

# Tickell Review of the Early Years Foundation Stage – Call for Evidence

## Call for Evidence Response Form

The closing date for this consultation is: 30  
September 2010

Your comments must reach us by that date.

**THIS FORM IS NOT INTERACTIVE. If you wish to respond electronically please use the online or offline response facility available on the Department for Education e-consultation website (<http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations>).**

Information provided in response to this Call for Evidence, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

**Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.**

Reason for confidentiality:

Name Jan Leightley  
Organisation (if applicable) Action for Children  
Address: 10 Great Queen Street  
London  
WC2B 5DD

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the Call for Evidence you can contact PCU helpline on:

Telephone: 0807 000 2288

or contact us on: [www.education.gov.uk/contactus/](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus/)

If you have a query relating to the consultation process you can contact the Consultation Unit on:

Telephone: 0870 000 2288

e-mail: [consultation.unit@dcf.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:consultation.unit@dcf.gsi.gov.uk)

Please tick one category that best describes you as a respondent.

<input type="checkbox"/> Parent/Carer	<input type="checkbox"/> Maintained school	<input type="checkbox"/> Independent school
<input type="checkbox"/> Childminder	<input type="checkbox"/> Nursery	<input type="checkbox"/> Local Authority
<input type="checkbox"/> Early years sector representative	<input type="checkbox"/> Play sector	<input type="checkbox"/> Breakfast/after school club
<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-school/playgroup	<input type="checkbox"/> SEN provision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other

Please Specify:

Action for Children is a UK-wide charity that speaks out for the most vulnerable and neglected children and young people, and supports them to break through injustice, deprivation and inequality, so they can achieve their full potential. Action for Children helps nearly 156,000 children, young people and their families through nearly 420 projects across the UK. We also promote social justice by lobbying and campaigning for change. Our services promote school readiness, identifying and addressing any problems early to ensure that children get the best start in life.

Action for Children services include early years provision such as Sure Start Children's Centres, crèches and specialist provision such as mother and baby units in prisons.

This response is based on the views of our practitioners who regularly use the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in their work with children and families.

### Provider - practitioner questions

How many children are currently cared for by you or in your setting aged 0-5?

<input type="checkbox"/> Under 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 5-10	<input type="checkbox"/> 10-15
<input type="checkbox"/> 15-20	<input type="checkbox"/> 20+	

How long have you been registered as a provider/practitioner?

<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 year	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-3 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 3-5 years
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5+ years

## Call for Evidence

The first part of this questionnaire is designed for parents or carers to answer, the remainder for schools, other early years providers and practitioners, local authorities, academics and sector representative bodies. However, please don't be constrained by the different sections of the questionnaire - if you have views on any of the questions here, then Dame Clare would like to hear from you.

There is a lot to consider in the Early Years Foundation Stage, so this questionnaire is long and you may not have a view on all questions. You might want to focus on the questions that are most relevant to you - you do not have to fill in the whole questionnaire in order to submit this to Dame Clare. There is space at the end of each section for you to write anything that you think is important but which isn't covered by the questions.

Thank you for taking the time to submit your views.

## Questions for Parents

1 How many children do you have aged between birth - 5 who are looked after in any form of early learning or childcare provision? Please include children who go to nursery or reception class in a school as well as other types of early years provision.

<input type="checkbox"/> One	<input type="checkbox"/> Two	<input type="checkbox"/> Three
<input type="checkbox"/> Four	<input type="checkbox"/> Five+	

Comments:
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2 What type of early years provision do you use for your children?

<input type="checkbox"/> Nursery school	<input type="checkbox"/> Nursery class	<input type="checkbox"/> Reception class
<input type="checkbox"/> Day Nursery	<input type="checkbox"/> Playgroup/preschool	<input type="checkbox"/> Childminder
<input type="checkbox"/> Breakfast/afterschool club or activity	<input type="checkbox"/> Special day school or activity for SEN	<input type="checkbox"/> Holiday club/scheme
<input type="checkbox"/> Children's centre	<input type="checkbox"/> Other -please specify	

Comments:

3 What kind of information would you look at to help you choose early learning and care provision for your child? Please tick your most important 3.

<input type="checkbox"/> Ofsted inspection reports	<input type="checkbox"/> Reputation	<input type="checkbox"/> Recommendation
<input type="checkbox"/> Activities and daily routines of the provision	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/> Opening hours
<input type="checkbox"/> Location	<input type="checkbox"/> Cost	<input type="checkbox"/> Support for children's learning & development
<input type="checkbox"/> Other -please specify		

Comments:

4 The EYFS sets out the standards that should be in place to help create a safe, healthy environment in early learning and childcare settings. What are the most important things to you when it comes to protecting your child's safety and supporting their health in a nursery or reception class in school or another early years setting? Please tick your most important 3.

<input type="checkbox"/> Staff knowing local safeguarding procedures	<input type="checkbox"/> Safe and secure premises & equipment	<input type="checkbox"/> Provision of healthy meals & drinks
<input type="checkbox"/> Good behaviour management	<input type="checkbox"/> Safe recruitment of staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Having staff with early years qualifications, training skills & knowledge
<input type="checkbox"/> The number of staff to children	<input type="checkbox"/> Access to an outdoor play area	<input type="checkbox"/> The amount of space available
<input type="checkbox"/> Each child having a 'key person'	<input type="checkbox"/> Other - please specify	

Comments:

5 Young children can learn incredibly quickly from birth, and need lots of interesting things to do as they develop and learn. What are the most important things that you think schools or other settings should be required to do to support your child's learning and development? Please tick your most important 3.

<input type="checkbox"/> Help them to build good personal, social and emotional skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Help to develop their communication, speaking & listening skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Begin to support them to read & write
<input type="checkbox"/> Support them in problem solving & numeracy	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop the knowledge to help children make sense of the world	<input type="checkbox"/> Support their physical development
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide them with opportunities to explore creativity	<input type="checkbox"/> Other - please specify	

Comments:

6 Would you want all schools and early years settings to have to do the same things? If no, please say which types of provider you think should not have to do them.

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

7 The practitioners who work in schools and other early years settings are uniquely placed to talk to you about your child's development. What information, if any, would you like them to give you about your child's learning and development?

Achievements

Interests

Learning style

How their development compares to other children of the same age

Other-please specify

Comments:

8 At what point would you like them to give you this information?

Informally when appropriate

At the end of each term/every three months

On a yearly basis

Just before they move into year 1

When they first start going to a nursery or reception class

Other - please specify

Comments:

9 Do you think that it would be useful for early years practitioners to, with your permission, talk to other professionals such as health visitors about your child's development?

Strongly agree

Partly agree

Neither agree or disagree

Partly

Strongly

disagree

disagree

Comments:

10 Parents and carers have the biggest influence on their children's learning and development. Do you think there's a role for early years practitioners to work with parents and carers to help improve children's learning and development at home?

Strongly agree

Partly agree

Neither agree or disagree

Partly disagree

Strongly disagree

Comments:

11 Do you have any other comments you'd like to make?

Comments:

**Questions for practitioners, owners/managers, schools, academics, sector representative bodies, training providers, local authorities etc.**

12 Many people have views about the EYFS. Many think that it has been very successful and would like it to remain unchanged. Others think parts of it need changing, or that there shouldn't be a mandatory framework at all. What is your overall view of the EYFS?

Comments:

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is an effective, constructive framework that enables practitioners to work to a consistently high quality in varied settings. In providing this framework it has had a positive impact on children in their early years.

The EYFS should remain a statutory requirement to ensure that it achieves its purpose: providing a framework so that all children get the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their potential.

Children benefit most from receiving services delivered by a confident, skilled workforce who feel empowered by the EYFS to make judgements about a child's development. The EYFS supports practitioners to identify any problems early and thereby to meet a child's individual needs. Action for Children practitioners believe that the EYFS has helped to create a professional identity for the early years, building on existing best practice and learning.

In addition to helping create a professional identity, the EYFS sets a clear framework for partnership working between parents and professionals, and between the settings that the child attends.

There has been a wealth of policy development affecting children and young

people in recent years. Given the change of Government and current economic environment, uncertainty remains in many areas. While many policy developments have been welcome, and have had a positive impact, in an environment of such uncertainty, practitioners will value consistency in key areas that are having a positive impact.

Actions for Children's services have now embedded EYFS into their working practices. They are keen to continue to work with EYFS as a basis of service delivery in the future to facilitate continuity and a long-term approach to early years services.

However, our response does highlight some areas for improvement and simplification including:

- The avoidance of duplication in early years goals - for example there is overlap between goals in personal, social and emotional development and knowledge and understanding around cultures and beliefs
- The cross-referencing of aims – this will be useful as one activity may well produce outcomes for different goals
- A stronger recognition of the role of parents/carers - they play a central role in their child's early years development that needs acknowledgement

*'Although initially a little anxious about having to work to a new early years framework, the nursery team in our children's centre has been using the Early Years Foundation Stage for two years and now value its purpose and structure. It underpins all the things that we would consider a priority for a child's development in the early years, such as safeguarding, child-led planning, parent partnership, inclusion and high standards of care'.*

Acting Deputy Manager, Wheatley Sure Start Children's Centre

One of the aims of the EYFS was to bring together learning and care requirements, because the evidence suggests that this helps to raise the quality of early learning and childcare provision. It was also felt that it would be easier for practitioners and parents/carers if all the guidance on early years services was brought together in a single framework.

13 Do you think there should be a framework that covers both welfare requirements and learning and development requirements? If you have views on the content of the welfare or learning and development requirements, note there are specific questions on this later on in the questionnaire.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Partly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree or disagree
<input type="checkbox"/> Partly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	

Comments:

The EYFS needs to cover both welfare requirements and learning and development requirements. This encourages a holistic approach to early years development that best meets a child's individual needs. Both sets of requirements must be in place as they support and complement each other. For example, a child may not be able to develop educationally if an underlying welfare issue is not identified and addressed.

Our practitioners have commented that combining the requirements has made it easier to refer to the framework and implement within various early learning settings.

For Sure Start Children's Centres (SSCC) the care requirements in the EYFS are integral to the setting, delivering services for children from birth. That this is linked directly with play, learning and development ensures easy access to information and transparency.

14 Some providers argue that they should not have to deliver the learning and development requirements of the EYFS - for example, independent schools, parts of the play sector/out of school care, and some childminders. What are your views on moving away from a single framework and having different or lighter touch requirements for some types of provider?

Comments:

Now that the single framework has been embedded it should remain across service provision within all early years settings. This brings consistency directed towards the child's development and assessment - as opposed to a focus on the service deliverer. A single framework provides a shared reference point, aims, objectives and goals for all providers, ensuring that the child remains at the heart of decision-making.

A single framework also ensures that services are commissioned to common outcomes. If some providers move away from EYFS, or aspects of the EYFS, there is a danger that standards may drop and the quality of care for some children will be compromised.

Within this the EYFS needs to be as user-friendly as possible. All practitioners

need to be supported and trained to ensure that they are confident in following the framework and thereby delivering positive outcomes for children.

15 What providers, if any, do you think should have fewer learning and development requirements? (*\*In this questionnaire, where children attend a range of settings we have called the settings where they spend the majority of their time between 8am and 6pm the 'primary setting', and the other settings they attend 'secondary settings'. E.g. if a young child attends a nursery class during the day, and an after school club for two hours after school, then the nursery class would be their primary setting and the after school club their secondary setting*).

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/> Secondary providers*	<input type="checkbox"/> Providers who don't receive government funding
<input type="checkbox"/> Providers whose philosophy conflicts with the EYFS	<input type="checkbox"/> Other - please specify	

Comments:

All providers should follow the same learning and development requirements as all children should have access to a high quality of care in any setting that they attend.

Settings should use the framework to guide the activities proportionately to their primary or secondary role. To facilitate this, the EYFS should have a greater focus on outcomes for children as opposed to methods to achieve the outcomes. This would allow practitioners greater freedom to support children to progress.

16 It could be argued that if providers receive government funding - for example for delivering free nursery education for 3 and 4 year olds - then they should be required to deliver the things that Government thinks are important and sets out in the EYFS. What are your views on this?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Partly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree or
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agree	disagree
<input type="checkbox"/> Partly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree

Comments:

The EYFS should remain statutory to ensure that all providers have to follow the framework.

This will provide a baseline standard of provision and continuity across all settings which should meet the child's right to receive an education that develops each child's personality and talents to the full and right to relax, play and join in a wide range of activities.

17 Do you have any other comments you'd like to make?

Comments:

**The themes and objectives of the EYFS**

18 The EYFS is currently based around four themes that are designed to provide a context for the EYFS requirements, and describe how practitioners should provide good quality and consistent support for the learning, development and care of young children. These themes are:

- A unique child
- Positive relationships
- Enabling environments

- Learning and development

Would you take a different approach to these themes and underpinning principles? If yes, please specify what approach you would take.

Yes  No  Not Sure

Comments:

The existing themes should remain as they encourage a holistic, whole-child approach which allows practitioners to provide tailored provision for the child.

*'The themes and principles of the EYFS should remain as they are. At Sure Start CFM, our stay and play sessions are planned around the four themes and this enables us to focus activity around the child's interests in a learning environment that allows children and their parents to have first-hand experiences of the curriculum in preparation for more formal settings.'*

Children's Centre Manager, Catton Grove, Fiddlewood and Mile Cross  
Children's Centre

19 The overarching aim of the EYFS is to improve children's developmental outcomes and to reflect that it is every child's right to grow up safe, healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and with economic wellbeing. Do you think the EYFS should have a different aim? If yes, please specify what aim you would have.

Yes  No  Not Sure

Comments:

The overarching aim reflects what we would hope for *all* children. Services need to meet individual children's needs to make sure all children are able experience a safe and healthy life.

20 a) Underneath this overarching aim, the objectives of the EYFS are to:

- Objective 1: Set the standards for early years providers
- Objective 2: Provide for equality of opportunity
- Objective 3: Create the framework for partnership working
- Objective 4: Improve quality and consistency
- Objective 5: Lay a secure foundation for future learning.

Do you think these objectives are the right ones? If no, please specify what you think the objectives of the EYFS should be.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
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Comments:

The objectives are the right ones and should ensure that all settings provide high quality services to all children that give a child a secure base from which to grow, develop and learn in the future.

20 b) Which of these objectives do you think is the most important of all?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Objective 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Objective 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Objective 3
<input type="checkbox"/> Objective 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Objective 5	

Comments:

It is difficult to prioritise the objectives as they are all important to ensure a child has the best possible start to life. However, if one has to be chosen, theoretically Objective 1 sets the standards under which Objective 2-5 are achieved and it also encourages needs-led and child-led practice that is accessible to all children.

21 Do you have any other comments you'd like to make?

Comments:

**Enjoying, learning and developing**

22 The six areas of learning and development are well established areas that are intended to provide a structure for young children's development and learning. Do you think they achieve this? If no, please specify what structure you think should be used.

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

The six areas provide a good structure for a child's learning and development. The areas inter-link and depend on each other to support a rounded approach to child development.

23 One of the aims of this review is to identify the knowledge and skills that are most important for young children to develop and thrive, particularly so that when they move into Year 1 they will continue to make good progress and achieve well in later school life. What do you think are the most important skills, knowledge, attitudes and dispositions that children need to develop from birth to five years?



All of the current six areas of learning

A subset of the six areas of learning - please specify

Other - please specify

Comments:

All six areas of learning are vital in early years to ensure a whole-child approach to development. The areas of development should be linked and fit around the individual child's interests and provide a sound and solid foundation on which to build going in to year one. They also provide opportunities to celebrate the children's different interests and achievements.

24 Currently, the EYFS says that children should be supported to develop equally across all six areas of learning at all ages. Neurological evidence suggests that there are some things it's important for young children to learn when they're very young - for example emotional control - and other things that they can pick up at an older age - for example peer social skills. Should the areas of learning be tailored for specific ages and stages?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Children develop at different rates and learning should be encouraged at the most appropriate point for each individual child. Tailoring the areas of learning to particular ages does not take account of the unique child.

For example, emotional trauma can result in a child experiencing a variety of behavioural and psychological problems which can delay their development (Action for Children & Canterbury Christ Church University [2009] *A meta-review of interventions to support children and their families in the aftermath of child sexual abuse*). In this case, strict tailoring to ages would mean that the child's individual needs are not understood and they are likely to not achieve the set goals. In addition, children with disabilities may not meet age-related milestones while still benefitting from application of the EYFS framework.

Setting specific ages and/or stages might also hold some children back if they are ready to learn new skills.

By not setting specific ages and/or rigid age-related stages, practitioners are empowered to respond to needs of individual children without the constraints of achieving what is defined as 'success' at a given time in a child's life. Children need time to consolidate and build on prior learning without time pressure of achieving set goals by 5 years old. No child should start school on the back foot which could result in them being bullied or becoming introverted or aggressive to cover up their lack of learning and hide their embarrassment.

However, if areas are to be tailored it should be through stages of development not ages. Stages can give consideration to the developing brain and what is logical for a child to do and understand.

Understanding developmental stages might make the EYFS more accessible and help practitioners identify when a child needs extra support. Stages would not restrict development to rigid age targets enabling the child to learn and develop at their own pace.

There are optimal times when children learn but learning is a life-long process. It may be interesting to consider 'weighted' areas of learning which would still require all six areas to be covered but the framework could suggest prioritising repetition of focused learning opportunities linked to developmental stages as a guideline.

25 The early learning goals (ELGs) set out the things that most children should be able to do by the age of 5. The goals provide a structure for early years practitioners to work towards, but some people have told us that there are too many goals, with some duplication, and that some of the goals are too hard for some 5-year-old children. Do you think there should be a structure for practitioners to work towards?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Partly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree or disagree
<input type="checkbox"/> Partly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	

Comments:

A structure is important and provides a framework for children to work towards at their own pace. A structure also assists practitioners in recognising how they can support children to move forward.

26 If you think there should be a structure for practitioners to work towards, what do you think this should include?

Comments:

It would be useful to have a structure for practitioners to work towards with a minimum number of goals that avoid duplication.

For example there is overlap between goals in personal, social and emotional development and knowledge and understanding around cultures and beliefs. Cross-referencing of aims would also be useful as one activity may well produce outcomes for different goals. This would also result in a more user-friendly document.

The goals could be more open-ended as set goals by the age of five might not recognise the unique child's speed of development and could result in parents perceiving their child as 'under-achieving'.

For some children, for example disabled children, progress can be in very small

steps. Where goals are too hard to meet the reason for this should be identified.

One practitioner highlighted the Development Matters handbook as being very useful but children need time to consolidate and build on prior learning without time pressure of achieving set goals by 5 years old.

By the end of the EYFS, significant gaps in development emerge between the most disadvantaged children and their peers from more affluent families, and this gap widens as children grow older. One of the aims of this review is to identify what practitioners could do to help narrow this gap.

27 What do you think are the most important areas to focus on to support disadvantaged children to progress? Please tick your most important 3.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Personal, social & emotional skills	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communication, speaking & listening skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Reading & writing
<input type="checkbox"/> Problem solving & numeracy	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge to make sense of the world	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Physical development
<input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities to explore creativity	<input type="checkbox"/> Other - please specify	

Comments:

Personal, social and emotional skills; and communication, speaking and listening skills provide a basis for children to achieve the other areas listed above.

Emotional wellbeing is crucial for children as it is a key factor in their ability to respond to learning opportunities. It has a major impact on both the emotional and social skills that enable a child to gain a good education, qualifications and employment. Emotional wellbeing can mean that a child can cope with uncertainty and adversity and can recover more successfully from traumatic events or episodes. (Action for Children [2008] *Emotional wellbeing and social mobility – a new urgency to the debate*).

Poor early education outcomes appear to be most pronounced in areas of the highest need, which is particularly problematic considering that closing the academic gap between rich and poor is harder to achieve as children older (Feinstein & Duckworth [2006] in CfBT [2010] *Effective early childhood education programmes: case studies*). The early years are crucial as by age six, the attainment of a child from a poor socio-economic background with high cognitive skills will be overtaken by a child with poorer cognitive ability but from a better-off background. Academic, psychological and behavioural attributes in

childhood can impact on future success. Non-cognitive or character capabilities at age 10 have substantial implications for adult outcomes (Feinstein [2003] *How early can we predict future educational achievement?* in Action for Children, 2009a).

Early intervention and support for disadvantaged children is essential to encourage the development of the skills and capabilities that increasingly underpin social mobility. It is also key in breaking cycles of deprivation and makes savings in the long-term. For every £1 invested in an Action for Children children's centre, a forecast social return to society of £4.60 is expected to be generated (Action for Children and nef [2009b] *Backing the Future: Why investing in children is good for us all*).

Action for Children's Wheatley Sure Start Children's Centre (SSCC) has found that children from disadvantaged families often have significant delay in personal, social and emotional development and also with communication, speech and language. Without the skills and abilities to make sense of how they feel, who they are, and develop a sense of belonging and well-being, they are in no position to learn more about the world around them, or to develop cognitive skills. A child's emotional well-being and ability to interact with and accept others is incredibly important. The ability to communicate effectively and to feel confident in their bodies, using large and small movements, also helps a child to feel more confident and develop self-esteem.

Communication should be seen in its widest sense so that it includes signs, signals and voice buttons for example, enabling all children to express their views. Disadvantaged and neglected children may experience particular difficulties communication and speech, possibly due to poor or no communication in the home, or the excessive use of dummies in their mouths. Delay in recognising and responding to problems around communication can impact negatively on other areas of development. Children who struggle to communicate often have low confidence and self-esteem, and can become frustrated resulting in behavioural difficulties which can be a barrier to them reaching their potential.

In addition, it is important that physical development is considered early and that individual children's needs are acted on to ensure that the most appropriate, safe learning environment is provided.

Poor physical development can be linked to unhealthy lifestyles with little or no physical exercise. In our experience it is not unusual for some children to be left sitting for long periods in pushchairs, high chairs or in front of the TV. They may live in built up areas where there are no safe places to play outdoors, run about, climb. Or it may be that their parents do not themselves fully understand the central importance of physical activity and play.

In addition to the areas above, the role of parenting is crucial in supporting the most vulnerable children and closing the gap between them and their peers. Some parents have had a poor education themselves and do not see the need to engage with learning. When parental style and confidence are factored in, the difference in child character development between richer and poorer families disappeared (Demos [2009] *Building Character in Action for Children* [2009a] *Deprivation and risk: the case for early intervention*).

28 Parents have the biggest influence on their children's learning and development. Do you think there's a role for early years practitioners to work with parents to help improve children's learning and development at home?



Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Parents and carers have a significant influence on their child's learning and development. It is crucial that early years practitioners work with parents to help improve their children's learning and development at home. To support this there needs to be a consistent approach among practitioners helping parents and carers to understand their contribution.

Parents want the best for their children but sometimes they do not know how they can best support them. Some parents think that everything is covered at school so there is no need for consolidation at home, whereas others think that the most important thing they can do is to get their child to read and write as early as possible. Given that learning takes place everywhere, parents need to be aware of the six areas of learning and development and how they can support these at home.

Our research tells us that parents consider emotional wellbeing and the social development of their children to be of central importance. We also know that parents can foster school readiness: being able to behave appropriately with other children and with adults, and having confidence and social skills. Parents can also be confident and consistent role models. Nurseries, Sure Start Children's Centres (SSCCs), playgroups and any semi-structured social situations are considered by parents as the key sites for children developing these skills, bringing them into contact with other children and adults. (Action for Children [2008] *Early years services and emotional wellbeing – what parents want*).

In partnership with Kirklees Council, Action for Children SSCCs in Dewsbury and Mirfield have developed 'The Child's Journey' which delivers evidence-based services, activities and information that communicate key messages to all families with an emphasis on reaching the most vulnerable. The Child's Journey involves opportunities, experiences and activities that demonstrate and build on the infant's and parent's strengths. It delivers a positive model of parenting and child development that focuses on the parent's awareness and understanding about their impact on their child's journey regardless of the service that the family are involved with. The four key components of The Child's Journey are: attachment; communication and language; developmental movement; and play.

At Action for Children's Wheatley SSCC, each of the workers in the nursery team works individually with parents at home. Their work is often based around supporting parents to understand more about their child's development and how they can support them to move forward. Workers carry out specific pieces of direct work, and will carry out play sessions at home involving the child and parent. Parents and children feel more comfortable at home, so may be more open to learning there, also workers can be role model to parents/carers within the home.

Action for Children Disability Lincolnshire provides crèche facilities for children with disabilities and additional needs aged 0-4 years old. As part of its services, Disability Lincolnshire provides parents with the opportunity to meet other parents, project staff and professionals both formally and informally. This provides parents and carers with support, skills and the confidence to recognise and meet their child's needs.

29 Learning and development in the early years is complex. Do you have any further comments on the current six areas of learning and development, ELGs and educational programmes in the EYFS?

Comments:

### **Assessing children's progress**

30 It's an integral part of caring for young children that practitioners should, on an ongoing basis, observe and understand what children are capable of and enjoy, and tailor what play and activities they do with them to reflect this. This cycle of observation and assessment, known as formative assessment (or 'Listen, Look and Note') informs or guides everyday planning. What do you think of this approach?

Comments:

Practitioners observe, assess and plan in order to move a child forward. Observation is particularly important as often other criteria are used to judge achievement. EYFS is an essential mechanism in that it includes direct observation and provides a framework for this to happen in a wide range of learning contexts.

Data from observations can be used to plan interventions. Effective use of assessment frameworks, such as the EYFS points system, can support a greater understanding of individual need (CfBT [2010] *Effective early childhood education programmes: case studies*).

There needs to be agreement between practitioners as to what the criteria are and how behaviours are interpreted. Links with the child's welfare and external context in which the child lives is also crucial to provide a rounded assessment.

The observation aspect is crucial in the development and planning for children, for example it can contribute to an Individual Education Plan. However, this can result in practitioners needing more non-contact time to undertake paperwork to evidence the child's development.

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31 Summative assessment is a summary of all the formative assessment done over a long period and the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) is a way of capturing this at the age of 5. It is intended to provide Year 1 teachers with each child's level of learning and development as they reach the end of the EYFS, so that they should be able to tailor learning to individual children's abilities, and to inform parents/carers how their child is developing.. However, some practitioners tell us that this takes up too much time, and that not all Year 1 teachers find the EYFSP useful. What are your views on the EYFSP?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I like it as it is	<input type="checkbox"/> I think it should be slimmed down - please specify how	<input type="checkbox"/> I think it should be non-statutory
<input type="checkbox"/> I think it should be got rid of completely - please specify why		

<p>Comments:</p> <p>Transition stages are very important for a child's development and the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) provides a mechanism for the sharing of knowledge that should ensure that the child's transition into formal education is made as easy as possible with the child's needs remaining at the centre. The EYFSP is useful because it clearly shows when a child is consistently achieving in an area of the EYFS and highlights areas where a child needs additional support.</p> <p>However, some of our practitioners are concerned that many schools do not pay enough attention to the EYFSP and that the transition is not as joined-up as the early years practitioners would like. In some instances, it could be suggested that Year 1 practitioners and headteachers are eager to convert the profile scores into national curriculum levels so they can measure progress. Some Year 1 practitioners are unfamiliar with the early learning goals and are unsure of what they mean. Teachers need to be trained and supported to fully understand the importance and use of the EYFSP to ensure the child's journey positively continues into Year 1.</p>
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32 a) Young children go through a number of transitions. As well as the transition from early years provision to Year 1, other examples of transition are between different early years providers, and into nursery classes in schools at the age of 3. Do you think there should be a summative assessment of a child's learning and development to help inform parents and to help support transition?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

In principle a summative assessment would be useful to ensure the child receives continuity in services when moving physical environments - i.e. from a nursery school to a primary school - and also when moving key stages. This could be a mechanism to ensure that information travels with the child and removes the need for multiple, time consuming assessments.

Some settings already use summative assessments as part of regular nursery reviews. These are used to inform parents of their children's progress and how they have coped with any transition within the EYFS stages and any changes that have occurred within the family – i.e. birth of a sibling. These summative assessments are also important for future planning for the child's individual learning and development needs.

However, it is important that summative assessments are not too onerous. A record of development to which parents have contributed might be another option. Action for Children's Mother and Baby Support Unit at HMP and YOI Styal starts a child profile when they join the project and the mothers are equal partners in contributing to it with photos, comments and observations. When a child moves on to another setting the profile goes with them providing a sense of who the child is, what they enjoy and what they can do.

Another option could be a requirement of a 30 minute transition meeting for each child instead of a summative assessment. This could help reduce the paperwork involved.

Action for Children projects also offer additional support during transition periods. For example Disability Lincolnshire supports parents on visits when their child is moving to a new setting and also invites staff/key workers from the new setting to visit Disability Lincolnshire before the move takes place.

32 b) If yes, when do you think this should take place?

Comments:

If a summative assessment is required, it should take place as a minimum requirement at age 3 when the child goes to pre-school and again at five – the first year of primary education. Schools should be required to use the assessment and avoid re-assessing the child again themselves. Reviews should also take place at the end of the first school year and when a child moves from one setting to another. It should take place at a time that most suits the child and parents where possible.

33 If you think there should be a summative assessment of a child's development, what do you think this should cover? Please tick your most important 3.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Personal, social and emotional development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communication, speaking & listening skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Reading & Writing
<input type="checkbox"/> Problem solving, reasoning & numeracy	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge & understanding of the world	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Physical development
<input type="checkbox"/> Creative development	<input type="checkbox"/> Other - please specify	

Comments:

Without personal, social and emotional skills; communication, speaking and listening skills; and physical development, a child is likely to struggle with the other areas listed above. Often a child needs to feel safe, secure, have a sense of identity, belonging and wellbeing, before they are open to learning new concepts and trying out new experiences.

34 Adults who work with young children are uniquely placed to recognise and understand how children are developing. Many practitioners work closely with other agencies to help to identify children with special educational needs (SEN)

before they reach compulsory schooling in Year 1. Do you think that identification of possible SEN could be integrated more explicitly into the cycle of early years observation and assessment? If yes, how do you think this should work?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes in principle but not in practice		

Comments:

The early identification of special educational needs is crucial to ensure that individual children's needs are recognised and acted on. There must be greater links between mainstream and specialist services so that the likelihood of identification increases and knowledge and good practice is shared across agencies.

Although some practitioners feel that the EYFS framework is already sufficient in supporting and enabling them to highlight any developmental delay of an individual child, this needs to be the case across the board. It is vital that staff are trained well and professionals work together to accurately identify special educational needs and the impact of family background on a child – e.g. children attending nursery with very poor communication skills. Staff must also be trained to identify and raise concerns if a child is not reaching key milestones. This must be done in a way that recognises that children develop at their own pace. False categorisation of a child with SEN could be detrimental for their future development.

There needs to be awareness in frontline staff of children's skills, abilities and knowledge at different stages and how to involve parents more in identification of special needs. Action for Children is aware of instances when children with disabilities have come to our projects and the parents were told that their children did not have a disability and that they would 'catch up'.

35 Do you have any other comments you'd like to make?

Comments:

It is vital that children do not fall through the gap, for example if they are not SEN stated but do not have their needs recognised and met. The statementing threshold is set at a level of need that many disabled children will not meet. These children do still have additional needs which must be met. EYFS must support this to happen and ensure that children are able to access the most appropriate early years provision that meets the individual needs of the child and enable them to reach their potential.

### **Safe, happy and healthy children**

36 The welfare requirements in the EYFS currently cover a lot of things, from child protection, to supporting children's health, to the safety of premises and equipment. The five areas under which the welfare requirements are grouped are safeguarding and promoting children's welfare, suitable people, suitable premises, environment and equipment, organisation, and documentation. Which of the welfare requirements do you think are essential?

Comments:

All of the welfare requirements are important to ensure a child can flourish in a safe environment.

37 Some providers have told us that certain welfare requirements are overly burdensome, and that there's too much paperwork and box ticking included in the EYFS. Do you think any of the welfare requirements should be removed or simplified? If yes, please specify.

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

All of the welfare requirements should be kept to ensure a child's safety and wellbeing. Overall our practitioners have not expressed feeling overly burdened however some have suggested that the documentation requirements could be simplified. Safeguarding is a fundamental and central part of our work with children and families.

38 Currently, the EYFS sets out only very high level requirements on supporting children's health - for example it says that children should be given nutritious meals and snacks, but doesn't include nutritional guidelines. What do you think the EYFS requirements should be in relation to children's health?

Comments:

The emphasis on a provider promoting the good health of children requires health and educational professionals to work together with health practitioners being consistently integrated as active partners in early years settings.

The role of the parent is crucial and EYFS should include practitioners working with parents/carers to ensure that healthy, good practice is continued in the home setting. Sure Start Children's Centres are an example of settings that have access to a wide range of health and nutrition information that can be shared with parents.

There needs to be some flexibility around food and drink as disabled children may have specific dietary requirements that counter the healthy eating premise. For example a child with swallowing difficulties may be given food that dissolves instead of healthy solid food that could cause choking.

39 The staff to child ratio and qualification requirements are included within the welfare requirements. How have you found implementing the ratio and qualification requirements?

Comments:

The majority of our projects have successfully implemented the staff to child ratio and qualification requirements set out in the EYFS standards, or maintained higher staffing ratios than those recommended.

However, for some projects providing services for disabled children there can be difficulty in meeting the ratio without lowering the number of children that can be looked after. Given current financial constraints, there is concern that there will be no additional funding to secure permanent extra staff. This also demonstrates an unmet need that impacts on some of the most vulnerable children.

40 Do you have any other comments you'd like to make?

Comments:

Whatever legal and policy framework is in place, front-line staff will always be required to make decisions in complex situations on critical questions relating to children's needs and possible risk of harm. The EYFS must be formulated to create a safe culture promoting safe recruitment, training and procedures.

Practitioners need to be given the time to attend training courses and access to expert advice and consultation. They must also have high quality supervision and management. To ensure the quality of supervision and management it is essential that first-line managers have the right skills, experience and training.

Sure Start Children's Centres (SSCC) can play a role in supporting early years practitioners. At Action for Children's Dawlish and Teignmouth Children's Centre, one childminder stated that '*We [childminders] need some guidelines/training opportunities to develop knowledge, understanding and expertise*'. To meet this need the Children's Centre runs a Childminder Drop-in service in partnership with Trio (commissioned by Devon County Council), which offers information on observation, assessment and planning and general good EYFS practice. This is done by providing a stimulating environment for children and making the planning behind the activities available to childminders. Relevant publications and articles are also shared as well as information on Ofsted registration, policies and professional development.

Action for Children's SSCCs in the Dewsbury and Mirfield locality run childminder network support groups. The groups are supported by a Childminding Co-ordinator who is responsible for publicising the group and ensuring quality of provision for the children. The Childminding Co-ordinator follows a challenge and support strategy with all childminders and quality improvement reviews are carried out to establish what support and training is needed to improve quality within the setting. Childminders who reach a high standard in their quality improvement review are invited to become affiliated to their local children's centre and are invited to attend advisory board and other planning meetings.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

**Please acknowledge this reply**

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

Yes

No

All DfE public consultations are required to conform to the following criteria within the Government Code of Practice on Consultation:

Criterion 1: Formal consultation should take place at a stage when there is scope to influence the policy outcome.

Criterion 2: Consultations should normally last for at least 12 weeks with consideration given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible.

Criterion 3: Consultation documents should be clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals.

Criterion 4: Consultation exercises should be designed to be accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the exercise is intended to reach.

Criterion 5: Keeping the burden of consultation to a minimum is essential if consultations are to be effective and if consultees' buy-in to the process is to be obtained.

Criterion 6: Consultation responses should be analysed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation.

Criterion 7: Officials running consultations should seek guidance in how to run an effective consultation exercise and share what they have learned from the experience.

If you have any comments on how DfE consultations are conducted, please contact Donna Harrison, DfE Consultation Co-ordinator, tel: 01928 794304 / email: [donna.harrison@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:donna.harrison@education.gsi.gov.uk)

**Thank you for taking time to respond to this Call for Evidence.**

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 30 September 2010

Send by post to:  
Department for Education  
Consultation Unit Area Ground B  
Castle View House  
Runcorn  
Cheshire  
WA7 2GJ

Send by e-mail to: [EYFS2010.REVIEW@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:EYFS2010.REVIEW@education.gsi.gov.uk)