

Early Childhood Policy and Practice in England: Twenty Years of Change

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Abstract

This article offers a chronological account and critical appraisal of changes to early childhood education and care (ECEC) services in England over the past 20 years. It describes the policy initiatives, educational interventions and research programmes introduced by successive governments that have effected significant changes to ECEC since 1990. The article covers four key areas: policies designed to reduce social inequality; the professionalisation of the children's workforce, and changing status of adults employed in pre-school education and care settings; changes to early years pedagogy and the early years curriculum; and finally how major research programmes such as the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) project and the Millennium Cohort Study have informed our understanding of the effects of social disadvantage and the characteristics of 'high-quality' pre-school provision that can alleviate this. There is now persuasive evidence that investment in state-maintained early education is highly cost effective, particularly for disadvantaged children. The current government, however, is shifting the burden of funding for professional training and high-quality integrated services for children and families from the state to the private and voluntary sectors. Time will tell if this is a backward step or movement in the right direction.

Key words: Early childhood; educational policy; educational intervention; England

Over the past 20 years, young children and families in the United Kingdom have experienced a series of significant changes in the organisation and quality of the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services offered to them. During this period, successive governments have initiated a string of strategic initiatives and policy developments that have improved the accessibility and quality of these services, particularly for parents and children living in areas of social deprivation. In this article, we offer a critical review of some of these initiatives and identify the major, government-funded reports and research programmes that have informed them. Our review will be necessarily selective and will focus on ECEC in England, as space does not permit comprehensive examination of related policies (such as those concerning healthcare and child protection), or those introduced elsewhere in the UK.ⁱ In addition, we draw on the views of a panel of prominent early years specialists convened to offer a critical evaluation of past and current changes to early years policy and practice in England. The panel, Carol Aubrey, Pat Broadhead, Tony Bertram, Debbie Castle, Jane Murray, Chris Pascal and Mary Wild,ⁱⁱ were invited to participate in an expert seminar held at the Warwick Institute of Education (WIE) in October 2012 that informed the content and direction of this paper. Panel members, and the postgraduate and early years practitioner audience discussed the impact of twenty years of policy change on:

- The levels of social inequality experienced by children and families in areas of social deprivation;
- The quality of the children's workforce; the experience and qualifications of adults employed in pre-school education and care settings;

- Early years pedagogy and the content of the early years curriculum;
- Our understanding of the influence of quality education and care during the pre-school period on developmental outcomes for children.

The seminar's purpose was to collect a body of informed and reflective opinion on these and other issues that would allow us to identify underlying issues relating to ECEC that remain unresolved. All panel members gave their permission for the views expressed at the seminar to be represented in this paper where appropriate, and have read and approved the seminar transcript, (WIES, 2012). Panel members' views on the issues above were analysed to identify crosscutting themes or lessons, which might emerge from their comments and reflections. In this paper, these issues will be discussed in turn.

Levels of Social Inequality

During the twentieth century, it became increasingly apparent that even in relatively affluent countries, differences in children's individual and family circumstances have long-lasting effects on their health, wellbeing and educational attainment. The introduction of welfare reform and other measures to reduce social inequality has been a priority for all political parties in the UK in recent years, particularly during the period 1997 – 2010, when the Labour Government was in office as Aubrey explains:

Tony Blair [the Prime Minister] said that it was his mission to eradicate poverty within a generation [and this led] within a year to a comprehensive spending review and a tranche of anti-poverty initiatives. Because central to the National Childcare Strategy (part of the Green Paper *Childcare Meeting the Challenge*,

1998) was [a focus] on increasing income for poor households and reducing the number of children growing up in families with no-one in work, so eliminating transmission of deprivation from childhood to adulthood. [New Labour] attempted to establish high-quality affordable childcare in every community to support parents into work or training.

(WIES 2012, 15-16)

Nevertheless, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) working paper, *Social Disadvantage and Educational Experiences*, (Machin 2006) reported that the adverse impact of poor socio-economic circumstances on young people's attainment was more marked in the UK than in any of the other 52 countries surveyed. Detailed analysis of the reasons for this lies beyond the scope of this paper. As Pascal points out, however, research evidence consistently demonstrates that children from low-income families are subject to deep seated structural, systemic inequalities that are socially disadvantageous, restrict growth and development and act as a break to social mobility, (Bertram and Pascal 2000). Pascal made this point most forcibly during the WIES expert seminar:

Inequality, the lack of social mobility remains a defining feature of English society, it has always been, it is, we are one of the most if not the most unequal societies in Europe, maybe in the developed world, we have the lowest levels of social mobility of any other country in the world.

(WIES 2012,18)

Of these systemic inequalities, Waldfogel and Washbrook (2010) argue that low income and adverse material circumstances are amongst the most significant. Using data from the UK, Millennium Cohort Survey of 12,644 British children born in 2000 - 01, they established robust, statistical associations between poverty and key aspects of cognitive development. Their analysis established that by 2005, over one

quarter of children in the Millennium Cohort lived in families with incomes below the average poverty threshold (after-tax income) of £16,500. By the time they were four to five years old, children in the lowest income band were on average 11 months behind children in the middle-income band in terms of expressive vocabulary, and five to six months behind on standardised, non-verbal tests of spatial ability and reasoning. High-level multivariate analyses allowed Waldfogel and Washbrook to establish four domains contributing to what they term the 'low- to middle-income gap' in children's cognitive performance: parenting and the home environment, family material circumstances, maternal and child health conditions and maternal employment and child care. A much clearer understanding of the relative contributions of these domains to the long-term outcomes for children's growth and development has emerged from this research. Evidence such as this, together with that of earlier longitudinal cohort studies from the US, suggests that some interventions are more likely than others to make a real contribution to reducing social inequality.

Although analysis of the Millennium Cohort Survey data is beginning to identify some of the key factors contributing to social disadvantage, British research into the effects of poverty and social deprivation on children's long-term development is a relatively recent enterprise. Successive governments, therefore, have drawn on evaluations of long-term, early intervention programmes, such as the US High/Scope Perry Preschool Program that has followed the lives of 123 children over 40 years from 1962 (Schweinhart and Weikart 2002; Schweinhart et al. 2005), and the Chicago Child-Parent Centre Program initiated in 1967 (Reynolds 1998). These evaluations have established that social and educational intervention for children and families during the pre-school period is highly cost effective in the long-term. The major goal of early childhood programs in the US has been to develop socially competent

children who, in the long term, would be able to meet family, school, and individual responsibilities. Drawing on meta-analyses of the extensive, US research literature, Reynolds (1998) identified eight essential principles of effective early intervention programs directly associated with both short- and long-term social competence and school success for economically disadvantaged children and families:

- (1) Target children and families at highest risk of educational underachievement;
- (2) Begin participation early during the pre-school period and continue into the school period;
- (3) Provide comprehensive child-development services;
- (4) Encourage active parental involvement in educational and care provision;
- (5) Adopt a child-centred, structured approach to the pre- and primary school curriculum;
- (6) Ensure small class sizes and teacher/child ratios;
- (7) Offer regular staff development and in-service training for qualified teachers;
- (8) Undertake systematic evaluation and monitoring.

The US experience demonstrated that high quality, pre-school education in combination with parental education could provide a solid foundation that allows children to succeed in life, to gain and retain employment, to enjoy stable relationships and to refrain from engaging in crime (Sylva 1994). In the early 1990s, these findings inevitably aroused the interest of the UK, Conservative Government. Their goals, however, were more economic than social, as they realised that not only was a well educated child likely to become a successful adult, but in the long run, effective pre-school education for four to five year-olds, coupled with good quality childcare for younger children would save the country money. As it was also apparent

that parental employment and child poverty trends were closely related, particularly for lone-parent families, a further benefit of pre-school education was that it allowed mothers to work, at least part-time. This, together with the desire of many women to return to work whilst their children were still very young, offered another potential boost to the economy.

At the time, as a report on ECEC in the United Kingdom by Bertram and Pascal (2000) revealed, preschool provision and childcare was extremely patchy. Some, (but by no means all) local education authorities offered pre-school provision for three to five year-olds in state-funded nurseries or nursery classes in primary schools. In other areas, parents had to rely on childcare offered by child-minders, relatives, or the private and voluntary sector. There was little regulation of the quality of services provided. Many women complained that they could not afford to return to work as private childcare provision was expensive and the few state nurseries were difficult to access. Against this background, the Conservative Government began to look closely at the systems in place for pre-school education. In 1993, John Patten, Secretary of State for Education, made one of its most controversial proposals. Denigrating working with children aged three to seven years to the level of unskilled childcare, he suggested the launch of a one-year course aimed at training mature non-graduates to teach nursery and infant classes by using their experience as mothers, as an excuse to forgo the usual degree requirement. Dubbed 'Mum's Army' by the media (Abrams 1993), the idea was castigated by the teaching unions who had fought hard to keep the graduate status of the teaching profession. Faced by such opposition, Patten was forced to abandon his plan.

Reforms introduced by the Conservative Government: 1990 – 1997

In 1989 the Minister of State for Education, Angela Rumbold, was asked to initiate an inquiry into the quality of educational experiences offered to three and four year-olds. Her instructions were to focus on the continuity of education in order to ensure a smooth transition to the 1997 National Curriculum. Her final report, *Starting with Quality* (DES) was published in 1990. The inclusion of early years academics on the working party ensured that its recommendations reflected the particular requirements of the under-fives, although they also stressed that the formality of the National Curriculum created difficulties for the move to compulsory schooling. A subsequent report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMIs), *Aspects of Primary Education: The Education of Children Under Five* (DES, 1989), provided examples of existing good practice. In the same year the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* was ratified, followed shortly in England by the 1989, *Children Act*. Although these various initiatives addressed wider issues such as social inclusion and inequality, the primary focus was education rather than health and welfare. Nevertheless, they were indicative of a growing awareness that tackling social inequality would require a more systematic approach to the care and welfare of young children. As the central ideology of the Conservative Government under John Major was free-market enterprise, at the time it was envisaged that any expansion of nursery education would be via the voluntary and private sectors in competition with the state maintained sector.

In their final year of office, the Conservative Government introduced a voucher scheme that entitled all four year olds to a free nursery place. This proved controversial: a fall in the birth rate meant that many schools had spare capacity in

their reception class (the first year of compulsory schooling), and encouraged parents to use their vouchers to send their four year olds to school. An unintended consequence, (contrary to the spirit of free-market enterprise), was that this scheme had a devastating effect on the Pre-school Playgroup Association (PPA). Since 1962, local community, PPA playgroups acted as a key alternative to state-funded provision. Although provision was locally based, the PPA was a national body made up of volunteers, (usually parents), supported by paid staff at all levels. Playgroups provided an opportunity for children to mix socially on a part-time basis and at small cost. To keep costs down, parents using the service were expected to volunteer help at least once a week. This system was popular as it offered affordable childcare as well as a social outlet for many mothers. The voucher scheme's offer of free part-time education, however, proved too tempting to parents and the numbers of children in playgroups fell dramatically.

At the same time, the government published *The Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning* (SCAA 1996). This offered curriculum guidance and a set of outcomes or learning goals that, given adequate provision, would ensure that young children were prepared for entry into compulsory schooling. Parents could only use the vouchers in approved institutions validated by inspectors charged with judging:

The extent to which the quality of provision [was] appropriate to the desirable outcomes in each area of learning, rather than on the achievement of the outcomes themselves by individual children.
(SCAA 1996, 1).

In 1997 just as the voucher scheme was about to be launched, the Conservative government lost the general election and the Labour Government

assumed office. One of its first actions was to cancel the voucher launch.

Nevertheless, by the end of the Conservative Government's term of office, two of the eight key principles of successful early intervention programmes (Reynolds 1998) were beginning to take shape; early participation in pre-school education and a structured, child-centred approach to the pre-school curriculum.

Reforms introduced by the Labour Government: 1997 - 2010

During the Labour administration, parents of young children, early years practitioners and other health and social care professionals, (the 'Children's Work Force'), have witnessed the launch of over 20 aspirational initiatives and interventions, (Nutbrown, Clough and Selbie 2008). As noted above, on assuming office, Prime Minister Tony Blair, delivered a landmark speech pledging that the central purpose of the newly elected Labour Government would be to tackle social division and reduce inequality. Two years later, his government announced a series of ambitious targets to eradicate child poverty by 2020 -21, with interim child poverty targets for 2004-05 and 2010-11, (Brewer et al. 2010).

Cognisant of the popularity of the abandoned voucher scheme, in 1998, the Government introduced free early years education provision for all four year-olds in England. The entitlement consisted of five weekly sessions of two-and-a-half hours for 33 weeks per year. The offer of a free place was extended to all three year-olds from 2004. In 2006, the free entitlement was extended to 15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year for all three and four year-olds. This aimed to enable five three-hour sessions to be offered, but recently a more flexible system has been introduced. Children can now attend nursery for blocks of two full days if required, in order to allow women to be free for part-time employment. In 2010, towards the end of its

period of office, the Government proposed to extend free education to include two year-olds from deprived areas with the aim ultimately of providing this service to 130,000 children.

In 1998, as well as introducing free education to all four year-olds, nurseries identified as particularly high quality were designated as Early Excellence Centres, and were charged with acting as exemplars for other settings. A year later in 1999, the ambitious *Sure Start Local Programme* was piloted. Conceived as an early intervention programme, its stated aims matched several of the eight essential principles outlined by Reynolds (1998). *Sure Start* targeted families and children at highest risk of underachievement; encouraged early participation and active parental involvement; offered a set of comprehensive services and a child-centred, structured approach to children's learning and development through the *Desirable Learning Outcomes*. The programme was aimed at families with children of four years or younger in the most disadvantaged areas in the country. *Sure Start* centres were set up as 'one stop shops' under a designated manager. The team, co-ordinated by a manager, represented members from the major services, with the intention of enabling parents to access all the services they needed in one place. Such multi-agency working was recommended in the 1989 Children Act; this was the first serious attempt to make it work.

In 2003, *Sure Start* was extended as part of the strategy outlined in the Green Paper, *Every Child Matters* (ECM), (HM Treasury 2003).ⁱⁱⁱ The actions recommended in ECM, demonstrated the Government's commitment to children's rights, as outlined in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, (UNCRC). ECM identified five outcomes that all early years and children's service providers should work to enable children to achieve:

- Being Healthy – enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle;
- Staying Safe – being protected from harm and neglect and growing up able to look after themselves;
- Enjoying and achieving – getting the most out of life and developing broad skills for adulthood;
- Making a positive contribution – to the community and to society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour;
- Economic well being – not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life.

The Green paper recommended that by 2010 there should be 3,500 *Sure Start* Children’s Centres, so that all families with young children would have access. Many of these took over from existing Early Excellence Centres or other provision such as *Sure Start* local programmes, state maintained nursery schools and neighbourhood nurseries set up in 2001 to provide full-time affordable childcare in the poorest areas in England.

In addition, in 2003, the Department for Education and Skills published the *National Standards for Under 8s Daycare and Childminding* guidance: a set of 14 national standards that established a baseline of quality that all day care and childminding providers were expected to meet. These were intended to drive continuous improvement in quality in all care settings for children under eight. The standards identified criteria on the suitability of carers and the qualifications/experience needed; the quality of the premises, equipment and facilities; the security of the children; their health and dietary requirements; and

provision for children with special educational needs or disabilities (DfES 2003). Finally, following the 2006, *Childcare Act*, the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCFS) introduced the *Early Years Foundation Stage Framework* (EYFS). The EYFS built on, and replaced earlier frameworks and set the standards, ‘for the learning, development and care young children should experience when they are attending a setting outside their family home, ensuring that every child makes progress and that no child gets left behind’, and ensured, ‘That every child is included and not disadvantaged because of ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties or disabilities, gender or ability’, (DCFS 2008b, 7)

By the end of its term of office in 2010, the measures introduced to tackle social inequality by the Labour Government fulfilled at least four of Reynolds’ (1998) characteristics of effective intervention programmes. These measures targeted children and families at high risk of educational underachievement; encouraged early participation during the preschool period; offered comprehensive child-development services and encouraged active parental involvement in educational and care provision. As Aubrey points out, however:

The first national evaluation of the *Sure Start* local programmes, published in 2005 [...], sadly showed only limited across-the-board impact on the lives of young vulnerable children and families.^{iv} [...] Ten years on, we have got 3.6 million (27%) of people in poverty: One in four, concentrated in the poorest 100 wards [...] in those areas where there are *Sure Start* children’s centres. Whilst there was evidence at one point, between 1998-9 and 2010-11 of one million families lifted out of poverty (through at least one parent working), there is a projected rise from 2012-13 in poverty with 300,000 more by 2015-16 and 4.2 million by 2020.^v
(WIES 2012,16)

Although the Labour Government's target to halve the number of children in poverty by 2010 has not been met, the reasons for this are extremely complex and do not mean that measures recommended in ECM or the EYFS were ineffective. Other factors affecting parental employment and earnings, such as the generalised slow down in earnings since 2004 -05 that resulted from the global economic recession, have had a significant, adverse impact on attempts to reduce poverty and inequality of opportunity, (Brewer et al 2010).

The quality of the children's workforce

Another area that has seen significant change over the past 20 years has been the gradual professionalisation of the early years workforce. It is now widely recognised that the value of investing in well-qualified people to care for and educate children is an important plank of strategies designed to establish the foundations of health and education during the early years, (e.g. Belsky et al. 2007; Schweinhart et al. 2005). When discussing the issue of qualifications, both Aubrey and Wild referred to the findings of the US, National Institute for Early Education Research policy brief (Barnett 2003) and the British, *Effective Provision for Preschool Education* (EPPE) study, (Sylva et al. 2010). These studies offer strong evidence that the education level of early years staff predicted the quality of interactions between staff and children. The EPPE study (see below) also offers robust evidence that the quality of leadership in early childhood settings is of critical importance in terms of securing a high quality experience for children and their parents.

Also, as discussed above, the changing nature of service provision exemplified by the *Sure Start* local centres identified a need for more effective interagency collaboration. This is particularly important when considering child protection issues,

where there have been some notable failures in recent years as it indicates that early years professionals require new skills for the 21st century. For example, the 2004 *Children Act* made interagency working a legal requirement and there is now increased pressure on all services to work together, particularly at a local level. This has led to significant re-examination and redefinition of the roles and status of early years professionals as well as of the qualification framework that underpins the profession, (e.g. Aubrey, Godfrey and Harris 2013). For example, the *National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership* (NPQICL), a Master's level qualification equivalent to that for Head Teachers of State Nursery Schools was developed in 2004 for those people who were to lead the work of children's centres.

In the next section we briefly outline the 1997 – 2010 Labour Government's response to the need for a new generation of highly qualified early years professionals, before going on to discuss changes to the qualification framework that have taken place over the past 20 years.

The children and young people's workforce strategy

In 2008, the Labour Government published the *2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy*, (DCFS 2008a). Ed Balls, then Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, outlined the thinking behind this strategy as follows:

The core of our approach is to make sure that everyone who works with children and young people – whatever their role – has the skills, knowledge and motivation to do the best job they possibly can. They must be able to ensure that children and young people are safe and can develop and succeed across all of the outcomes, which underpin Every Child Matters.

(DCFS 2008a, 2)

Referring back to Blair's 1997 commitment to 'tackle social division and reduce inequality', ten years after coming to power, the Labour Government made the strong claim that:

A world-class workforce was the single most important factor in achieving our ambitions for children and young people. Excellent practice by committed and passionate workers changes young lives.

(DCFS 2008a, 2)

This is a far cry from Conservative Government's 1993 proposal that for non-graduates, a one-year course and experience as a mother was sufficient training for early years teachers. A recent study by Oberhuemer, Schreyer and Neuman (2010) has identified Europe wide agreement that the education for three to six-year-olds should be provided by people with graduate qualifications. However, this study also revealed a significant gap across Europe in the training and qualifications of professionals responsible for the care and education of birth to three-year-olds outside the home. In the next section we look at how the nature and content of the English, early years qualifications framework has evolved since the early 1990s.

The development of qualifications 1993 - 2013

In addition to well established, educational qualifications for graduate teachers such as the Bachelor of Education (BEd), the Bachelor of Arts with Qualified Teacher Status, (BA QTS) and the Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE), the development of new degrees in Early Childhood Studies in the mid 1990s was a natural outcome of a heightened awareness of the needs of young children. Rather than focusing solely on education, however, these degrees included the study of

psychology, sociology, health and law. In the first instance many were designed to provide nursery nurses with the opportunity to gain a further qualification and later, the possibility of training as a teacher. As the new Early Childhood Studies degrees became established and the range of work widened, many younger students were attracted, gaining employment as teachers, social workers, play workers and family support workers.

Most of the qualifications achieved by people working in nursery education, however, were vocational. National voluntary qualification (NVQ) were available at two levels. Level Two NVQ was equivalent to General Certificate of Secondary Education Ordinary level qualifications (GCSEs) usually taken at sixteen, and Level Three, the equivalent of GCSE Advanced level ('A' level) qualifications taken at eighteen. Other qualifications, such as the Cache Diploma, a full-time taught course with placements, enabled people to become nursery nurses. In 2001, Foundation degrees were introduced awarding a qualification equal to the first two years of a University Honours degree. For the early years sector this meant a *Sector Endorsed Early Years Foundation Degree*, the content of which was laid down by the Government and included the study of child development, curriculum areas and child protection, mainly from a work-based perspective. Students on this part-time course were usually working as nursery nurses or teaching assistants in reception or Key Stage One classes for five to seven year-olds in primary schools. Gaining this level of qualification enabled many to achieve promotion to Higher Level Teaching Assistant posts. This was important, as career prospects for most early years workers were limited. Further opportunities were offered to those achieving this Foundation degree since they were eligible to 'top-up' to a Pass or Honours degree by studying for one or two years part-time respectively.

In 2007, *The Children's Plan* (DSCF) introduced the requirement for every full day care centre to have a graduate on its staff. Originally this was intended to be a teacher, but the introduction of the *Early Years Professional Status (EYPS)* looked set to supersede this idea (DCFS 2008b). Although training for this status was aimed at students, who had or were about to achieve a pass degree, it was not generally delivered by universities but by private consortia working in tandem with Higher Education Institutions. The length of training depended on the amount of experience the student had of working with children from birth to five years. Once achieved, EYPS graduates were regarded as qualified to lead delivery of the early years curriculum in full-time, early years settings or children's centres. When introduced the EYPS was marketed as being equivalent to qualified teachers status, but as is frequently the case this was not matched by equivalent pay, and the qualification was not widely recognised, particularly by parents. As Wild pointed out:

Even amongst fellow professionals sometimes, they [EYPS qualified staff] were still seen as not quite as good as the teacher, as the reception class teacher.
(WIES 2012, 12)

During the Labour Government's term of office, although the qualification levels of early years professionals clearly improved, there was still a lack of consistency across the sector, (e.g. Hadfield et al. 2012). In 2012, therefore, the Coalition Government commissioned Professor Cathy Nutbrown to undertake a review of early years qualifications. This revealed a confusing picture with over 400 early years qualifications covering different standards. Consequently, although very few of her recommendations were accepted outright, Nutbrown recommended a more streamlined qualifications framework; all childcare qualifications should cover the

same set of standards and should be at a level equivalent to the traditional GCSE, ‘A’ levels. Also, she recommended that everyone aspiring to work with young children should have attained at least level 3 in English and mathematics. Castle, a highly experienced Nursery Manager was in complete agreement with this recommendation when the issue of qualifications was discussed at the WIES seminar:

As a manager who interviews staff, candidates for posts, one of the things that I find really difficult is having applicants that can’t fill in application forms, can’t string sentences together on paper, let alone in an interview, and I wonder [...] how we can expect these people to provide excellent quality childcare [...] If they can’t write about themselves how can they then transfer their skills into caring for other people’s children. The expectations of parents, particularly in a setting like ours, is very high, our parents are very well informed about child development, early years education, and so we have to be able to match their expectations all the time.

(WIES 2012, 7)

In January 2013 *More Great Childcare: Raising Quality and Giving Parents More Choice* (DfE 2013), a discussion paper by Elizabeth Truss, the Children’s Minister, was published partly in response to the *Nutbrown Review*. Describing the current nursery provision as ‘chaotic’, this plan identified four key areas that the current Coalition government intends to address: Raising the status and quality of the workforce; freeing high quality providers to offer more places; improving the regulatory regime and giving more choice to parents. This plan has proved controversial and has received a mixed reception from early years professional organisations, early years experts and parents’ groups. For example, Truss recommended changes to the adult-child ratio in settings, standardisation of the nursery nurse qualification and a new *Early Years Teacher Status* (EYTS) (to replace the EYPS). There was a robust, cross-sector challenge to the proposed ratio changes

causing the government to abandon this part of the plan, however, changes to qualifications are taking place. To address the need for better-qualified staff for babies and very young children, the new EYTS training is intended as a qualification for teachers of 0 – 5 year-olds. As this includes the reception class in school, critics of the scheme argue that as the EYTS only requires a pass degree, teachers qualified under this scheme will eventually replace the current early years teachers with Honours degrees and QTS who are more expensive. This is a retrograde step, perhaps not quite a return to a ‘Mum’s Army’, but an undermining of the hard fought battle to keep parity of status for all areas of the teaching profession.

Also, although there is a clear commitment to raising the status and quality of the children’s workforce through better quality training and a simplified qualifications framework, the plan also outlines a commitment to return to a free market economy in terms of the provision of this training:

We will remove constraints on childcare training; for example, the obligation to use only local-authority-approved first aid training. This will ensure that there is competition in the market for high quality training and professional development.

(DfE 2013, 29)

In order to ensure the quality of provision and the effectiveness of the new qualifications framework, new regulatory powers are proposed for OFSTED (the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills), and providers are to be encouraged to develop their own national standards so that, ‘Providers that can demonstrate a strong commitment to quality will be the ones that flourish, as parents become ever more demanding consumers of their services’, (DfE 2013, 40). As Castle pointed out, however, even if there is a more consistent qualifications framework that

will make it easier for early years settings to recruit staff, for the private and voluntary sector, for leaders and managers of early years settings, funding the cost of continuing professional development for those staff is problematic and may drive up costs.

The continual professional development of my team, [...] is always very challenging, and also at times very expensive and when you're in the PVI sector, the profit line or the breaking even as it is in our case is an important part of my role, CPD can become a very expensive option for us.

(WIES 2012, 13)

Thus, although 'More Great Childcare' recognises the importance of regular staff development, in-service training for qualified teachers and systematic evaluation and monitoring, it remains to be seen how this will play out in a consumer-oriented, market-driven environment.

Curriculum reform

The Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning, (DfEE 1996) was one of the first publications to offer non-statutory curriculum guidance for ECEC. In 2000, a Government Select Committee on Education and Employment conducted an inquiry into Early Years Education (House of Commons 2000). Its focus was education, but other relevant issues were taken into account including parenting, assessment, curriculum, play and the outdoors. Initially its intention was to look at the age range from three to seven years, but after taking advice from early years experts its remit was broadened to cover birth to eight. An outcome of this was the development of the *Birth to Three Matters* framework (DfES 2002), which provided guidance for those working with the youngest children. This framework, and *The Curriculum Guidance for The Foundation Stage*, (QCA/DfES 2000), which replaced *Desirable Outcomes*, aimed to provide a smooth path from birth into compulsory schooling. The

Curriculum Guidance offered a play-based curriculum and considerably more detail than *Desirable Outcomes* although the areas of learning it identified as important were similar, the main difference being slight changes to the headings. Thus, Personal and Social Development became Personal, Social and Emotional Development; Language and Literacy became Communication, Language and Literacy; and Mathematics became Mathematical Development. The other areas: Knowledge and Understanding of the World; Physical Development; and Creative Development remained the same. These curriculum frameworks were intended not just for those working in nurseries or children's centres; child-minders were also required to follow them.

Finally, as discussed earlier, the 2006 *Childcare Act*, the first Act exclusively concerned with early years and childcare, paved the way for a further revision to the early years curriculum: *Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)* (DfES 2007; DCFS 2008b) This focussed on four themes: A Unique Child; Positive Relationships; Enabling Environment; and Learning and Development. In curriculum terms, however, the areas of learning differed little from the previous two frameworks although Mathematical Development became Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy.

The new EYFS curriculum was extended to include school reception classes with the intention that these classes should offer a play led curriculum rather than the more formal Key Stage One of the National Curriculum. This meant that the transition problems between the early years curriculum and the National Curriculum, (which had previously occurred between nursery and school), now occurred when children moved from the reception class into the first year of Key Stage One. To counter these problems, the inspectorate recommended that there should be a gradual move away from a play-led to a more formal approach to teaching and learning.

Broadhead, however, is highly critical of simplistic notions that all early years pedagogy should be play-based or play-led (Broadhead, Howard and Wood 2010). In her view:

We're still confused about what play is. I'd like to put to you finally an idea that children in fact do not learn through play, that this is too unsophisticated a notion. [...] If we keep harnessing play for a learning process [subject] to adult direction [...] what we do is diminish its power and diminish its pleasure for children. We need to think about how the environment looks and [...] about how playful learning and playful pedagogies are embedded in those environments and bring those ideas into our curriculum documents in the future.
(WIES 2012, 3)

The pressure for schools to demonstrate that their pupils were performing well in national Standardised Assessment Tests (SATs) at age seven was so great, however, that in many instances teaching and learning in reception class has had to become relatively formal in order that children might adjust more easily, (Aubrey 2004).

It was not only the United Kingdom government affecting the nursery curriculum, however, initiatives from abroad were also causing interest, (Soler and Miller 2003). Three in particular were influential in shaping thinking about the early years curriculum. The first of these, the New Zealand *Te Whariki* (Ministry of Education 1996), emphasised developing reciprocal partnerships between families, early years professionals and the wider community, and informed the structure of *Birth to Three Matters* (2002) and the *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* (2000). The second was Reggio Emilia in Italy that emphasised following the interests of the child, (Edwards, Gandini and Forman 1998). This had a widespread influence on the early years curriculum nationally (e.g. Teaching and Learning Scotland 2006). Reggio's employment of an artist in every early years setting, exhibitions and videos

of the projects undertaken by the children, as well as the week long seminars offered to English teachers, saw a rise in the number of artists in residence working alongside nursery staff. The final influence on the curriculum came from the Scandinavian emphasis on outdoor education and Forest Schools, (Maynard 2007). Many English nurseries and schools partitioned off an area as a ‘forest school’ although in reality many were little more than wild life areas as the available space was small. Teachers and nursery practitioners attended training courses to enable them to work effectively with children in these areas.

This interest in the outdoors was particularly important since there were concerns across all age groups children were spending too much time indoors, partly because of child protection issues, but also because of the rise in the use of technology. The increasing use of computers and play stations means that many children lead a largely sedentary life. This is exacerbated by parents’ concern for children’s safety, which restricted freedom to play outdoors. This is a serious social concern that has led Bertram and others to call for a re-evaluation of how we assess risk in early childhood settings:

I believe in child protection issues and I think you should have rightfully systems in place, but I think we can go too far. [...] We’ve lost our way in terms of risk [...] this is seriously impacting on the way that young children explore the world. We need to get this into context, of course there needs to be protection systems in place, but not so much that it interferes with actually development of children and that sense of adventure and exploration which I think is essential. (WIES 2012, 14-15)

In the next section we offer a brief outline of key British research-based educational intervention and evaluation studies years that have had a significant

impact on early years pedagogy, the nature of the curriculum and our understanding of the impact of high quality, early years provision on later developmental outcomes.

Research on the impact of high quality provision on later development

National evaluations of *Sure Start* established that active parental involvement in children's education and a strong home environment together with a child-centred, structured approach to the curriculum are important determinants of quality, (NESS 2005; Siraj-Blatchford and Woodhead 2009). Two notable intervention projects initiated in the late 1990s had a significant influence on the *Sure Start* programme. These were *Raising Early Achievement in Literacy* (REAL) (Nutbrown, Hannon and Morgan 2005) and the *Peers Early Education Partnership* (PEEP), (Evangelou and Sylva 2003). REAL, funded in part by the local education authority, has involved over 300 families, 50 schools, 100 teachers, nursery nurses, and other professionals in Sheffield. The initial PEEP project involved 156 families in Oxford and further 86 families from Oxfordshire who acted as a matched control group and was part-funded by the Department for Education and Skills. Both projects involved parents and children in areas of social deprivation.

REAL was the largest preschool intervention study in the UK to focus on raising standards of attainment in literacy for three to four-year olds. It was an inclusive programme that offered both parents and children the opportunity to develop their literacy and learning. Its second phase included a randomized control trial involving 176 families, half of who served as controls. Children's literacy skills were tested before and after the programme. This trial established that the programme was

particularly advantageous for children whose mothers had few educational qualifications.

PEEP had a broader remit and targeted improvement in literacy and numeracy as well as in pro-social behaviour and self-esteem. The three year-old children participating in PEEP or its control group were tested on a range of standardised tests at the start of the programme and again aged four and five. Evangelou and Sylva (2003) reported that after two years of parental participation, children in the PEEP group were ahead of their matched (non-PEEP) peers in the following areas: Language and Literacy (Verbal Comprehension, Vocabulary and Concepts about print); Numeracy (Early Number Concepts) and Self-esteem (Cognitive and Physical Competence).

These programmes were similar in that each provided a structured pre-school curriculum alongside a parental education programme based on the *Opportunities, Recognition, Interaction and Modeling* (ORIM) framework (Hannon 1995). This framework encourages parents to participate in, recognize and value their children's opportunities for learning and their achievements. Parents are offered tutoring so that in informal learning contexts with their children, they can model appropriate literacy and numeracy behaviours. They are also provided with books and other support materials. Specially trained early years educators provide this tutoring at home and at children's centres, nursery schools or other settings for participating parents. Both programmes had, and continue to have, a significant impact on local authority pre-school provision for children and families. They have also influenced government thinking about the Foundation Stage, the nature of the early years curriculum and the importance of planned, parental involvement in this curriculum.

In 1997, the DfES commissioned a substantial six-year research project focusing upon three year-old children, their progress through pre-school (the Foundation stage) and the first three years of formal schooling (Key Stage 1, 5 - 7 year-olds). *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education* (EPPE) research project, the largest of its kind in Europe, was designed to investigate how the individual characteristics of children are shaped by the environments in which they develop, (Sylva et al. 2010). It compared the educational outcomes of 2,800 children drawn from randomly selected pre-school settings in six local authorities with those of 200 children who did not attend any form of early education. In addition to collecting information about these children it also collected information about their families, their preschool setting, and their neighbourhood environment. It was later extended: *The Effective Preschool and Primary Education* (EPPE) 3 – 11 ran from 2003 to 2008, and *The Effective Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education* (EPPSE) project has now followed children from the 1997 sample through to age 16. The EPPE and EPPSE projects have resulted in over 30 technical reports and research summaries.^{vi} The EPPE research team's account of children's progress over the pre-school period identified the following key characteristics and effects:

- Age of entry is important; an earlier start is related to better intellectual development and improved independence, concentration and sociability; full time attendance does not lead to better gains for children compared with part-time provision.
- Disadvantaged children in particular can benefit significantly from good quality pre-school experiences, especially if they attend centres that cater for a mixture of children from different social backgrounds.

- The quality of pre-school centres is directly related to better intellectual/cognitive and social/behavioural development. Children tend to make better intellectual progress in fully integrated centres and nursery schools.
- Quality was higher overall in integrated settings, nursery schools and nursery classes. Settings with good proportion of trained teachers on the staff, show higher quality and their children make more progress. This is also true of settings that view educational and social development as complementary and equal in importance.
- Effective pedagogy includes interaction traditionally associated with the term “teaching”, the provision of instructive learning environments and ‘sustained shared thinking’ to extend children’s learning.
- Although parent’s social class and levels of education were related to child outcomes, the quality of the home learning environment was more important. (Adapted from EPPE Team 2003, 2)

The EPPE studies have informed and shaped government policy during a time of significant change to the curriculum and the nature of provision, (Sylva et al 2010), and the EPPSE study continues to enrich our understanding of the nature and long-term effects of high quality pre-school education.

Recent changes and developments to early years provision:

After the 2010 election, the Conservative and Liberal parties formed a new Coalition Government. Also in 2010, *The Child Poverty Act* came into force. This commits current and future governments to reducing the rate of child poverty in the UK to 10 percent by 2020. In December 2010 the *Field Report* published

recommendations designed to lift families out of poverty. A year later, the *Allen Report* (2011a and b) on early intervention appeared. Focusing on disadvantaged children in need of support, it recommended identification and intervention as early as possible during the Foundation Stage to rectify potential problems before children started primary school. There were overlaps and similarities between these two reports recommendations that served to strengthen their impact. A further report, the *Munro Review* (2011), examined issues relating to child protection. It made recommendations for the way social services, ECEC settings and schools should safeguard children in their care.

Finally, in 2010, Clare Tickell was commissioned to review the latest evidence on: children's development and what is needed to give them the best start at school; developmental assessment; the minimum standards required to keep children safe and support healthy development; and whether there should be one single framework for all Early Years providers. Her review, *The Early Years: Foundations for Life, Health and Learning*, was published in 2011. It was informed by a comprehensive account of research on young children's development and learning that included the REAL, PEEP and EPPE findings, (Evangelou et al. 2009). Tickell's recommendations were sent out for consultation in 2011. The revised *Early Years Foundation Stage Framework* (EYFS) framework that finally emerged from the consultation, whilst incorporating many elements of the original 2008 framework, simplified the curriculum so that teachers and practitioners now focus on 17 rather than 69 learning goals with fewer assessment points. The overriding aim of the revised EYFS, however, is to prepare children for school. It offers guidance on child protection issues, children's development during the Foundation stage developmental stages and the early years curriculum and a new developmental check for two-year-old children

aimed at detecting possible problems and putting support in place to help overcome them. Needless to say, some of the changes Tickell recommended have proved highly controversial, particularly those relating to the areas of learning and how these should be assessed.

These various reviews and reports have informed the Coalition Government's plan, *Supporting Families in the Foundation Years*, (DfE/DoH 2012). This describes its vision for services for young children and their families, and has 'early intervention at its heart' (2012, 5). Amongst other measures, it states that the national network of *Sure Start* Children's Centres is to be retained and free nursery education is to be extended to the most disadvantaged two year-olds. Recently, however, changes in the funding environment for local authorities appear to have resulted in the closure of many *Sure Start* Centres, and the government has signaled that the £1.5bn allocated to councils to spend on early years projects is to be diverted to fund education for two year-olds, (Butler 2013).

Conclusion

Although reducing social inequality and educational disadvantage remain key drivers of government policy, there is increasing concern that the EYFS emphasis on preparing children for school and the proposal to extend education to two year-olds, may constrain other aspects of their development, and is leading to increasing 'schoolification' of early childhood, (OECD 2006). Without exception, members of our expert panel expressed concern about possible limitations to children's autonomy, their freedom of expression and their opportunities to play out of doors as Murray commented:

In the past two decades I think we've seen English children becoming [...] ever increasingly subject to adult agendas, very often to the exclusion of their own.

[...] Schoolification is evident in the pressing down [...] of literacy and numeracy on children's lives in early childhood education and care settings. Adultification is evident in commercialisation, lack of opportunities for children to play, and [...] this focus on school readiness, this focus once they're in primary school of having to meet their targets all the time.
(WIES 2012, 17)

There is also concern that in spite of much progress, the proposals set out in *More Great Childcare* (DfE 2013) may not, as the government intends, raise quality, offer more choice and improve the quality of young children's learning experiences. Debate and discussion at WIES 2012 highlighted the following overarching concerns. Firstly, political, social and economic constructs of early childhood and the purpose of education, appear to have more influence on service provision than the views of children and families who use the services. Secondly, the need for statutory frameworks and stringent, child protection regulations curtail young children's access to spaces and places for play and limit their developmental opportunities. Finally, although we now have good knowledge and understanding of how to address it, as Pascal points out social inequality is once more on the rise.

Lack of social mobility remains a defining feature of English society [...] There is nothing more political than early childhood and early childhood education [...] It's about where possibilities are planted in people, it's where future lives are shaped and generated and it's where doors are opened, or by the way slammed shut [...] Early education can make a difference and the recent evidence that we've been looking at estimates that it can redress all those income inequalities by about 50%.^{vii} Now that's a lot, that's worth fighting for, 50% difference to a life, 50% of children being shifted, 50% of life chances opening up, I think is worth fighting for.
(WIES 2012, 19)

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ⁱ See appendix for a chronology of key strategies, policies and reports.

ⁱⁱ We gratefully acknowledge the contributions to this paper of Carol Aubrey, Emeritus Professor, University of Warwick; Tony Bertram, Professor/ Director, Centre for Research in Early Childhood, Birmingham; Pat Broadhead, Emeritus Professor, Leeds

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ⁱⁱⁱ In the UK, a Green Paper is a Government publication that identifies possible courses of action in terms of policy and legislation. Green Papers are commissioned from a relevant government department when new legislation is required, is in need of modification. Green Papers offer recommendations; they do not commit the government to action.

^{iv} See for example the account of this evaluation in Belsky, et al (2007)

^v ‘Child poverty facts and figures’, Child Poverty Action Group, 2012 available from <http://www.cpag.org.uk/child-poverty-facts-and-figures>

^{vi} These reports area available for download from <http://www.ioe.ac.uk/research/153.html>

^{vii} Pascal, Bertram, Delaney and Nelson, (2013)

An Outline of the Education Acts, Reviews, Reports and Other Significant Events Concerning Early Years Education Referred to in the Text

1989	The Education of Children Under Five (HMI Report)
1989	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
1989	Children Act
1990	Starting With Quality (The Rumbold Report)
1992	Education (Schools) Act for Children's Learning
1992	Ofsted inspections introduced
1993	Mum's Army proposed
1996	Nursery Voucher Scheme (Nursery Education: The Next Steps)
1996	The Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning framework
1996	Counting to Five: Education of Children Under Five (Audit Commission)
1997	Change of Government from Conservative to Labour
1997	Nursery Voucher Scheme abandoned
1997	Early Excellence Centres introduced
1997	Effective Provision of Pre-School Education research project commissioned
1998	Baseline Assessment introduced
1999	Sure Start Local Programmes opened
2000	Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage framework
2000	Select Committee on Education and Employment report on Early Years Education
2001	Neighbourhood Nurseries set up
2001	Introduction of Foundation Degrees
2002	Birth to Three Matters framework
2003	Every Child Matters -green paper
2003	National Standards for the Under 8s: Childcare and Childminding
2004	Children Act
2004	National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centres Leadership (NPQICL) introduced

2006	Childcare Act
2007	UNICEF: Child Poverty in Perspective: An Overview of Child Well-being in Rich Countries (Innocenti Card 7)
2007	The Children's Plan
2007	Early Years Professional Status programme began
2008	Early Years Foundation Stage framework introduced
2008	2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy
2010	Change of Government from Labour to Conservative
2010	The Foundation Years: Preventing Poor Children Becoming Poor Adults (The Field Report)
2011	Early Intervention: The Next Steps (The Allen Report: 1st Part)
2011	Early Intervention: Smart Investment, Massive Savings (The Allen Report : 2nd Part)
2011	The Early Years: Foundations for Life, Health and Learning (The Tickell Review)
2011	The Munro Review of Child Protection (The Munro Review)
2012	Revised Early Years Foundation Stage framework introduced
2012	Foundations for Quality (The Nutbrown Review)
2012	Supporting Families in the Foundation Years [Discussion paper)
2013	More Great Childcare (Discussion paper)
2013	Early Years Teacher Status introduced

Warwick Institute of Education/The Open University

The Changing Face of Early Childhood Policy and Practice in England over the Past Twenty Years: an expert seminar

Friday 23rd November, 11 am – 12.45 pm
Westwood Lecture Theatre, Institute of Education University of Warwick

Both Undergraduate and Higher Degree students are welcome to attend

Over the past 20 years this country has made significant progress/strides towards meeting the articles laid out in the 1989 UNCRC although the rate of change has not always been constant. Whilst successive governments have introduced legislation for educational and curriculum reform, child protection and the training of early years professionals, the needs and the rights of children and young people have not always been prioritised in real terms.

So, in the current political and economic climate in England, is it possible to maintain the services provided for young children and their families?

This expert seminar brings together a panel of distinguished early years academics and professionals to debate how the nature of social and educational provision has changed over the past twenty years and to discuss how this has influenced the well-being and social mobility of our youngest citizens.

Panel Members:

Carol Aubrey, Emeritus Professor, University of Warwick
Tony Bertram, Professor/ Director, Centre for Research in Early Childhood, Birmingham
Pat Broadhead, Emeritus Professor, Leeds Metropolitan University
Debbie Castle, Manager, Warwick University Nursery
Jane Murray, Senior Lecturer, University of Northampton
Chris Pascal, Professor/Director, Centre for Research in Early Childhood, Birmingham
Tim Waller, Professor, Anglia Ruskin University
Mary Wild, Senior Lecturer, Oxford Brookes University

For Panel Members and Higher Degree Students a series of workshops will be held in the afternoon in the Westwood Teaching Centre from 2.00 – 3.30.

Focus of Workshops: *What should we prioritise over the next 20 years?*

Workshop One: What should the Early Years curriculum look like?

Workshop Two: How can we reduce social inequality and improve social mobility?

Workshop Three: What should high quality childcare look like and how should it be funded?

Workshop Four: What level of qualification should we demand for childcare and education professionals?

Workshop Five: How can we ensure that all young children are safe and able to fulfil their potential?

Corrected Transcript

Key:

Facilitators:

- Liz Coates, University of Warwick
- Dorothy Faulkner, The Open University

Participants:

- Carol Aubrey, Emeritus Professor, University of Warwick
- Tony Bertram, Professor/ Director, Centre for Research in Early Childhood, Birmingham
- Pat Broadhead, Emeritus Professor, Leeds Metropolitan University
- Debbie Castle, Manager, Warwick University Nursery
- Jane Murray, Senior Lecturer, University of Northampton
- Chris Pascal, Professor/Director, Centre for Research in Early Childhood, Birmingham
- Mary Wild, Senior Lecturer, Oxford Brookes University

Liz: First of all I would like to welcome you all to this early years seminar, and particularly I'd like to thank our panel of experts for coming and agreeing to take part in what we hope will be a really stimulating discussion. The seminar really is set up to mark the 20th anniversary of the founding of the International Journal of Early Years Education which some of you will know was founded in the University of Warwick, Institute of Education and Dot and I were the, I was the Editor and Dot was the Reviews Editor. So let me introduce the panel and then I think perhaps we ought to get on without more ado. And we have Pat Broadhead, from Leeds Metropolitan University. Carol Aubrey from University of Warwick. Mary Wild from Oxford Brookes University. And Jane Murray from the University of Northampton. Debbie Castle who is one of our own, but is also Manager of the University Nursery. Chris Pascale and Tony Bertram who are both Directors of the Centre for Research in Early Childhood which is based in Birmingham. So without more ado, welcome and thank you very much and I'll hand over to Dorothy Faulkner from the Open University who will start the ball rolling with the first question.

Dorothy: Well good morning everybody, what we're going to do is we're going to go over the five areas which you've got on your programme, starting off with the early years curriculum and what we've asked our panellists to do is to reflect on changes that have occurred over the past 20 years in these particular areas, so Pat and Jane and Mary are going to start off and give us their reflections on the changes to the early years curriculum over the past 20 years, what was good, what was bad and so on and so forth. Okay, over to you three?

Pat: Am I first?

Dorothy: If you'd like Pat, yes.

CURRICULUM

Pat: Right, I'll only go first as my name was said first and we've also got three minutes in which to speak on these huge issues so pardon us if we speak very quickly (*all laugh*). What I wanted to do in focusing on the curriculum was actually focus on play, in relation to the early years curriculum and what sort of developments there have been in the last 20 years and what that has meant for the place of play in the curriculum. We've got mountains of literature, I'm sure many of you will know of it that point to the importance of play for young children's development, and yet overall in my view it remains sidelined within our curriculum documentation. And what we might think about today is why that is, why does play remain relatively sidelined and do we need to change that in the future? The earliest documents that we had on curriculum were called the Desirable Learning Outcomes, terrible name for a curriculum document for young children in my view and they appeared in '96. These stated their intent to be the targets that children should achieve prior to entering formal education, so it wasn't a curriculum as such but a set of targets, a set of outcomes for children. We'd had, and still do have many developmental milestones that are commonplace in the literature, but the difference with these outcomes is that it led to a growing sense of all children having to achieve the same thing at roughly the same time which was never what the developmental milestones in the literature meant. So this had huge implications for pedagogy and in my view it was instrumental in bringing about notions of failure into debates about young children's achievement. The desirable learning outcomes made no mention of play. These were superseded in 2000 by the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage, it was very definitely a curriculum and it had one page on play. The words planned and purposeful play emerged in this document and it seemed to suggest that planning and purposefulness was something that adults did and not something that children were capable of doing. These guidelines were also paralleled by profiling and the assessment of children led us towards a much more formalised approach to pedagogy in the early years, play seemed to get sidelined once again and especially so in the reception classes where the literacy and numeracy strategies were dominating. In 2007 we got the Early Years Foundation Stage which had a much stronger focus on play and playful approaches, these were emphasised throughout the documentation and also in the widespread training that accompanied this documentation. In 2009 we had a publication, I don't know if you've seen it, Learning, Playing and Interacting, it's still available on the early education website and this was the first time we had a document, a curriculum related document that was talking about playful learning and playful pedagogy's that was connecting those two aspects. But I'm afraid that in my view that was as good as it got, around about that time. The Tickell Review and the more recent curriculum guidance I think sits somewhere between those desirable learning outcomes and the 2000 curriculum guidance. It returns again to this concept of planned purposeful play as something that the adult does, not what children are able to do in the right environment, play isn't mentioned in the overarching principles, paragraph 1.9 of the statutory guidance does mention children, 'leading their own play' but it's very brief, so these debates are not well embedded. Although the Tickell Report does acknowledge a confusion about what play is and that's perhaps the essence of it, we're still confused about what

play is. I'd like to put to you finally an idea that children in fact do not learn through play, that this is too unsophisticated a notion and is a phrase that I think we need to move away from in the future which is a bit ironic coming from me 'cos it was a phrase I used in the title of the last book I wrote with Andy Burt. I think that in the right environment play inhabits children's thinking, it inhabits their actions and their interactions as they strive to understand how the world works and what their place is in the world, this is why children play, they don't play to learn, they play to find themselves and to be themselves and if we keep harnessing play for a learning process to adult direction I think what we do is diminish its power and diminish its pleasure for children. We need to think about how the environment looks and we need to think about playful learning and playful pedagogy's are embedded in those environments and bring those ideas into our curriculum documents in the future, I would argue. Thank you.

Dorothy: Thank you Pat. Yeah, who's going to go first?

Jane: Well I'm going to pick up on a couple of the points that Pat was making but I'm going to focus what I'm going to say on the nature and the purpose of the early years curriculum. And I'm going to go way way back to Aristotle in fact to begin with, a lot further than 20 years ago. Aristotle was curriculum as a combination of theory, practice and process. Conversely, coming a little further forward, the American E D Hirsch sees curriculum as product and I think it can be argued that there are elements of all of these things in the current EYFS. Perhaps though early years curriculum might be purely about active learning which begins in wonder as Socrates and many of the early years pioneers such as [Ruso, Pestalotsi and Foyble? 08.10] believed. I'm going back to the curriculum guidance that came out in the early 2000. The term curriculum was used to describe everything that children do, see, hear or feel in their setting, both planned and unplanned. So is this a reflection of reality or is it just rather unwieldy. Nevertheless the English early years curricula from desirable outcomes to the current EYFS 2012, seemed to present a watered down version of the national curriculum subjects, indicating EYFS as preparation for national curriculum. Is the early years curriculum all or even partially relevant to young children's present needs if its focus is presentation I wonder. What might happen in the future if we were to ignore children's present needs and if the revised primary curriculum emerges as a narrow offer for children aged 5 to 11, what will the next iteration of the EYFS be. Would it be narrower too, would it be slimmer and would this be a good thing or a bad thing perhaps because if we bear in mind that other curricula in other countries are very much slimmer than our current model, then perhaps it's something to consider. So since the Education Reform Act we've had a managerial approach, which has minimised values. And perhaps values in relation to principles are at the core of it all, would they be enough and if so what principles and whose principles. Claire Tickell recommended that there should continue to be a universal early years framework but do we really need a statutory national early years curriculum at all? Perhaps we could take a leaf out of Hungary's book and include a far greater local element in all of that. Moving onto purpose very quickly, I wonder what curriculum is for and who it's for. It's a construction really I suppose, a formalisation of activity, potentially a control of activity and through centuries English children have tended to be subjugated and controlled, right back to the saying from Mirk in 1382 that children should be

seen and not heard. And this perpetuates the day in many educational contexts in England, and some other countries as children are prepared for the future workforce. In the current statutory early years curriculum we do see emphasis on product, goals, rather than processes. Curriculum derives from the Latin for racecourse, again indicating the EYFS may be seen as preparation for national curriculum and that's where all the school readiness agenda perhaps is coming in. Yet since 2000 we've seen downward trends in literacy, mathematics and science in international comparisons, so maybe we need to revise that idea. In a goal focused model what is the role of care in relation to education and in the early years curriculum, sorry is the early years curriculum about delivery or experience. And finally in all of this where are the children, in a generation children's dominion over their own spaces and shared spaces has diminished. Children's play, free time and early learning have all become colonised. Resulting in schoolification, scholarisation. And as Pat mentioned as well there are serious issues in relation to play and practitioners understanding of play and its role in curriculum and in the children's wider worlds. Just to finish on then, perhaps fortunately many of us who've worked with young children know that there are often gaps between the rhetoric of prescribed curriculum and the reality of practice. Are these unintended consequences or as I fear I practice, subversion. Thank you.

Dorothy: Thank you. Mary?

Mary: Hello. In preparing for this I was reading something by Bernadette Duffy who was talking, it was interesting given what you said about values, how values underpin what a curriculum is, it's determined by what we see as important for children and we've got a flavour from the two previous speakers as to what some of those principles might be. And she talks about how during this period we have gone from a stage of no guidance to an absolute plethora of guidance, I think to the extent that sometimes our practitioners have maybe felt a little bit overwhelmed and, as if there's "yet another set of guidelines", you know. I decided to approach this a little bit from my own personal journey in early years which started in the middle '90s as a parent, when I was a parent on my daughter's playgroup committee and it was when the then Conservative government brought in vouchers and settings had to make a case for having, being able to receive the government money and they had to do that around the Desirable Learning Outcomes. And for some reason I volunteered to write the report for the playgroup. And I think that was maybe because, you know, of having trained as a primary school teacher and I have to say it seemed obvious to me, you know, they were doing lovely wonderful things with my daughter and the other children, but it hadn't been made explicit at all and I kind of saw that as what I was doing and that would be uncontroversial, why wouldn't you do that? I quickly learned it wasn't uncontroversial (*laughs*), just in that little anecdote there, you know the idea, you know, I was coming very much from an education perspective, whereas there were issues of the whole orientation of early years between care and education and where each sits in all these iterations of the curriculum. The two previous speakers have charted through developments from those early movements towards codifying what we might want for our young children through to the curriculum guidance. Also the birth to three framework which made a brief appearance and I think was broadly quite welcomed because

it had a focus on things like competent children, some of those principles were really quite welcomed. But in another controversy, other people labelled it the “nappy curriculum”, why on earth would you be, you know, prescribing what you want, nought to three year olds to do? Whatever the controversy over three to five year olds, nought to three?

And then, those two came together, the curriculum guidance for the foundation stage and the birth to three to form that first Early Years Foundation Stage. And one of the controversies there seemed to be this emphasis on developmentally appropriate practice, and that’s another value that Duffy was talking about, what is it that we see as developmentally appropriate? I think a lot of the debate can get hung up on the fact that it’s presented in stages and the idea that all children of a certain age should be doing certain things. I think in fairness to the curriculum documentation they are a little bit more fluid than that, those stages overlap quite broadly but I think maybe what drives the sense of working towards something is this notion that at the end of it all there looms this thing called the Foundation Stage Profile, and we’re all on track (*laughs*), on the race towards that. In the new Early Years Foundation Stage, when that was revised I was part of a group that did the literature review that was one of the things that Dame Claire Tickell looked at when she produced her review, it was interesting in that literature review to see how much some of the developmental psychology literature was actually saying some of the same things that people had been saying in early years about the role of play and its significance and so forth. How that was just part of the way children approach life, and they learn as they’re going along, having no distinctions. And so now we have the new Early Years Foundation Stage, we still have domains or areas of learning, but one of the things we had said in our report, you’re needing to keep the holistic nature. Those domains are permeable. The emphasis is on primary areas of learning, things like, you know, personal, social, emotional as underpinning I think that is actually quite a good thing in the new EYFS. And also I like the fact that they’ve started to talk about how children learn, things like thinking about valuing children as active learners, as creating their own reality, as creating, thinking children. Where I have some difficulties or I’m less enamoured of it is the fact that if you go through the document and think about how many times school readiness or ready for school, ready to learn, as if the whole purpose of those first five years is to make sure that when they’re five or six they can go and sit on a carpet somewhere and listen to somebody..

Dorothy: Thank you. I’m afraid that we’re not going to have time to ask the rest of the panel to jump in because we are trying to keep to a very tight schedule and so let us move onto our second area for discussion which is going to be led by Chris, Debbie and Tony and the area we’ve asked them to talk about is what should high quality childcare look like and how should it be funded? Now I don’t know which of you would like to go first?

Chris: Okay, I’ll start. Well good morning everyone, I’m going to come at this from the systems kind of perspective and maybe some of the others can look at kind of the conditions that make for good childcare and I’m going to talk about the system and the funding bit of it and looking back over the 20 years which we were invited to do. The whole fit of childcare within a system of support for families and young children and where that sits in relation to the kind of services that we

provide as a country, as a society, and that balance between what families should provide, what the state should provide, what the PVI sector should provide and where does childcare sit in that system. And I think over the last 20 years many of us, and certainly for me, I've been working hard to try and get a less fragmented system of support for children and families, and unfortunately we have in place, or historically we've had in place in England a very fragmented system of support around families and children, some very excellent parts of the system, some very poor qualities, some big gaps in the system. And I think we can't look at childcare on its own and I guess maybe some of the other panels might like me, have a big problem with a term childcare anyway, because childcare doesn't really capture what it is we're doing when children are away from home and being looked after and living their lives, that's how I'd like to see it, living their lives in other places with other people under certain kind of conditions. So what are we trying to do when we're trying to put in place places and spaces for young children to go to. And the childcare agenda by the way isn't just an early years agenda, it goes right the way through as children go through primary and maybe secondary as well, where do children go outside the home, or when parents need to be not caring for them, not in charge of them. So it's a big sort of societal thing about what are the places, spaces for children from babyhood on. So systemically that's been a real challenge for us because we've had, you know, as we move into a modern global society, it's very clear that the places and spaces where children would have been historically in the wider family, in the wider community, those conditions have radically changed, people are in contexts, local contexts where those more traditional places like grandparents or extended family or even just out and about like I used to be, we used to just go out and about if I wasn't at home. I can remember my mother saying to me as a young child, youngish child in the morning, "Make sure you're back for tea," and we'd, she'd go her way and we'd go our way and we'd be out and about in the neighbourhood. Well that would be now viewed as a parent who had, you know, would be taken into care I think 'cos, you know, where are your children. So I think this is a big issue about where children go and how children are contained and I think many of us have been working very hard to develop a more integrated and a more, and more capacity and more integrated system that really does give children places and spaces to have a good childhood. Now then you become the issue about how professionalised does that have to be, you know, does it have to be just a warm cosy homely kind of place with warm cosy homely kind of people. What we know now in the last 20 years is that these times in children's lives are critically important for life chances, we know how much learning, I mean you use that word, is going on, if I'm talking about these very young children. But also how important the out of school spaces are where children are learning about themselves and how to live their lives and what communities and the wider society expects of them. So there's this whole debate about care and education and I think some of, some progress has been made, we know now that childcare has to really understand the pivotal importance of those experiences in terms of children's early development. So that emphasis between care, education, family, support, affordability, I just want to say this, it is very clear that you cannot provide good quality spaces and places without investment, I think governments have to invest like most of the rest of Europe and help families provide affordable spaces and places for children to go to. Okay, I'll finish there, thank you.

Debbie: Okay, well as a Nursery Manager, as a practitioner, I think that one of the issues that concerns me a great deal is about the quality of the staff that you have in your setting. And I sort of made a few notes here, some of the things that concern me, things like the quality of training that staff are receiving, the level of qualification that is expected to be as an acceptable level of qualification for staff working in early years, and I think all of these things impact on the professionalism that goes on within a setting. And as a manager who interviews staff, candidates for posts, one of the things that I find really difficult is having applicants that can't fill in application forms, can't string sentences together on paper, let alone in an interview, and I wonder, you know, how we can expect these people to provide excellent quality childcare if they actually can't do these things, you know, they can't, if they can't write about themselves how can they then transfer their skills into caring for other people's children. The expectations of parents, particularly in a setting like ours, is very high, our parents are very well informed about child development, early years education, and so we have to be able to match their expectations all the time. A previous, a Nursery Manager that I know said that it's the wow factor and it's not just that wow factor once, it's every time they walk through the door, parents expect to be able to say, "Wow, I didn't know you could do that with children," and that actually requires a lot of innovative thought within the practitioners working in that setting. I suppose an important element of that from my point of view is the continual professional development of my team, which is always very challenging, and also at times very expensive and when you're in the PVI sector and the profit line or the breaking even as it is in our case is an important part of my role, CPD can become a very expensive option for us. So we have to be quite innovative about how we're going to do that with our work, our team as well. We're very fortunate here at Warwick and I have to say this 'cos one of my team is actually sat in the audience (*all laugh*), to say that I actually have a very well-qualified, very highly qualified, very highly experienced team working at Warwick and I think that makes a huge difference to the kind of care that you're able to provide to other people's children. I quite agree with Chris about the issues around funding, and also the question about whether it, you know, what care should be, should it be care, should it be called care? Oh gosh, sorry (*laughs*), I've lost my track. That's all thank you.

Dorothy: Thank you very much, if we move over to Tony?

Tony: Yeah, can you hear me if I project at the back? (*Audience says yes*). Sorry, wave at me, if I start to falter. Just picking up from what Debbie said, I think I'd like to start there. In terms of [?? 27.11], what we call things, you know, I think the Russian Bhaktin, that's B-h-a-k-t-i-n, did a lot on discourse analysis and he talked about, there's a surface level at which we discuss things and there's a bit underneath which we get the subtext, and there's points at which you can actually come down from the surface which is what we pretend it is to actually the bit underneath, it comes back to what you mentioned about values, and I think sometimes the use of particular words and phrases helps us do that. So purposeful play, what on earth does that mean, you know, and yet it sounds kind of warm and fuzzy and something we would want to embrace. And I think there's, we've had a number of phrases that people have raised this morning about that and I think it was Byron that said, you know, be open to everything, but doubt everything and I think that's quite a good approach for you to adopt as

researchers and people who are interested in the field, be open to the new ideas, but question it, and I think particularly question some of these phrases and Chris is right to raise this issue of childcare, what does that actually mean and how does that play into, you know, we have this new Minister now, trust, who comes from the right wing of the Tory party and is into free enterprise, part of a free enterprise group. So childcare for her is going to mean specific kinds of things which is all about money and accessibility which I agree, but it isn't about quality. So I would want to trouble in our rubric first of all the notion of childcare, is that really what we're about 'cos it's much more substantive than that, it's about family services and children's services and we need to think about that globally in terms of integrated services and partnerships, people working together, the team around the child and so on. And the other part of our text actually says high quality, you know, and we can, oh yeah high quality but actually we do need to trouble that because it means completely different things to different people, ask children what they mean by high quality they'll give you a completely different view to what a head teacher of a primary school maybe, you know, what are you expecting from this preschool setting, or what the parents are expecting, you know, and for parents actually security and costs is high on their agenda. So I do think that we, and if you want to look at, you know, people who's troubled that, have a look at Moss, [Dalberg and Hens? 29.45], they question the whole idea of high quality. If you're asking me what high quality is (*laughs*) and Chris and I have written books on this, you know, we've got a kind of list of ten dimensions of what you can look at. If I was to say what's the key variable in quality, and what we can all agree on it has to be the characteristics of the interactions between the child and the adult, the adult has to feel secure, located, have a sense of identity in their environment and often that is transmitted through social, emotional aspects of their environment, child has to feel located, secure. If the child is secure the child will go out and explore because one of the wonderful things about being human is that we're all full of exploratory drive and it's a wonderful thing to have exploratory drive, [?? 30.38] talks about the state of flow that actually we're often at our happiest as adults when we're actually engaged in the task that gives us pleasure, I'll leave you to describe what that is but (*all laugh*) that when we're engrossed in something our friend [?? 30.59] talks about this in terms of involvement and has got a five point scale and everything, involvement scales. And so I think security first of all, then the ability to explore, and finally the whole bit about me making. And for me if I'm looking at a quality curriculum I'd want to look at what we called educative dispositions, educative dispositions, there's another set of weasel words that you need to unpack, educative dispositions, what do I mean? I mean a curriculum that allows for exploratory drive, that allows for curiosity in children, that allows for imagination and exploration. And creativity, precision, persistence, these are what I mean by the attributes of dispositions. And most of all I think together with self-management and self-efficacy, something about being in control of your world and being able to make decisions, that stuff that Caroline Dweck has done around mastery orientation I think is very meaningful. I have a Greek friend who's into his 80s now and he's lived the most wonderful life because he still is lifting up things to find out what's underneath and he's a great guy to engage with because he's just into the world and all the other aspects of the world. I have three grandchildren at the moment, or case studies as I call them (*all laugh*) and they're all around two years of age, you know, it's wonderful to watch them. They have

such exploratory drive, you know, everything possible, we're at the stage where we have to lift all the things up to a certain level so they can't reach it. So the difference between two year olds and an 86 year old, you know, to be able to retain that exploratory drive, that enthusiasm, the awe and wonder bit about the world and yet you can point to six year olds in some of primary schools for whom it has been switched off and I think that is one of the key variables. So key variables are about quality of the interaction, that's the adults, the home learning environment and the practitioner working with the parent and the child, those qualities of interaction, but it's also probably the most key variables in terms of quality is going to be the leadership of the centre that the children are in, which comes back to you Debbie (*all laugh*).

Liz: Thank you very much Tony, have we got time for... have we time for other contributions?

Dorothy: I think we'll move on and then we'll sort of open it more widely if that's okay with everybody. There'll be plenty of time at the end of you all to ask questions of the panel as well. The next thing we're going to discuss is, leads on from that and it's about training of early years practitioners, so who's doing that one? Carol and Mary? Carol, yes, we haven't heard from you yet.

Carol: It is interesting how these different topics have interacted (*all agree*), talking about professionals, talking about quality care ... And taking that point, Vincent, Braun and Ball (2008) stated that in the 19th Century we introduced primary education for all, and the 20th Century we had secondary education for all, and in the opening years of the 21st Century we sought to establish preschool education for all. But if we look at that provision and then look at the professionals who serve that provision, then it's a market that is still very much marked by private provision and, I suppose, one of the things that the last ten years has marked in the extension of provision and training, has been major development in state provision. Provision, targeted particularly at socially disadvantaged areas as Helen Penn said, has transformed provision from a political backwater and helped to redefine childcare as a public matter rather than a private one. And I think this is on the one hand quite important but at the same time we must remember that our government does intend for childcare to remain as a mixed economy, so whilst we've increased our public provision we can say we still have 80% of nursery places that are private. And fees that are high in England compared with the rest of the world and particularly Europe are paid for by the parents themselves. Now that might be okay but we'll come back and look at whether it's okay for the middle classes later on. In fact I suppose what marks the 21st Century with Gordon Brown introducing tax credits to the poor it is more of the working classes who use these ... putting their children into nursery schools to get back into work which has had a strong encouragement by the government. So that leads us then to looking at what kind of provision and therefore what kind of professionals for what kind of world? And I think Oberhuemer, Schreyer and Neuman (2010) have been very helpful in looking across the OECD countries in terms of the qualifications that exist and that leads us to look at some questions we might ask ourselves about our training and provision. So what they first noted, which of course John Bennett did before that, in terms of formal qualifications, there's a significant gap across Europe in the

training and qualifications of professionals for birth to three years and those for three to six years. That said, if we look at the rich countries of Scandinavia, we look at Norway, Sweden and Denmark, there is fully integrated state provision from birth through to six or when children go to school and indeed for Slovenia too from the old socialist traditions. So there is enormous diversity. However if we look at the three to sixes, depending on when children enter school, most countries do have an International Standard Classification in Education (Level 5), therefore we have a more widely accepted graduate professional, more anon about England. So, in a way, what Oberhuemer *et al.* (2010) suggest is we've got more convergence around the three to sixes and the need for a graduate profession which you folk (audience) are all going to go out to contribute to, which is great. However, if we look at England, as I've said already then for teachers in the state-maintained sector for three to four years there will be a graduate profession but still there will be a large number of children in private nursery provision and that will be probably the middle classes from three to five, where there is more concern about children's cognitive development, for good or ill. So that leads us to the next stage of discussion - that we've got very much a difference in qualifications across the age range, but we've also got growing convergence about the need for a graduate profession for three to sixes. But we also have differences in the nature of the training which we haven't talked about because one can be a graduate in many different ways and so we have a social pedagogy in Denmark where there is a lot more emphasis on care and welfare and this overlaps with the early curriculum debate, very little State control of the curriculum which is also interesting compared with our own very mixed system and our high levels of control. So what we do see however is a growing convergence in emphasis on the pedagogical aspects of children's development in the three to six range. But this raises questions - what sort of balance do we want between pedagogy and the other disciplines in the birth to fives or sixes; what qualification requirements are there for the core practitioners and their auxiliaries because again, remember that whilst we might have an EYP in every setting, there will still be, it is likely there will be other people who may have no qualifications or a level two or a level three National Vocational Qualification, or whatever. So what balance do we want; what sort of curriculum and specialisms? Do we want an age-focused approach; do we want generalist or specialist concepts? And that brings me rapidly, since Tim isn't able to be with us, to say that what we do see also across the 21st Century from 2002 onwards is a senior practitioner with an Early Years Foundation degree and from 2006, increasingly an Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) underpinned by any degree and whilst the Children's Workforce and Development Council said that we should have an EYP, a graduate EYP in every Sure Start Children's Centre by 2010 two in disadvantaged areas, and an EYP in every daycare setting by 2015, this raises questions. We no longer have a Workforce Development Council and where will those targets go as we fall, if we do, deeper into recession? They were ambitious targets. So wrapping that up, where are we now? We still have an EYP which was not the case before though there have been tensions and challenges to its conceptualisation, I think, right the way through to the Nutbrown Report (2012) which is rather suggesting that EYPs should possibly be fast tracked to teachers, again reinforcing that idea that the respectable way forward is to have an early years trained teacher in the setting. So in summary, we have no timescale for professionalising the whole EY workforce which is interesting. The system does

remain confusing and there are a variety of recommendations within the Nutbrown Report but whilst there is this diversity it has a sort of disempowering effect on professionalisation practices. So where do we go from here? A few studies, as Oberhuemer *et al.* (2010) noted, have actually looked at the association between staff qualifications level and quality measures. Barnett (2004) reported numerous of studies suggesting education level of staff predicted quality of interactions between staff and children, and children's learning and development. But not all US studies report consistently positive effects of staff having a Bachelor-level degree. Early *et al.* (2006) found an association between staff with higher than Bachelor-level qualifications and quality features of the setting, such as children's achievements and this was confirmed by a subsequent meta-analysis of studies (Early *et al.*, 2007). Sylva *et al.* (2004) found that the qualification of the head of centre related positively to overall quality ratings and this finding has influenced English policy. So, whilst there is some evidence that a Bachelor-level degree leads to positive effects on quality of early education, it's by no means secure.

Across the world there is a growing political interest in early childhood, and it makes us pause at this moment to ask - what images of childhood, children, within the particular historical contexts we're in, including the socio-economic context (which we'll come back to in a moment) and what cultural scripts do we have that will permeate our conceptions about what a professional is going to be today, and by 2015, and by 2020? So I've taken a bit more time (*all laugh*)...

Dorothy: That's alright.

Mary: Okay, I hope this doesn't get too repetitious, we end up saying similar things across all the piece don't we? Back in 1997 I think it was Barry Shearman who was in the Education Select Committee at the time drew an analogy between getting somebody to repair your washing machine and you wouldn't dream of having somebody not qualified to do that and yet routinely we handed over the care of our most precious asset, our children to people with, you know, a vast range of qualifications and some perhaps not quite as high as we might have thought. And Carol referred to the EPPE Study, that was commissioned around about the same time and one of their key findings was indeed about the quality of who led settings really mattered and if we think back to the curriculum debate, however we envisage the curriculum, these professionals are the backbone of it, it's only as good as the people on the ground implementing it. And when I say as good as the people on the ground I think part of professionalization is actually helping people to sometimes challenge rather than just see themselves as delivers of whatever the curriculum is. But this, so this notion of the quality and the qualifications of the staff has been growing over the last decade and it's led to a number of initiatives that Carol talked about, things like the foundation degrees for people who've already been working in settings for a couple of years, they could go on and do a two year course, some of them then transferred to a third year course but they didn't have to, but then this new qualification came on the scene. Or actually I should say it's not a qualification, it was a status, the early years professional status and actually the fact that it was called a status and not a qualification I think says something about this debate about where it sits alongside teachers, in theory it was supposed to be an equivalent status but was it

in practice and not least in terms of the terms and conditions for people who were early years professionals, became early years professionals could expect. So there's been this progression but I think sometimes as well that's felt to people on the ground that actually it's shifting goalposts, you told me, I got the senior practitioner status, now I've got to go on and do a third year degree course. And there was some debate as well about the whole EPPE side of things about did it need to be a teacher, was it the graduateness that made it, having the time to reflect on issues of child development, the importance of play and so forth? And if it was the graduateness, actually what you've studied, how significant is that? And some of these issues are still the sorts of things that Cathy Nutbrown was exploring in her recent review, but she seems to be, she talks there, about the lack of consistency that we've still got across the sector. She intimates that actually a nought to seven teacher would be good, but there again where would that leave an EYP? There's this notion of fast tracking but here they've got another goal to attain. Also upping the minimum qualifications to work with children, thinking about, as you were saying about the English and the maths that they come into work with our young children with.

Throughout our report as well we were saying that however we train or prepare our staff for the workforce, and once they're there their continuing professional development, we need to have a strong emphasis on child development and the importance of play in there.

I alluded earlier on to the notion of parity and I think it's all tied up and all these things linked together about the economics of it, was this one of the reasons they didn't go down the EYPS to teacher route earlier on because it would just cost a lot? Will they take up what Nutbrown has said because, you know, in an age of austerity I wonder what the government are going to do with that suggestion. And I was at this point hoping we would have had Tim here and could defer to the big research project they did looking at early years professionals over the first few years. At my own institution we did a very small scale piece of research with early years professionals and there was a lady there who came onto the foundation degree very lacking in confidence, didn't believe she had very much to offer at all, did the foundation degree, got her final, her honours degree, went on to become an early years professional and in the interviews she said, "I found my voice." She now leads a network of childminders and helps them with their training. So I think there are some remarkable individual personal stories there, where actually it did mean something to them, but actually people in that small scale research were also saying when they're in the workforce and amongst parents even as well it's still not widely recognised. But even amongst fellow professionals sometimes they were still seen as not quite as good as the teacher, as the reception class teacher. And while we have this disparity in what we reward our early years sector workers, you know, what is that saying about how we truly value this role as a country? But of course we now have some ministers who think that affordability is key and of course it is if you're a parent looking to, you know, how are you going to fund it. So where should that funding be coming from, maybe we have to bite the bullet and say, "Do you know what, as a nation if we say this is important and we value the people that work with our children and thereby our children, we ought to be prepared to put our hands in our pocket and pay a bit more tax potentially." Sounds like a party political broadcast (*all laugh*). But underneath it all, well what does it mean, this term professionalism: back to terms, what does it mean to be a professional? Lawyers are professionals,

teachers, what does it mean if you haven't got professional agencies that are speaking up to you like the medical profession does? Is it actually not about the getting somewhere, I am now a professional, is it about an ongoing process that has to carry on the continuing professional development, that this continual reflection on why I'm doing what I'm doing, why I believe what I do. Is it about becoming an ambassador and an advocate for that role?

Dorothy: Thank you. Right, we've moved onto another area which is linked to what Carol and Mary had been talked about 'cause we're looking at how we are going to help children fulfil their full potential and how we can ensure that whilst we are doing that our children are also safe. And for that can I turn to Debbie and Tony please?

Tony: Go on then.

Debbie: Really (*all laugh*)? Right, the issue of child protection. Yes, of course, early years workers need to be vetted to make sure that their children are safe in their care. For me it's an issue about how we do that, a few years ago my memories... years ago, very quickly, but it doesn't seem that long ago we were on the cusp of introducing the Independent Safeguarding Authority who were going to check every single person who ever came into contact with anybody else's child in any shape, form, or circumstance, and this was a huge machine, it was hugely unwieldy and then got shelved at the last minute. But what it was going to do was advise settings, professionals, organisations when somebody had some kind of criminal conviction that would preclude them from working with vulnerable people, all vulnerable people, not just children. Currently the situation is that members of staff working with children and other vulnerable people have a Criminal Records Bureau check against them which is better than nothing at all, but is actually only good for the day that it's done on because there is no mechanism within that for advising settings that since the last check this person has now received a criminal conviction. And for me as a manager I find that quite a concerning situation. I don't know what the future is going to hold with regards to the Independent Safeguarding Authority and the checks that they were proposing to introduce. I think that in terms of what we can do in the setting to protect children is to put measures in place that ensure that nobody is given the opportunity to harm a child. Within our own setting for example we make sure that new members of staff, students, anybody who we don't know well is not left alone with children, is not put into a position where their child could be at risk. The building that we're in which is, for anyone that's been over there, I'm not sure, is a fantastic purpose-built building and was actually designed with the safety of the children in mind so there's a lot of internal glass, meaning that there are no quiet corners where a child could be harmed unseen by another member of staff and it's an issue that we do take very seriously. The university expects us to renew our CRB checks every two years as well. But I don't think that's enough, I think there's more we can do, I don't know what that is (*laughs*), but I think there is more that we can do to protect children.

Dorothy: Thank you Debbie, and Tony?

Tony: Yeah, I want to link this to gender amongst other things. But I want to start with the, clearly childhood, the concept of childhood is a social construction, how we

view children and how we view what we're going to do with children comes out of our society and in a plural society that's quite different according to, you know, the subcultures within society. We can talk about other countries, we can talk about history, we can talk about the Victorian view of children, you know, seen but not heard kind of thing or sending them under... we were up in Yorkshire, near Bradford at Hockney's exhibition at Salt Mills and these big machines that used to be on these floors and the kids, 'cause they were small enough to get underneath would go and collect the fluff from the mill and all of that, you know, we've moved on haven't we, you know, and we can talk about the tiger mother, different constructions of childhood. And this all underpins how we view actually risks around children and I actually do feel that we've got this out of kilter, I think we have no idea how to judge risk in the western world anymore. I think we are completely swamped by what we read in the papers and these are often targeted at particular things. Having said that of course I believe in child protection issues and I think you should have rightfully systems in place, but I think we can go far too far, you know, I see people sawing down trees in playgrounds and someone, some little scrubby bush that some kids have made a den in, you know, they want a little space to explore their world, it's a little bush in the playground and then dinner superintendent is saying, "Come on out, come on, come on out where I can see you," you know, it's the most watched generation that there's ever been. And going back to what I was saying about exploration and exploratory drive I think there are big issues, I have no idea what childhood is going to be like in the future, but when I look at my grandchildren, one of them the other day, there was a Home and Gardens or something posh like that on the, and this two year old was pressing one of the pictures with his finger on the magazine, okay, like that, pressing like that 'cos his mum's got a laptop thing, an iPad, and I'm thinking look at that, you know. 20 years ago I was running a conference sending out letters and licking them, you know, could you run an international conference (*laughs*), I mean that's the last 20 years, I've no idea what the future is going to be like for these little grandchildren of mine but when I see them doing this kind of thing which the mind just boggles and yet, you know, [Denzik? 57.13] talks about, the Danish guy, sociologist, he talks about there's a kind of way in which we all want to recreate our own childhood, you know, that we have he says a chronocentric view, in other words the time before of us, that was the old-fashioned time when our parents did these, (*makes gesture*) how old-fashioned could that be, and there's a time in the future, oh these kids today, but the time that we inhabited, you know, well for good or bad but, you know, that was just about right and that's what we're trying to recreate when we, it's a view, you can trouble that. But I think this notion of risk in my view and I do believe you, you know, the EYFS talks about key workers and so on that actually everybody's responsibility to protect the children and it's the foremost view of what the parents are looking for in terms of their choice of quality, are their children going to be secure, I think we can address all of those things. I actually think I'd like to see more social network systems put in place but that's a whole other issue in order to inform parents more about what's going on in the settings. But I do feel that we've lost our way in terms of risk and that this is seriously impacting on the way that young children explore the world. Chris talked before about, you know, you... her mum said to go off and eat your sandwiches (*laughs*), get out from under my feet and go off, Tessa Livingstone did some of this work and she gave maps of the neighbourhood to the

grandparents, draw a circle round, there's your house, draw a circle around where you were allowed to go, well we got on our bicycles, we went over there, we were out for eight hours, we actually tied a rope to a piece of tree and we swung across the river, you know. The places I used to go to, it's a brick croft, and there were things that I learnt there about the age of six, went to run away, went to stand up for myself, you know, all this sort of stuff that was quite important for me in later life, today you give the... the grandparents they could go out for the day and do all of these things, the parents, well we were allowed to go between this road and that road but the traffic was too bad but as long as we were in there and we were back by that, you know, that, and today it's about well I can't even get them out in the garden, they're up in their bedroom playing machines. I just worry about that and I'm just trying to put the other point of view and say we need to get this into context, of course there needs to be protection systems in place, but not so much that it interferes with actually development of children and that sense of adventure and exploration which I think is essential. And the gender bit is that of course when you're looking around this room and I'm not trying to imply that there's only one kind of gender or not... or even two kinds of gender, I'm sure there are more than two kinds and the different models of gender (*laughs*), but there's only four blokes in here and one of them is sitting at the front, you know, that's telling you something, that early childhood for me is not a female issue, it's a societal issue, so there's that isn't there and that's part of the subtext that we're not talking about here, that we need to address that as an issue. 'Cause I think actually children need to be, I was going to say need to be exposed to men but I don't mean that (*all laugh*), I do think that we need to think seriously about that. But yeah it beholds everybody and the team around the child and I think in terms of putting, making partnerships, particularly I'm feeling about children-centred, making partnerships about how we support and help children in terms of protection issues is hugely important. But I'm just putting the other point of view in terms of we need to get risk in, in balance.

Dorothy: Thank you Tony. Okay, and our last topic for debate is about... I think everything that we've heard so far has been leading up to this, is about social inequality and social mobility in relation to early years education and childcare. So I think Chris Carol and Jane, you were going to lead on this, Carol or Jane, who wants to go first?

Jane: Would you like to go first Carol?

Carol: Okay.

Dorothy: Thank you.

Carol: Well this topic felt a little bit depressing at this point in time (*laughs*). If I look back over the last Labour government, New Labour had as a central plank to its policy to tackle social exclusion, child poverty and welfare reform. And Tony Blair said at the time that it was his mission to eradicate poverty within a generation that led immediately or within a year to a comprehensive spending review and a tranche of anti-poverty initiatives. We can just pull out a few strands like, obviously the Sure Start local programmes at the time. Because central to the National Childcare Strategy (part of the Green Paper *Childcare Meeting the*

Challenge, 1998) was focused on increasing income for poor households, reducing the number of children growing up in families with no-one in work, so eliminating transmission of deprivation from childhood to adulthood. It attempted to establish high-quality affordable childcare in every community to support parents into work or training. We talked about the tax credits earlier. We'll see if we can look at what is happening now and what is projected for the next 15 years in those terms. So suffice it to say, the Sure Start local programmes became children's centres and that's another topic for another day. But towards the end of this period, as we approached the end of Gordon Brown's term of office, a range of very important reports appeared. Professor Sir Michael Marmot's (2010) review of health inequalities looked at health inequalities in terms of social justice and noted the real economic benefits across society, not just focusing on, targeting really poor children but giving every child the best start in life in terms of early development of physical and emotional health and cognitive, linguistic and social skills through high-quality services that has also been central to this morning's discussion. The Field Report (2010), another independent review stressed that poverty and life chances were predicated on experiences in the first five years, the Allen Report (2011) focused on early intervention to improve 'school readiness' in the Foundation Years, whilst the Munro review (2011) of child protection again emphasised working with parents and the effectiveness of early intervention. This took us to the Tickell review of the EYFS again emphasising the importance of early intervention.

Meanwhile, just picking up an earlier thread, the first national evaluation of the Sure Start local programmes, published in 2005 and followed by others in 2010 and 2011, sadly showed only limited across-the-board impact on the lives of young vulnerable children and families. By 2010, two health targets related to body mass index and physical health were met and also four family targets, for instance, related to creating a more stimulating home environment and being less chaotic but there was little evidence of improvement in cognitive learning. Two negative findings related to depressive mothers and lack of visits to schools to find out about the progress of children

So where are we now? After all we cannot say that we are a generation on, but ten years on, we have got 3.6 million (27%) of people in poverty. One in four, concentrated in the poorest 100 wards, so again in those areas where there are Sure Start children's centres. Whilst there was evidence at one point, between 1998-9 and 2010-11 of one million families lifted out of poverty (through at least one parent working), there is a projected rise from 2012-13 in poverty with 300,000 more by 2015-16 and 4.2 million by 2020. So we are clearly in a very difficult and challenging time, much in contrast to Scandinavia, where Denmark, for instance, has less than 3% of children growing up in poverty.

Global Millenium Development Goals to eradicate poverty, increase gender equality, reduce child mortality, improve maternal and child health, combat HIV/AIDS and malaria, ensure a sustainable environment and global partnerships for development are lagging. Targets are also being challenged in terms of food nutrition by volatile food prices. So, to sum up - what does that mean in terms of social mobility? The picture is not particularly optimistic. In fact there's been

little social mobility since the 1970s, in other words children changing and expanding their opportunities beyond those of their parents and their grandparents. UK has the worst record among the OECD industrialised countries and here children's futures are tethered to their parents' incomes and getting worse. So again taking Norway, Sweden and Denmark as examples, there is a recognised association between developed countries with high levels of mobility and high levels of equality that we might consider.

But never mind, the coalition government has set up a Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, so all will be well (*all laugh*) and they note that if the UK was more equal then murder rates would be halved, mental illness would be reduced by two-thirds, obesity would be halved, imprisonment would be reduced by 80%, teenage births by 80%, levels of trust at the 85% level. Meanwhile unearned wealth in this country is unchanged. Look at Mr Topshop whose family is installed in Monaco (*all laugh*). The middle classes incomes are stagnating (I don't expect many people feel terribly sorry for them) but there is entrenched disadvantage at the bottom. So that at this point in time when we look back it may be regretfully, but still we move forward hopefully since finally I suppose we should add that parents still make a big difference to the education of their children and education is the main engine which produces social mobility.

Dorothy: Thank you.

Jane: Well I'm going to take a slightly different tack because all the things that Carol was thinking about in terms of social inequality and poverty I had on my list so I'm going to look at now marginalisation of children as a group, as a kind of inequality. Even 20 years ago Neil Postman proposed that the high watermark of 100 years of childhood was over. Yet in the past two decades I think we've seen English children becoming increasingly, ever increasingly subject to adult agendas, very often to the exclusion of their own and I think of three words when I think of this actually, I think that English children are constrained currently by schoolification, adultification and vilification and a lot of tions in there I know. But I'll just expand a little bit if I may. Children's spaces have dwindled, I'm sure you're all familiar with the work of Peter Moss and his colleague Peachey, they share with us that it's not just physical spaces, but children might inhabit, there are other spaces too, social, cultural, discursive, temporal, ethical spaces, these are all spaces that adults have gradually come to sort of colonise and remove children's autonomy from. Schoolification is evident in the pressing down, and it is a pressing down of literacy and numeracy on children's lives in early childhood education and care settings. And also this notion of scholarisation at home. And adultification is evident in commercialisation, lack of opportunities for children to play, and if we think about their experiences now, even in early childhood, this focus on school readiness, this focus once they're in primary school of having to meet their targets all the time then they're making a contribution to the economy of the future, so I think picking up on Tony's point earlier of all the children bending down and picking up all the little bits of linen and cotton from the floor, have we really moved on so very much, I'm not sure. Features of the high watermark of childhood as Postman referred to, such as opportunities to play out of doors and develop self-regulation have really dwindled. Sue Palmer says that

the developed world is suffering an epidemic of misery amongst its young. And a third of these components, vilification of children seems to be rife and we saw this very evidently after the London riots, which expose a very deep seated antipathy to English children, even though very few children and young people were actually involved at all. And following this Barnardos conducted a poll and they found that 38% of the people who responded and they were adults responded disagreed that children who get into trouble are in need of help. In fact some commentators went as far as to say that the London riots were seen as the result of two generations of excessive child protection (*laughs*), slightly perverse. Children's uses of outdoor space are viewed very negatively and there's quite a substantial tranche of literature on this, quite a lot has come out of the University of Northampton, not that I'm advertising but we just happened to have had a group in recent years that's really focused on all of that. So in the two past decades children have really become increasingly excluded sorry from their public spaces which other groups remain free to use. And particularly in relation to participation, internationally agreed children's rights to which we signed up in 1991 are not accorded to English children, they really are denied the full potential of their capabilities and that's well documented. There's good evidence to indicate that English children's participation, freedom, and happiness are poor in comparison with levels of wellbeing that their contemporaries enjoy in other countries. And I'll just leave it there because otherwise I shall just be repeating all the very sensible things that Carol was saying, thank you.

Dorothy: Thank you.

Chris: Okay, oh dear (*all laugh*). This is a bit of a... and maybe what I can try and do is lift it, us a bit, 'cos I mean all those things that have just been spoken on are absolutely true, inequality, the lack of social mobility remains a defining feature of English society, it has always been, it is, we are one of the most if not the most unequal societies in Europe, maybe in the developed world, we have the lowest levels of social mobility of any other country in the world. Well what do we do, do we sit and wring our hands and say, "Well," do we give up, it's just that's how it's going to be. Actually if I look over the last ten years or so and Tony and I have just done a review for Ofsted interestingly on what can schools and the school system do and education do in addressing this big issue because at the moment our system is failing to address this issue if we're blunt, it hasn't managed to do it. We've done a review of the international evidence and it's quite interesting and actually quite optimistic for us in our sector. And what it's saying is yes all those things are true in England but the evidence is saying that we do know a lot more now about how we might begin to address some of these deep seated structural systemic inequalities that our children are believing. And I don't know about you but I actually came into education, to because I had a wonderful defining passionate interest in a subject, or a discipline, my route in was through social change and social policy. And I had a deep seated desire to give the least advantaged people in our society a better life and a better chance, it sounds very, you know, pie in the sky but it really does drive me wanting to make a difference, wanting to make a contribution to a few lives or more than that. And I think there is nothing more political than early childhood and early childhood education and your job to do that, it's about where possibilities are planted in people, it's where future lives are shaped and generated and it's where doors are opened, or by the

way slammed shut. So we are positioned pivotally in a system that can change that as a capacity, we've not been doing it very well but we know we can do it and we know what seems to make a difference. So of course there's the big income and the economic side of it, but we know health inequalities are right, Carol you're right to mention that, health is a big part of that and health is intergenerational passed on, poor health is intergenerationally passed on which is why the new EYFS has put physical development which is the health dimension into our work, it's very much a central part of what we went to do. If we don't give children a basis where they know how to eat well, to exercise, to handle stress and pressures, then, and those are learned skills and capacities, then they'll continue to live out unhealthy, you know, poor nourished lives. So health we know if we make an input to that makes a difference, it'll change possibilities generationally. What else do we know? Again it's been mentioned, we know that parenting and home learning environments make a difference, make a huge difference and in the new EYFS your work and our work with parents to support parenting styles and home based contexts and to support parents in that role is really really important and that can make a difference, a long-term difference on what conditions children are experiencing from babyhood on. And the other bit is that children that get enhanced access to high quality early education and I'm distinguishing that with the care agenda although good quality early education has that style to it, early education can make a difference and the recent evidence that we've been looking at estimates that it can redress all those income inequalities by about 50%. Now that's a lot, that's worth fighting for, 50% difference to a life, 50% of children being shifted, 50% of life chances opening up I think is worth fighting for and we know systemically in the system the early childhood bit, this health bit, this parenting bit and early education, good cognitive experiences for our least advantaged children can address and make up for 50%, in a system that's a lot. And I think that's why we've got this rollout extension of the two year old entitlement with an early education bit to it because that evidence is there, if we're gonna do something, the new head of Ofsted is saying, "I've suddenly got to understand that the early education bit has got to be part of what we do, primary and secondary schools it's too late," it's already intervention, we know that this entrenchment, this inequality is already firmly in place by the time they enter primary school, maybe even earlier than that. So I'm not so depressed by it because I think it's positioning us to be able to do that, but we have to fight and we have to argue and in times of austerity we can make the case that we disproportionately have to have the resources and the well qualified staff and the places and the spaces and that share of a diminishing resource that enables us to do that job. Thank you.

Dorothy: Thank you. Well thank you very much to all our panellists, I think shall we give them a round of applause? (*Applause*). And I think Liz and I's perspective, of looking back over the past 20 years what we've seen is things come and things go and as Chris said we're in the frontline, sometimes we manage to take two steps forward and then we have to take a couple of steps back, but incrementally over time things are changing and we do have things in place which we didn't have 20 years ago. But I'd like to open it up to you all now to ask any question that you like really of any of the members of the panel, something that's sparked off an interest for you in what they've said.

(Waiting for microphone).

Audience: Thanks, it was quite an interesting conversation, actually one of the question, it's not a question really, it's more like a comment and it has to do with the politics and ethics of care, that was a topic that was mentioned by many of you and it's quite an interesting sort of paradox, it seems that we seek here being moving from the private domains to the public domains, however we don't question what a public domain mean in that case because increasingly care is becoming more of a sort of, a category of economic interest and especially within neoliberal family policies, care is something to make money about and care seems to be either to be seen either as an obstacle for parents who care for them, especially disabled children and can't go or access the job market, or something that you can outsource to low paid people, mainly women tend to be the lowest paid people to care for the children. So I just want to kind of unpick a little bit those politics and ethics of care and especially I believe that has quite significant implications when it comes to understanding risk and they've used the spaces and places of children, so yeah, I would welcome any thoughts on that.

Dorothy: Would any of you like to address that? Yes, Tony.

Tony: In The Times this morning which I just read over coffee just now the main lead is on care for the elderly and I think that there's some interesting analogies that are happening between, if we're not careful, how that's developed, care for the elderly and care for our very youngest and you often find that the extremes of society, the most vulnerable society including people with special needs and so on, that they're the ones who suffer the greatest periods of austerity. And I think if you look at care of the elderly you see that such things as stimulation and education and so on have been removed, in this review this morning they were saying that actually even basic needs like 20% of these institutions which have become privatised, don't even give enough nutrition to the people that are in the centres. So I think that if you see care as something of putting people away so that the rest of us don't have to worry about it there's an issue there and that's one of the reasons why I want to trouble the use of the word childcare, so I think there is something in the public conception of care pushing people away, you know like we used to do in the Victorian ages, put people in institutions, it was taken care of if you like, that's my worry.

Dorothy: Anybody else? Carol.

Carol: I was just thinking how the Sure Start local programme ethos seemed to change from a very initial focus on young children's early social, emotional and cognitive development, when it seemed to have become hijacked by the getting women back to work agenda. And it seems that despite all of the things we've said, a good deal of the agenda has been allowing all classes of women to get back to work and again going back to the Vincent, Braun and Ball study, it was quite interesting how more advantaged women from Wandsworth and Battersea had very different views. They were very concerned that their birth to three children should be with nannies or childminders because they were concerned about their emotional development, whereas the less advantaged mums who had less voice and anyway had to use tax credits, would put their children in

day-care. At the age of three to six it changed, so it seems to me that the discourses around what we do and why we do it at a political level have changed and underneath that it isn't about the needs of children. I think there has been this sense that it is about the adults and their needs, or is it really about the children and it often comes back to this - where are the children's voices in this? In fact, we're making these decisions, being able to because as Heckman says, you get more kids into early good quality care, you're going to make more money for your society later on, rather than thinking about the needs of the children. So it's a tricky one because it's clear that there are different discourses and different impetuses in different parts of society but, at the end of the day, at the macro level we've got these competing discourses about caring about the children but actually getting more money into the economy.

Dorothy: Thank you. Another question?

Audience: This kind of links in a way but how do the panel see the need to get better qualified staff and better equipped staff that I think Debbie mentioned, you know, literacy and numeracy, how do you balance that with the continuing low wages within the sector and the fact that the sector is still driven very much by competition as mentioned the government still wants a childcare mixed economy. So sort of how do you sort of balance the need for better staff, better paid staff against competition and the lack of funding to be able to provide those staff.

Jane: I haven't got a very long answer for that, it's quite a short one, I don't, what I actually firmly believe is that universal care, whether it's for children or for the elderly is the concern of every single one of us in society and that that's an economic and also a moral issue and until and unless we do actually adhere to that we are going to have these continuing tensions.

?: And I'll just pick that up as well and it's something I said in one of my earlier responses is that care of the elderly and care of the young is expensive to provide it well with the trained staff that they're going to give them the quality of life that we'd hope young children or the elderly would have and that costs money and I think it has to be subsidised by the whole of society through the tax system, in other words there has to be public subsidy and I think society has to do that. I don't think that a market economy will deliver it, it doesn't mean that the private sector can't be involved but a market driven society won't do it, we need a regulated and subsidised system is my belief and we have to have a government that takes that on.

Audience: Do you think that middle class parents want their cake and eat it though to a certain extent, they don't want to pay for childcare fees but they want quality provision for their children?

?: Yeah, I think that's probably true, they want the best quality but they've got to put their hands up. But I come back to your point, it's everybody's responsibility, you know, our children are our children, our elderly are our elderly, what kind of society do we want to live in. So that cost should be distributed and shared fairly, it's enormously expensive to have a young child and, you know, and to be struggling so I acknowledge that, it's very hard and you want to pay but it's very

difficult for many families. So I think we've got to have a collective view about this and putting it down to an individualised society, it's where England is gonna position itself, is it going to be a social welfare, social investment kind of society or not and I think it's that choice.

Dorothy: Pat?

Pat: I also think the workforce itself has to find its voice in this and it is harder to find your voice when you're on low pay and you're working long hours for less money and you don't feel valued and don't feel you have considerable status in a society and if it's any consolation, I'm sure it won't be but those of us who are working early years in higher education have to fight those battles as well because early years is often marginalised in many institutions in higher education, it's seen as a low status area so I think events like this are really important and I do actually think that when people move into the early years workforce, I didn't think this when I moved into the early years workforce, it's only an awareness that's come to me later and with more experience but when you move into that workforce I think probably more than any other part or maybe it is with the elderly, you know, you realise that you need ongoing training and development, there is so much to learn, there is so much to understand about young children and how they learn, about the families that they're living in and the diversity that exists amongst those families and about the communities in which those children find themselves. Multiple levels of complexity but as a worker in that sector you're trying to mesh and marry every day as you engage with those children and their parents. And so I think we have to find ways to collectivise our voice, to build cooperatives, whatever it is that we do we find ways to join together to make demands, to ask for entitlements and rights in relation to training and development. If we sit around waiting for a government to give it us they'll not do it, we have to have our voice heard in order to make them sit up and take notice.

Dorothy: Thank you Pat. I think we've got time for one, maybe two more questions.

(Waiting for microphone).

Audience: Tim, I was greatly encouraged by a lot of the stuff that you said (*corrects name*), Tony, sorry, I haven't got my glasses on, sorry (*all laugh*), Tony, I do apologise, I was greatly encouraged by a lot of the things that you said, thinking about the other questions that have gone on, one of the things that comes to mind is that the heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart and as a collective of early years professionals and linking to the things that you've said about troubling the water and the key principles, how do you see the early years profession developing there and becoming secure in their identity as adults in order to teach, show children how to become confident in their learning. Does that make sense, I've got lots of things going around in my head and I'm trying to link it all together.

Tony: I mean it's a good question, it picks up from Pat's point about, you know, actually it's about power and voice and how we see ourselves in terms of our own professional status, or even our status vis-à-vis everybody else and I think, I often

go to places where you ask people, “What do you do?” and they sort of shuffle and look at their feet and say, “Well I’m only a nursery teacher,” as though it’s something almost to be embarrassed about, you know, instead of saying, “Actually I’m a nursery teacher and do you know if it wasn’t for me, you know, people wouldn’t be able to go out to work to sustain the economy and, you know, make a contribution and if it wasn’t for me these little kids wouldn’t grow up and have this view of the world.” And I think it’s this, I mean you’re right, it’s about us recognising that actually early years is hugely important and we need to be better advocates about it, instead of sort of, there’s a kind of, I have to say there’s a kind of cosiness within the system, you know, and then we’re all, is that we are agreeable or that we agree too easily kind of thing, you know, and maybe we do need to get over the wall and start pointing fingers and making noises and, you know, and dying our hair purple or whatever it is (*all laugh*). I mean I agree with you and I think that’s part of it is that if you don’t have that self-belief and self-confidence about what you do and to do that you have to be knowledgeable about your subject, you have to be articulate, but you have to have the get up and go to go and do it, you know, and that behoves all of us to speak on behalf of the big, an advocate is not speaking for yourself, it’s speaking on behalf of somebody else and that’s the issue. Good question.

Dorothy: Mary do you want to add to that?

Mary: It’s more or less the same thing but I think we do have to become small p political and that you’re right, the centre of it all is our heart and our beliefs and what we think about things, but sometimes that allows us to get kind of marginalised, they’re very well meaning and well-intentioned but we don’t need to pay much attention, they’ll just get on with it and I think we have to start engaging the head and bringing the two together and pushing ourselves, start to speak outwards rather than just reinforcing our own beliefs and views, but actually get those out there and make a real effort to do so and encourage every single student, you know, in this line of work to stand up and be proud for what we do and make sure everybody out there knows what we do and why.

?: And again I think we’re progressing with this, I think we do have much more of a collective sense of our sector and who we are and the importance of training and the words to say what we’ve done intuitively in the past and there’s a whole bank of theory and knowledge and research that’s developed phenomenally over the last, so there’s a lot of evidence that we can use, but I just wanted to pick up on the issue of leadership and I think we, you know, we haven’t been well led and we haven’t grown our leadership and the professional qualifications around leadership need to take onboard not just that we’re managing in the centre or we’re managing children’s learning but that we have to lead systems and in that leading we lead, you know, sideways and upwards through the system as well as downward to the children. And I do see some, I mean the NPQICL that for children’s centres which is about to be opened up to a wider group that can take on really good quality professional leadership training, ‘cos I think you need that, you need to have that, that leadership training, it’s not management training, not how to manage your resources and your staff rotas but how to inspire, how to vision, how to have a sense of what might be that and how to take people through change processes, that’s what leadership is about. So I think, you know, seeing

yourself as a potential leader and taking the professional development to give you the skill base to do that so I think we've got work to do. But I see it developing.

?: And I think it was coming through some of those qualifications of things like EYPS, the unseen, was bringing people together and they realised what the issues they were facing and the brick wall they were coming, everybody else was and then there was that kind of collective power that you get, that collective voice and...

?: But there is something about leadership, because there's a culture in early childhood, we're part of a team, it's not me it's us, we all do it together, but actually what we do need is strong powerful people who will say I'll take the risk, I'll put my head above the parapet, I'll lead us through this, I'll create and work, they work collaboratively but are not afraid to see their own leadership role and responsibilities.

Mary: There was one thing when we were doing the EYPS training and the assessment for it, there was a lot that was less than desirable about that process but one of the key things I remember we had to keep saying to the individuals on it was don't keep saying we, say I, I've done this, I've made that change, I've brought that about.

?: Yeah, and knowing that you individually can make a difference and being strong about that.

Tony: I look forward to coming back in 20 years time to celebrate the (*all laugh*) formation of the Warwick advocacy cooperative.

Liz: Excellent, just got time for one more question.

Dorothy: There's two actually, see how we get on.

Applause: Thank you, I thought that was really really interesting what you were all saying, I know I fully believe that we need to look back to see where we are today and I fully believe that we need to look to the future as well to see where we're going to go, but if I was being an advocate for children today I would say, "What about me?" 'cos I'm living in the here and I'm a child now, so my question would just be to each of you in one sentence to tell me if you were Prime Minister what you would do for me today (*all laugh*)?

Mary: Well I'll make myself very unpopular maybe, I would say, I would tell you you're going to have to pay more taxes to make this work.

?: I would probably say you don't have to pay more taxes, we have to get the money off the people who aren't paying the taxes (*all laugh*) because if we get it off them we can make it work.

Carol: Wrong solution at the wrong level, if we don't start at the top and redistribute, but that's a tricky one. And as far as advocacy goes there are such diverse groups,

sub-groups and subsets of subgroups, that makes it difficult for us to go after one thing.

Tony: It's an idea, in The Economist three weeks ago they were looking at a school district in Texas, you know, not known for its left wing liberalism (*all laugh*) where they, the school administration has decided that they would no longer, 'cos you go, you're in school till 18 in the States, they took the top year off and actually put that into providing services and this is in West Texas, that's an idea isn't it because it has to be about redistribution, you know, there are lots of kids out there that could be doing apprenticeships, have that money and put it into early years where it's going to make a difference.

Chris: I agree with all of that, I would also send you somewhere where there was a different country where they did things differently because you would then see that there are other possibilities and that would be a big inspiration I think, maybe you could take, who would you take with you, not Gove (*all laugh*), you can choose who you take with you, Osborne, the Chancellor (*overspeaking*).

Tony: It's not a great choice is it?

Chris: No, but you could get them by the neck while they're there couldn't you and rub their noses in it, that's what I'd quite like to do, come with me (*all laugh*).

?: Best answer.

?: I've got one more, I'd actually ensure that policy followed evidence 'cos I'm not convinced that's happening at the moment.

(*All say no*).

?: And I think for me it's an issue of recognising, you know, the society recognising the value of what we do because I think that so long as it is seen as just somewhere where you put your child while you go to work we will never move on from the...

Dorothy: Thank you. I think we're allowed five more minutes but then we will have to stop.

Tony: Isn't the problem, I don't see that (*overspeaking and laughing*) the problem with all of this, that we need to look at resource to justify our position in society as educators or carers or wherever we sit is that to justify our sector we need to show results, because that's the only way we're ever going to get more finance into our sector, so making continual change today we can't justify whether that's going to be the solution to the problem, without looking at the end of a generation, isn't that the problem with all of this, is that we sit here and discuss change, I mean I agree with the policy that people need to listen to the educationalists and the developmentalists who look at how children do unfold and somewhere we need to stop and say, "Okay, we might not get a result next year or in five years time but perhaps in 20 years time if the academics are actually heard and the people who study in this sector are allowed to, if our voice is heard, we're allowed to put into

practice all the things we've learned, then surely in a generation's time then we can be accountable and say, "Okay, we are brilliant at this," and perhaps the political signs should be, let's let the people who know what they're talking about, not Michael Gove for example (*all laugh*) actually take hold of this and run with it.

?: Yeah, I think you're absolutely right but I think it would be a very brave person that's going to say, "Right, stop, let's start again, you know let's do it the way we feel in our gut that it should be done," you know.

Carol: I was just wondering since we haven't got any money and we're not likely to have any money, perhaps instead of looking to the developed world we should be looking to places like South Africa where they are far more challenged in every respect in terms of health and wealth and wellbeing, and the sort of bottom-up approaches that are used there gather together a community of people around the carers, around the child and some of these are child-led households. Anyway, so their challenges are just outside our experience but given that they haven't got money and they depend on NGOs then perhaps what we ought to be doing is looking ... Now we could say against that, that's what happened to, is perhaps what Sure Start set out to do. There's something around the communities that's about their working together and finding ways to share their resources and their expertise since we ain't gonna have lots of money ... So we've got to look at it in different ways rather than saying, "Well, we've got to wait for the politicians or the academics," or sadly we'll wait a long time. In either case, probably it is about energising the communities and not disempowering them so that they take up their own ideas, but we help them realise their ideas or their agendas, but the answers are there possibly, not with the politicians and the academics certainly.

Dorothy: Anybody else want to make a comment on that? (*Pause*). Right, well it remains for me now to say thank you very much to our distinguished panel (*applause*) and thank you very much for our audience who I hope you've really enjoyed this morning and learnt a lot from it, I know I have, and just to say those of you who want to join in the workshops this afternoon please sign up before you go and I think that Chris and Tony have got some leaflets here about their conferences which those of you who are interested please pick them up. Thank you very much, thank you.