Pages\)-\(1\).pdf.aspx/?lang=en-GB&ext=.pdf](https://www.christie.com/getattachment/NewsResources/Publications/September-2019-(1)/Early-Childhood,-Education-Care-Workforce-Trends-A/C-Co-ECEC-Report-(Pages)-(1).pdf.aspx/?lang=en-GB&ext=.pdf) accessed: 6/11/19.
- DfE (Department for Education) (2017) *Early years workforce strategy*. Available at:<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-workforce-strategy> [Accessed 8-6-2024]
- DfE (Department for Education) (2024) *Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2> accessed 7-6-2024

References

Euade, T. (2011). *Thinking through pedagogy for primary and Early Years*. Exeter: Learning Matters.

Enser, Z. and Enser, M. (2021). *The CPD curriculum: creating conditions for growth*. Camarthen: Crown House Publishing Ltd.

Gov.UK (2023). *Childcare and Early Years providers survey*. Available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/childcare-and-early-years-provider-survey> (accessed, 7/6/24)

Gray, C. And MacBlain, S.F. (2015) *learning theories in childhood* (2nd edn). London: Sage.

Hardy, M. And Heyes, S. (1994) *Beginning Psychology: A Comprehensive Introduction to psychology* (4th edn). Oxford: Oxford University Press

MacNaughton, G. (2003) *shaping Early Childhood: Learners, curriculum and contexts*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

McDowell Clark, R. (2010) *Childhood in Society: for Early Childhood Studies*. Exeter: Learning Matters.

Mathers, S., Eisenstadt, N., Sylva, K., Soukakou, E. and Ereky-Steves, K. (2014) *Sound foundations: a review of research evidence on quality of early childhood education and care for children under three: implications for policy and practice*. Available at: [https://education.gov.scot/resources/sound-foundations-a-review-of-the-research-evidence-on-quality-of-early-childhood-education-and-care-for-children-under-three-implications-for-policy-and-practice-2014/#:~:text=and%20Childcare%20\(ELC\)-,What%20is%20this%3F,birth%20to%20three%20years%2Dold](https://education.gov.scot/resources/sound-foundations-a-review-of-the-research-evidence-on-quality-of-early-childhood-education-and-care-for-children-under-three-implications-for-policy-and-practice-2014/#:~:text=and%20Childcare%20(ELC)-,What%20is%20this%3F,birth%20to%20three%20years%2Dold). [Accessed 7-6-24].

Merrick, B. (2022). *Diversity in the early years workforce: new data but more is needed*. <https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/opinion/article/diversity-in-the-early-years-workforce-new-data-but-more-is-needed> Accessed 7/6/24.

Moyles, J. (2001). *Passion, paradox and professionalism in Early Years education*. *Early Years: An International Journal of Research and Development*. 21 (2) 81-95.

References

Moyles, J. Adams, S. and Musgrove, A. (2002). Using Reflective Dialogues as a Tool for Engaging with Challenges of Defining Effective Pedagogy. *Early Child Development and Care*. 172(5). pp. 463-478.

Nutbrown, C. (2012). Foundations for quality: The independent review of early education and childcare qualifications, final report. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175463/Nutbrown-Review.pdf Accessed: 22/7/22.

OECD (2011). Encouraging Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care. Available at: [https://www.oecd.org/general/searchresults/?q=Encouraging%20Quality%20in%20%20Early%20Childhood%20Education%20and%20Care%20\(ECEC\)&cx=012432601748511391518:xzeadub0b0a&cof=FORID:11&ie=UTF-8](https://www.oecd.org/general/searchresults/?q=Encouraging%20Quality%20in%20%20Early%20Childhood%20Education%20and%20Care%20(ECEC)&cx=012432601748511391518:xzeadub0b0a&cof=FORID:11&ie=UTF-8) Accessed on 7/6/24.

OECD. (2019). Good Practice for Good Jobs in Early Childhood Education and Care. Available at: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/good-practice-for-good-jobs-in-early-childhood-education-and-care_64562be6-en Accessed on 7/6/24.

Ofsted (2023) International perspectives on early years. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-perspectives-on-early-years/international-perspectives-on-early-years> accessed 7/6/24.

Ofsted (2024) *Early years inspection handbook*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-inspection-handbook-eif/early-years-inspection-handbook-for-ofsted-registered-provision-for-september-2023> [Accessed 8-6-2024]

Pascal, C., Bertram, T. and Cole-Albäck, A. (2020) *Early Years Workforce Review: revisiting the Nutbrown review - policy and impact*. London: The Sutton Trust

Royal Foundation of the Prince and Princess of Wales (2024) *Prioritising early childhood for a happier, healthier society: how businesses can drive, and benefit from, transformative change in the UK*. Report for The Royal Foundation of The Prince and Princess of Wales On behalf of The Business Taskforce for Early Childhood. London: Deloitte. Available at: <https://thebusinesscase.centreforearlychildhood.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Prioritising-early-childhood-for-a-happier-healthier-society-Report.pdf> accessed 7-6-24

References

- Ryan, R. and Deci, E. (2000). Self Determination Theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development and wellbeing. *American Psychologist*. 55 (1), p. 68-78.
- Sakr, M. Dujczynski, M. Santos Pinto, C. (2022). Ethnicity and the early years workforce: a census of staff in maintained nursery schools in England. <https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethnicity-the-early-years-workforce-a-census-of-staff-in-maintained-nursery-schools-in-england>
- Schön, D. (1983). *From Technical Rationality to Reflection in Action, The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, USA Basic Books.
- Shanks, R. (2017). Mentoring Beginning Teachers: Professional Learning for Mentees and Mentors. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*. 6 (3). pp. 158-163.
- Siraj I. and Hallet, E. (2013). *Effective and Caring Leadership in the Early Years*. London: Sage.
- Simpson, D. (2010). "Being Professional? Conceptualising Early Years Professionalism in England." *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* 18 (1): 5–14.
- Tafelj, H. (1969), Social categorization, English manuscript of "la categorisation Social". *In introduction a la psychologie Social*, ed. S. Moscoici, 1:272-302 paris larousse
- Timperley, H. (2011). *Realizing the Power of Professional Learning*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Veale, V. (2023). Right from the start: an exploration of the lived experiences of qualified teachers in maintained early years settings. Available at: <https://research.stmarys.ac.uk/id/eprint/6189/> accessed 11/6/24
- Young, M. (2010). Alternative educational futures for a knowledge society. *European Educational Research Journal*, 19 (1), pp. 1-12.

Get in touch

info@tactyc.org.uk

