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Early Years collaboration between TACTYC and BERA EC SIG

During 2012/13 a series of policy developments in England suggested the need for stronger advocacy of young children's rights to high quality care and education. These developments included planned unfavourable changes to ratios of staff to young children (birth to three) in day care (DfE, 2013) and a particular version of school readiness, with a rise in the expectations for the literacy and mathematics Early Learning Goals in the revised Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum (DfE, 2012). Jane Payler, Chair of TACTYC: Association for the Professional Development of Early Years Educators, approached Elizabeth Wood, Convenor of the Early Childhood SIG, to suggest a new project that would build on previous collaborations. The aims of the new project were twofold: to produce briefing/guidance documents for policy makers in the approach to the next General Election, and to update the 2003 BERA Review 'Early Years Research: Pedagogy, Curriculum and Adult Roles, Training and Professionalism'. The briefing document is grounded in findings from national and international research evidence, government reports, and cumulative wisdom on high quality early years provision. Two research reviews – an academic and a user review, will be completed during 2014-15.

The new project began with two seminars, the first at the University of Winchester, 30th April 2013, in which over 50 academics and leading early years professionals shared research findings in posters and discussed recent research and policy developments in the four nations of the UK. Keynote presentations were made by Professor Denise Hevey, University of Northampton; Dr Christine Stephen, University of Stirling; Dr Glenda Walsh, Stranmillis University College; and Dr Jane Waters, University of Wales Trinity Saint David. Key themes for the policy guidance were developed from group discussions.

Further work was carried out on those themes at the second seminar at the University of Sheffield on 6th July 2013, following presentations from Professor Cathy Nutbrown and Wendy Scott, President of TACTYC. The work to formulate and refine the guidance continued in small groups over the following months and the resultant thematic briefs were further refined and compiled by Jane Payler and Elizabeth Wood. The complete draft document was made available for consultation to the TACTYC membership (528 members), to SIG members, and *The Canterbury Christ Church Baby Room Network* (NING), whose membership currently consists of 150 settings / professionals from

across the UK and beyond. Following consultation, one detailed overview document was produced, comprising all six themes together, and individual summaries of the themes.

The six themes that were agreed include:

Professionalism – Early Years as a Career

Parents and Families

Play and Pedagogy

Learning, development and Curriculum

Assessment, Transitions and School Readiness

Broader Policy Issues

The project has drawn on the expert knowledge of TACTYC and the BERA SIG members, who have given generously of their time, and have contributed considerable cumulative wisdom and experience. Both TACTYC and BERA have supported the production and dissemination of the documents and have lent their organisational strengths to our joint advocacy.

The next stages are as follows. First, we intend offer the document to the education policy leaders of the main political parties, and offer to meet them to discuss the key points and recommendations. The document will then be distributed widely to key organisations, and through existing networks of TACTYC and BERA SIG members. Second, we will convene collaborative groups who are able to give more of their time to developing the academic and user reviews based on the six themes. Our intention is also to suggest a research agenda to guide future scholarship in the field. These documents will be published via the BERA and TACTYC websites, and we hope will be valuable resources for students, practitioners and scholars.

Dr Jane Payler

Chair of TACTYC

University of Winchester

Professor Elizabeth Wood

BERA Early Childhood SIG Convenor

University of Sheffield

References

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DfE (2013) *More great childcare: Raising quality and giving parents more choice*. Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/219660/More_Great_Childcare_20v2.pdf