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[HOME](#)[ABOUT](#)[MEMBERS & STAFF](#)

[BUSINESS PUBLICATIONS](#)[A-Z INDEX](#)

[GLOSSARY](#)[CONTACT](#)

Publications & records

search

[Advanced search](#)

[Hansard](#)[Archives](#)[Research](#)[HOC Publications](#)[HOL Publications](#)[Committees](#)

You are here: [Publications and Records](#) > [Commons Publications](#) > [Select Committees](#) > [Education and Employment](#) > Education and Employment

**Select Committee on Education and Employment [Fourth Special Report](#)**

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## ANNEX

### EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT ON THE EARLY YEARS: THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE

The Select Committee's recommendations are in **bold** text.

The Government's response is in plain text.

Some of the recommendations and responses have been grouped.

**1. We recommend that the Government should develop a Parents' Charter to be visible in every Early Years setting which affirms the centrality of the parent in the development and education of their child and welcomes them as vital educators of their children.**

Parents are children's first and most enduring educators and it is important for settings to develop an effective partnership with them. The Government, in principle, supports the recommendation. DfEE officials will consult Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs) and other early years and childcare organisations to consider the development of a 'Parents' Charter'.

**2. We recommend that the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships should make the necessary resources available to support parental participation in Early Years activities.**

The Government recognises the importance of parental participation and involvement in early years activity. Recent research highlights the strong link between the shared reading and literacy activities of parents and child and later attainment and shows that very young children, between birth and age 3, are eager and capable learners.

One of the principles of the Foundation Stage is the importance of practitioners and parents working together. This is included in the Curriculum Guidance, it was an element of the training in the Foundation Stage provided to all settings, and will be included in future training for Foundation Stage practitioners—for which we are providing £113.5 million in total over the next three years. We have also produced, with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), a leaflet for parents to help them understand the Foundation Stage.

Parental involvement in the education and care of children is a key feature of our Early Excellence Centre Programme, which already includes a number of examples of very good practice in this area. We plan to expand the Early Excellence programme and to put it at the forefront of our efforts to support the wider development of high quality integrated services. We are also considering how to make further targeted resource available to support specific work to support parents in the education and development of their children.

**3. Parents should be involved in helping practitioners to draw up individual profiles of their children to help the process of planning for their learning. We recommend that the DfEE should develop new forms of developmental profile at entry to school which would include parents' own contributions to assessment and planning.**

The Government agrees that to involve parents in developing an understanding of the abilities and requirements of their children is good practice. We will consider the possibility of using the observations of parents to inform assessments as part of the review of the existing Baseline Assessment process.

**4. We recommend that there should be more support given through the health, social services and education services working together to provide assistance to parents. We recommend that the Government should work with BBC Online and other innovative providers to produce appropriate programmes on parenting.**

The Government is committed to helping parents and to involving them in their children's development and agrees that providers of health, education and social care should work together more closely to provide better support. This is already happening where there are Sure Start or Early Excellence Centres, and in other areas where local partners choose to work in this way. Other support for parents is available through our family literacy and numeracy programmes and other intergenerational learning and development projects. Multi agency collaboration involving, amongst others, education, health and social services, is a central feature of the Early Excellence Centre programme. We will use the EEC programme, which we are aiming to expand significantly over the next 3 years to catalyse and stimulate the wider development of similar high quality integrated services. Likewise the continuing development and expansion of Sure Start will provide further resources to support the development of integrated approaches to the delivery of services for young children and their families.

As part of the Ministerial Group on Family Policy's practical initiatives, the Government has contributed to the startup funding and some of the core costs of the National Family and Parenting Institute (NFPI). This includes a mapping and auditing exercise of services at a local level to support parenting and family relationships. The resulting Parents' Services Directory will be available on the web, in print, through libraries and, eventually, through digital television.

The Home Secretary supported the BBC's series of programmes on parenting, indicating his willingness for resources to be made available to back up the series via voluntary organisations. Accordingly, NFPI and One Plus One received funding to establish local befriending schemes, and for providing suitable materials, connected to the content of the programmes. The NFPI planned the first Parents' Week to coincide with the BBC 2 parenting week. In addition, the BBC Online links to ChildcareLink, the Government's website which gives information on childcare places nationally and locally.

The NFPI is just one example of the Government's practical initiatives to support families. The Home Office is also funding a range of voluntary organisations through the Family Support Grant to support parents in their parenting role.

**5. The physical security of the children being looked after should never be compromised.**

The new arrangements for regulating childcare, to be operated by OFSTED later this year, will provide assurance to parents that their children are being looked after safely, securely and in a way that promoted their health and development. This is the focus of the new national standards for the regulation of day care and childminding that OFSTED will apply across the country.

**6. We endorse the DfEE's recommendation that childminders should attend a recognised childminder's course within six months of starting childminding and that regular inservice courses should continue to be a part of every childminder's programme.**

The Government welcomes the Committee's support. The new national standards will be published in time for the transfer of childminder regulation to OFSTED in September 2001.

**7. We recommend that no childminder should be allowed to smack any child in their care.**

**8. We recommend that no childminder should be permitted to smoke in the presence of any child in their care.**

The Government has made clear that smoking and smacking will be prohibited in all group day care settings not based in the home, and in all childminding settings unless parents give their explicit consent. In addition the draft standards state that childminders must promote the good health of children in their care.

We received approximately 6,000 responses to our consultation exercise on the draft national standards for the regulation of day care. Of these, an initial analysis of 1,069 was carried out, of which 335 related directly to our proposals for national standards for childminders. The selection of responses for the initial analysis was done on the basis of a random sample, although we made sure that we also considered the responses of key organisations in the early years sector, including the National Childminding Association.

In answering the question "Do you agree with the criteria set down for this standard?", which contained the proposal to allow childminders to smoke in front of children in their care with parents' consent, 37 per cent disagreed while 63 per cent agreed.

In answering the question "Do you agree with the criteria set down for this standard?", which contained the proposal to allow childminders to smack children in their care with parents' consent, 43 per cent disagreed while 57 per cent agreed.

In each case a number of respondents who agreed with the overall standard made comments relating to the specific criteria dealing with smoking and smacking.

Having completed our consultation on the national standards we were concerned that the views of parents had not been adequately represented. That is why the Government commissioned an independent opinion poll of over 1,000 parents to ask them whether parents or the Government should decide on whether childminders should be permitted to smoke in the presence of children in their care or smack minded children. A significant majority (74 per cent smoking, 83 per cent smacking) agreed with our view that these are matters on which parents rather than the Government should decide.

**9. We recommend that the years from birth to five plus should be viewed as the first phase of education, in which the involvement of families and parents will be crucial. Since education and care are inseparable, there should be a universal service under the leadership of a single Government Department.**

The Government agrees that policies on education and care for children from birth to five should be joined up. Having introduced the Foundation Stage, we are now turning our attention to researching best practice with regard to younger children from birth to three. We will develop a framework for supporting children between these ages and their families.

We fully support the principle that users should have access to seamless services where this is appropriate. Our approach to early years and childcare is wholly consistent with this. The DfEE has combined into a single unit its formerly separate Early Years Division and Childcare Unit. We are evaluating Sure Start programmes to learn from their success and apply the principles of that success across under fives provision generally.

We are committed to breaking down traditional barriers between Departments and we are exploring new and more effective ways of integrating Government policy. Sure Start is one obvious example focusing particularly on the need of children under four living in disadvantaged areas. The Sure Start unit, while based in DfEE, is jointly accountable to DfEE and Department of Health.

**10. We recommend that Government funding should be made available to support the sharing of best practice and learning from the experience of the Sure Start centres.**

Sure Start is a cornerstone of the Government's strategy to eradicate child poverty by 2020. It is concerned with improving the life chances of children from birth to the age of four living in the most disadvantaged areas of England. It has, however, always been the Government's intention that, over time, Sure Start would have a wider impact that will reach more and more children. We plan to establish models of integrated service delivery based on local need, which can be replicated across the country.

It is clear that by influencing and improving 'mainstream' services, we will get the best value out of the substantial resources—estimated at as much as £11.5 billion every year—that already go into services for children and families. Our aim therefore is to identify the elements of Sure Start that work and to disseminate them to everybody involved in delivering services for children and families. The Sure Start Unit has already introduced a bimonthly newsletter (Upstart!) and a website ([www.surestart.gov.uk](http://www.surestart.gov.uk)) to support the sharing of good practice between Sure Start programmes and the wide range of agencies that are involved in them. The national evaluation of Sure Start, which has just begun, will be another valuable mechanism for achieving this.

At the local level, key agencies in some districts—especially those with more than one Sure Start programme—are already beginning to think about an areawide strategy to link the programmes up and to address the areas in between.

**11. We recommend that there should be substantially increased Government support for, and investment in, integrated initiatives like Sure Start and Early Excellence Centres.**

The Government has made clear that its broad strategy for the early years is to secure good quality, fully integrated services for parents and their children.

The Green Paper, "*Schools: Building on Success*" stresses the Government's determination to encourage the development of new integrated early years centres which draw on the strengths of the public, private and

voluntary sectors. Through the Early Excellence Centre programme, Sure Start, Neighbourhood Nursery centres and other programmes the Government intends to create—and will encourage others to create—up to 100,000 new fulltime nursery education places where childcare is available to cover a normal or extended day.

By March 2004, we will have doubled the number of Sure Start programmes from 250 to 500. The level of spending on Sure Start will correspondingly increase from £184 million a year to £499 million a year by 2004. This represents a growth in real terms of over 36 per cent a year. We also plan to expand the Early Excellence Centre programme to up to 100 centres by 2004 including designating centres operating within Sure Start areas and centres developed through the Neighbourhood Nurseries initiative. In this way, the great potential synergies between programmes can be exploited and built on to improve services for young children and their families.

In October 2000 we launched a new Initiative to encourage maintained nursery schools and other existing providers of early education and childcare services to expand into new areas and extend their services for parents and children. We aim to help 250 schools in this way by 2004. We have also established a small pilot programme, involving projects in five local education authorities, to test innovative approaches to combining early education with wraparound care. The projects, which will run until March 2003, will look at different ways and methods of integrating provision of this kind for three and four year olds and will provide models of good practice that can be adopted more generally. We hope to be able to announce extension to new pilot areas shortly.

**12. We recommend that the evidence from comprehensive evaluations of Early Excellence and Sure Start should be used actively within Government across Departments to support and promote the further development of integrated policy and practice under the leadership of one Department.**

A largescale, longterm national evaluation of Sure Start began in January 2001. The purpose of this evaluation is to inform the Government about what aspects of Sure Start are most effective. It will look at both shortterm and longterm outcomes, and will track a sample of Sure Start children over time to see whether and how Sure Start has improved outcomes for them in later life.

A comprehensive framework for evaluation of the Early Excellence Centre pilot programme is in place. It aims to show how different forms of integrated provision work in different local contexts; to identify and disseminate good practice in the delivery of quality integrated services for children and families; to identify the impact and outcomes of integrated services; and to demonstrate the cost effectiveness and value for money of the programme. Its findings will highlight issues for policy and to inform the future development of the programme. Evaluation evidence is a key plank in the delivery of the dissemination strategy planned for the programme. Early findings have been published and other opportunities will be sought to share their good practice. An initial publication—First Findings—reported that Early Excellence Centres have the potential for enhanced cost saving outcomes. In one case, for every £1 spent on Early Excellence Centre services for family support, £8 was saved on alternative services. The findings of these evaluations will be widely available across Government departments as well as the wider public.

**13. We recommend that the adult:child ratio should be no more than fifteen to one in Reception and Year 1.**

**14. We recommend that children below compulsory school age should be taught informally in ways that are appropriate to their developmental stage and their interests. We recommend that in Reception and Year 1 classes there should be fifteen or fewer children for each member of staff working with the children in the class.**

The Government recognises the advantages of greater adult:child ratios for younger children. The size of infant classes for children in Years R, 1 and 2 are already being limited to 30 as part of the Government's class size pledge. The further initiative to increase the number of teaching assistants working in primary and secondary schools in England by 20,000 by 2002 will make a substantial contribution to reducing the number of children to each adult in the classroom. 60 per cent of all reception classes currently enjoy an adult: pupil ratio of 1:15 (2:30) and £56 million is being made available between 2000-01 and 2002-03 to reduce reception class ratios to 1:15 in the 60 most deprived Local Education Authorities.

The Government agrees that the teaching of children below compulsory school age should reflect their developmental stage and interests. This is consistent with the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage which was published in June 2000 and very widely welcomed by early years practitioners; researchers; and specialist organisations. The QCA is developing further guidance on planning for the curriculum in all Foundation Stage provision, including that in primary schools.

**15. We support the approach in the Curriculum Guidance issued by the Qualifications and**

**Curriculum Authority that more structured learning should be introduced very gradually so that, by the end of the Reception year, children are learning through more formal, whole class activities for a small proportion of the day.**

**22. We support the Qualification and Curriculum Authority's Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage, which illustrates rather than imposes stepping stones for a child to progress from the age of three to the end of the Foundation Stage.**

The Government welcomes the Committee's support for the Government's approach to early learning as set out in the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage. The Curriculum Guidance, which is now the core reference document for this Stage, puts clear emphasis on providing learning experiences which are suited to children's needs and achievements has been widely welcomed.

**16. We recommend that training for the Reception Year should be moved out of Key Stage 1 training and into the training for the Foundation Stage.**

The Government agrees that the particular requirements of the Foundation Stage should be reflected in in-service training. We are funding EYDCPs to provide training for Foundation Stage practitioners. That will cover the Reception children, including those in mixed settings with children in Year 1.

The Teacher Training Agency (TTA) is currently reviewing the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) requirements, covered by DfEE Circular 4/98. As part of that review, the TTA is proposing to update the revised requirements to take account of the Foundation Stage and will invite comments on possible changes as part of its consultation. Currently, it would be impracticable to implement this recommendation, due to the way ITT courses are offered. ITT providers offer courses in ages 3-8 or 3-11 and they are free to decide whether or not to offer early years as a specialism as part of these courses.

**17. We recommend that initial and in-service training programmes for Early Years practitioners should emphasise the skills and knowledge necessary to both involve and support family members. We recommend that the Teacher Training Agency and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority should emphasise in their guidance and the teacher training syllabus the skills for working with adults as well as those for teaching young children.**

The Government agrees that it is important to involve and support family members and that practitioners should be prepared to do this effectively. This has been specifically addressed in the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage and will be included in planning guidance for practitioners in delivering the Foundation Stage. We have encouraged EYDCPs to challenge and support early years settings in engaging and involving parents.

The current requirements for Initial Teacher Training (ITT) include several references to working with and involving family members. When assessed, trainees must demonstrate that they understand how pupils' learning is affected by their physical, intellectual, emotional and social development, and must have a knowledge of effective ways of working with parents and other carers. In addition, trainees must be able to manage, with support from an experienced specialist teacher if necessary, the work of parents and other adults in the classroom to enhance learning opportunities for pupils. Trainees must recognise that learning takes place inside and outside the school context, and understand the need to liaise effectively with parents and other carers and with other agencies with responsibility for pupils' education and welfare.

The Induction standards also include specific references to working with and involving family members that NQTs must demonstrate in order to successfully complete the Induction period. For example, all NQTs should demonstrate that he or she liaises effectively with pupils' parents/carers through informative oral and written reports on pupils' progress and achievements, discussing appropriate targets, and encouraging them to support their children's learning, behaviour and progress.

**18. Many of those giving evidence argued that the age of school entry was less important than the kind of curriculum and teaching young children encounter when they enter statutory schooling.**

This reflects the Government's view.

**19. We recommend that the Government should review the limitations in practice on the operation of parents' choice for entry to primary school, to ensure that the needs of children to be placed in appropriate settings are paramount.**

The Government believes the quality and appropriateness of the educational experience is far more important than the type of setting a child attends. As the Foundation Stage becomes embedded the label of the setting will matter less.

Nevertheless we are fully committed to parental choice in early education. Parents should not be compelled to accept a school place when they believe that their child's needs would be best met by another provider, or that their child is not yet ready for school. Already, through the Code of Practice on School Admissions, we are encouraging all primary school admission authorities, when they offer parents a school place, to allow them to defer taking it up until later in that academic year when their child will be approaching or be of compulsory school age. We are monitoring the extent to which deferred entry is an option for parents. We will continue to keep this under review and to consider what more can be done to protect parental choice.

**20. We recommend that the compulsory age of school entry should remain at the term after the child's fifth birthday; and the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage should be fully implemented in primary schools to ensure that children receive the style of education appropriate to their stage of development.**

The Government agrees with the recommendation. The Curriculum Guidance has been well received, and we have been supporting its introduction across the range of Foundation Stage settings. We have asked EYDCPs to plan further training and development for all foundation stage practitioners, including those working with children in Reception classes in Primary schools.

**21. We recommend that baseline assessment should be moved to the start of Year 1.**

The QCA has been consulting on new arrangements for baseline assessment, including the timing of assessments. QCA's advice is expected at the end of April. The Government will consider the timing of baseline assessment in the light of that advice, as well as any consequent need to rename baseline assessment, if appropriate.

**23. We recognise that the scale of the challenge in the Guidance to practitioners, who will need to have imagination and flexibility to enable children to learn in ways appropriate to their developmental stage.**

The Government agrees that providing a high quality curriculum for the Early Years is both important and a challenge. The DfEE applauds the efforts of the EYDCPs and early years practitioners who are responding to it. We are keen to keep momentum going, to share good practice and provide support where needed. On this basis, we are continuing to work with EYDCPs and other key organisations to seek and resource improvements in quality.

**24. We recommend that training to assist practitioners to enhance children's personal, social and emotional development should be supported by the DfEE.**

**36. We recommend that there should be continued Government investment in training at all levels in the Early Years sector.**

**38. We recommend that all training should be adequately funded, and in particular, that there should be Government grants for mature and parttime students, and better support for those following NVQs.**

The Government supports these recommendations which are aimed ensuring the supply of accessible, good quality training for all early years practitioners.

We have committed considerable resources over the next three years to fund training related activities. EYDCPs will have access to £21 million a year to help to make training and qualifications more accessible for the workforce, a further £30 million from the European Social Fund specifically to help unblock obstacles to taking up training opportunities and £113.5 million to provide training for early years practitioners for the Foundation Stage.

The £113.5 million for training for the Foundation Stage will ensure all early years practitioners access a minimum of four days of training per year which will be aimed at enhancing children's personal, social and emotional development, as well as other areas of learning in the Foundation Stage. It will fund equal opportunities training, training in the identification and assessment of children with special educational needs (SEN). It will also fund measures to support weak settings and ensure access to a qualified teacher for non-maintained settings, working towards achieving our national target of one qualified teacher to every ten non-maintained settings delivering funded early education.

In our recent Green Paper *Schools: Building on Success*, we reaffirmed our commitment to early intervention to improve the prospects for children with SEN. The Secretary of State announced on 20 March a £25 million package over 3 years to assist Local Education Authorities and their EYDCPs achieve our targets designed to improve SEN provision locally for young children. Specifically, the additional resource will help to fund:

- up to four pilots during 2001-02 to establish area SEN Coordinator (SENCO) networks (£0.5 million);
- training over 3 years for settingbased SENCOs (£9.5 million);
- national training materials to support training activity (£1 million);
- a regional network of SEN experts to provide nationally coordinated support to area SENCOs over 3 years (£3 million);
- parallel additional funding for LEAs over 3 years to support and improve existing activities, for example: development of portage schemes; better resources for helping children with low incidence disability (£11 million).

We have also set the Learning and Skills Council a national indicative target of helping 230,000 young people and sector workers to gain level 2 or level 3 qualifications in early years, childcare and playwork by 2004. Local Learning and Skills Councils have been asked to work with EYDCPs to support local training and qualifications requirements. DfEE officials are also considering a range of options to best support practitioners. These will include the possibility of grants and bursaries to support training and qualifications in areas where key skills are scarce.

**25. We recommend that innovative practice in ways to foster children's personal, social and emotional development should be disseminated widely through the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships.**

Good practice in fostering children's personal, social and emotional development is being disseminated by EYDCPs through Foundation Stage training. It will be developed further in QCA's planning guidance for the Foundation Stage and the core competence programme that is being developed for Foundation Stage practitioners. The Government is happy to consider what might be required, particularly on disseminating innovative approaches, in addition to scheduled plans.

Activities that help develop children's early literacy and numeracy skills can also contribute to children's personal, social and emotional development. The QCA's guidance says that planning a range of activities is also important for the promotion of children's social skills and helping them to develop their independence and ability to concentrate.

**26. We recommend that the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships should expand training opportunities, particularly in the voluntary and private sector, to enhance the level of teaching skill, including planning and assessment.**

**41. We recommend that Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships should provide positive leadership and financial support to make training more accessible and affordable for the private and voluntary sectors.**

EYDCPs play an important role in identifying the training needs of the sector. They need to be aware of local needs both in the voluntary and private sector and other early years settings, and to decide how to prioritise their funding allocations in response to this. We have asked them to draw up plans to meet a number of training and development targets, reflecting their knowledge of local needs both in the voluntary and private sector and other early years settings.

**27. We recommend that every setting that is inspected by OFSTED should have such [outdoor play] areas available to the children. We recommend that if necessary the DfEE should make specific grants to Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships to make this provision possible and should assist settings in receipt of grant also to pursue other sources of funding, such as the New Opportunities Fund.**

**28. We recommend that the funding of Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships should be increased to enable children who have no opportunity for outdoor play, to have safe and secure facilities regularly available to them so that they can play and learn outdoors as well as indoors.**

The Government is aware that some settings are currently constrained by the lack of suitable outdoor play areas and encourages EYDCPs and practitioners to look for opportunities to make the most of local facilities, developing shared access where feasible.

During 2000-01 we have made £5 million of capital funding available to the 75 most deprived authorities to promote wrap around care. One of the suggested uses of this money was to improve outdoor facilities for children and encourage the development of safe and secure external play areas.

We have also recently made £2 million of capital funding available specifically for maintained nursery schools that can, at local discretion, be used to improve external play facilities. This is part of a larger package that includes an additional £5 million, which can be either used to improve facilities, such as outdoor

play areas, or support initiatives that widen the range of services nursery schools provide. These schools generally have very good outdoor provision, and use it well.

In addition, childcare funding has been increased very substantially over 2001-04, from £63 million to more than £200 million a year by 2003-04. There is considerable flexibility in this funding for local decision taking on expenditure and it is open to any Partnership to bid for money for extending outdoor play facilities.

Under the new Neighbourhood Nurseries initiative, it will be possible for EYDCPs to consider using some of the NOF capital element for developing outdoor play facilities. We will continue to keep this issue under close review.

**29. We recommend that Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships in relatively disadvantaged urban areas should plan to provide a range of outdoor experiences appropriate to the age of the children including, for example, visits to urban farms, the countryside, woodland and the seaside, where the environment is used by skilled practitioners to instruct, stimulate and expand the imagination of children.**

The Government agrees that outdoor experiences offer valuable learning opportunities to young children. Early Years practitioners are already encouraged to develop a stimulating and varied curriculum that includes learning in the outdoors. The Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage promotes this and offers examples of children's activities and the practitioner's role in extending children's learning out of doors.

**30. We recommend that as a long term vision the DfEE should foster the creation and development of a ladder of training for Early Years practitioners which could lead to a graduate qualification equivalent to that of qualified teachers.**

The Government supports the recommendation that career opportunities should be developed for practitioners. The Qualifications Framework, being developed by the QCA links qualifications to job roles and gives national recognition to the standards achieved. The Early Years National Training Organisation and the National Training Organisation for Sport, Recreation and Allied Occupations (SPRITO) are working on systems for recognising and giving credit for individuals' prior experience and learning to enable them to progress more quickly. The Green Paper "*Schools: Building on Success*" signals the Government's intention to build on this by developing a new senior early years practitioner role and new routes into teaching for sector workers. It will discuss the way forward with key stake holders. The Government has also embarked upon the development of a 'core competence programme' for Foundation Stage practitioners that will comprise modules relating to effective early education practice. The intention is to design these in such a way that they can be accredited towards existing and future qualifications.

**31. We recommend that every setting outside a home which offers early education should have a trained teacher on its staff. Trained teachers should also be involved in the networks which support childminders looking after children in the Foundation Stage.**

The Government supports the recommendation to increase the involvement of qualified teachers more directly across the range of early education settings. The current level of involvement is relatively low and the total number of settings high (around 35,000 in all). Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships have been set targets to increase the number of qualified teachers available to support settings, to achieve a ratio of 1 to every 10 nonmaintained settings by 2004.

**32. We recommend that Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships should publish regular surveys of the costs of childcare in their local authority areas, as well as surveys of the typical rates of pay in their area for different categories of practitioners in the Early Years sector.**

The Government agrees that Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships should be required to publish the costs of childcare in their local authority areas. The childcare and early years audit guidance for 2000-2001 included just such a requirement. This will be continued into future years' audits.

We will also consider the Committee's recommendation about surveying rates of pay in discussion with Partnerships.

**33. We recommend that the Government with the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships should adopt an objective of ensuring equitable pay and conditions for all categories of practitioners across all settings in the Early Years sector.**

The Government recognises the challenge of recruiting and retaining sufficient suitable workers of the right calibre and will work with Partnerships on a range of measures to raise the status of working in the sector, recruit the additional staff needed and improve retention. Pay and conditions lie outside the Government's

remit but will be kept under review by the Partnerships and the Government.

**34. We urge the DfEE to examine the reasons for the low recruitment of men into the Early Years sector and to make strenuous efforts to address the imbalance in the Early Years workforce.**

**35. We welcome the national recruitment campaign, led by the DfEE, for Early Years staff, including Early Years teachers, and we recommend that particular efforts should be made to attract men as part of this campaign.**

The Government supports these recommendations.

The Government strongly agrees that the sector needs to draw on a wider pool of talent if it is to ensure that children continue to get the best quality care and education. Male workers have a lot to offer children, including acting as positive role models and providing a male figure in a child's life where there is none at home. The Government is committed to increasing the proportion of men in the workforce and has set a target of 6 per cent by 2004 from a baseline of 2 per cent in 1998. During the next phase of the national recruitment campaign, we will be actively promoting the recruitment of underrepresented groups, including men, to the workforce.

The Early Years National Training Organisation will shortly be publishing a good practice guide to encourage employers to recruit more men, people from ethnic communities, people with disabilities and older people into early years care, education and playwork.

**37. We recommend that there should be national targets for training so that within ten years all Early Years practitioners have appropriate and specialist levels of training, with all heads of centres, nurseries and playgroups being at graduate level or equivalent and all other early childhood workers at NVQ Level 3 or equivalent.**

The Government shares the Committee's view that we need to raise qualification levels in the early years sector.

In the short term, the introduction from September of national daycare standards will mean that providers across England will be expected to meet the same common set of minimum requirements, rather than the variable local arrangements that currently apply. The standards will include minimum levels for qualified staff. We recently announced the new national standards for full daycare which require the manager and all supervisors to hold a relevant level 3 qualification and at least half of the remaining staff to be qualified to level 2. The standards for other settings will be published shortly.

It is our intention to build on the new national standards by raising overall levels of qualification over time. We are looking to establish a working group to look at qualification levels in the medium and long term. In particular we intend to create a new senior early years practitioner role and helping more sector workers to obtain qualified teacher status. In setting future targets for training we will consider the possibility of moving over time towards a requirement for setting leaders to be at graduate level.

**39. We recommend that all early childhood workers should have access to continuous professional development as of right. Qualified Early Years teachers should visit the settings outside the home to work alongside practitioners to assist their professional development.**

The Government supports the recommendation that all early years, childcare and play sector workers should have access to continuous professional development. Qualified Teachers will be involved with every private and voluntary sector setting to help improve the quality of provision. We have set Partnerships a target to achieve a ratio of 1 qualified teacher to every 10 nonmaintained sector setting by 2004 and have provided resource to ensure that all Foundation Stage practitioners can access at least 4 days of relevant training per year, by 2004. The Learning and Skills Council has been asked to work with Partnerships to give a boost to short course training. Partnerships will have funding to help them to support access to training and development.

**40. We recommend that further education, higher education and other training institutions should develop more flexible training options (such as distance learning, workplace training and modularised training), to increase access across the sectors.**

The Government agrees with the Committee's recommendation.

In particular the Government is aware of the need to offer more flexible routes into ITT. Discussions have been held with higher education institutions about recognizing how an NVQ Level 4 in Early Years Care and Education can contribute towards a degree. Last year, new, flexible, "modular" postgraduate ITT routes were

introduced by a number of ITT providers. These new, flexible routes offer candidates individually tailored training that matches their needs and circumstances, and takes account of prior learning and experience. Candidates can start their training course when it suits them best (not just at the beginning of the academic year in September), and the training and assessment is broken up into flexible modules, which candidates can undertake when it is most convenient for them. This may enable them to gain Qualified Teacher Status whilst at the same time, meeting any existing commitments.

Alternatively, applicants may consider the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP). The GTP is an employment based route, open to all those aged 24 or over who possess a degree or equivalent qualification. It enables schools to employ graduates as unqualified teachers and to lead them through an individual training programme leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). The usual time scale for this programme is twelve months, but can be shorter.

Partnerships and the LSC will work together to identify demand for training and should consider accessibility to individuals when choosing methods of delivery.

**42. We recommend that higher education institutions, in conjunction with the Teacher Training Agency, should develop Early Years training options at higher levels (postgraduate) to enhance the Early Years trainer work force. We recommend that the Teacher Training Agency should sponsor places on Early Years postgraduate courses.**

The Government's priority has been to help EYDCPs to achieve quality improvements at practitioner level. We acknowledge the importance of developing and sustaining the skills and competence of trainers and will enter discussions with the appropriate training and further and higher education institutions with a view to providing support as resources allow.

**43. We recommend that the Early Years National Training Organisation should take a strong lead in the dissemination of the new Early Years qualifications 'climbing frame' to ensure that employers and parents understand what the range of qualifications mean.**

The Government supports this recommendation.

We are currently funding the Early Years National Training Organisation for a number of projects that will build on the development and understanding of the QCA framework.

**44. We recommend that the OFSTED's Director of Early Years should have substantial experience of the care and education of young children. In our view it is also essential that there should be a strong element of both Early Years experience of education and care within the team.**

The Government welcomes OFSTED's choice for the position of Early Years Director. We are confident that Maggie Smith's experience, particularly as director of children's services UK for Barnardo's, and previously as head of children's services in Manchester, will be invaluable as she establishes the new Directorate, taking forward further developments in the regulation of early years and childcare.

OFSTED is currently recruiting senior team, knowledge and experience of the sector will be one of the competencies required. The Care Standards Act includes provision for staff currently undertaking this work to move to OFSTED therefore existing levels of knowledge and experience will be maintained.

**45. In our view OFSTED should recognise that the manner of inspection should change from the current climate of extreme stress in schools both before and during an OFSTED inspection to one of support.**

OFSTED have confirmed that they have been aware of these concerns for some time and have taken continuous steps to reduce the stress which inspection may impose on schools. Recent changes have been the shorter period of notice (6-10 weeks), short inspections for the most effective schools and greater dialogue between inspections and teachers. Postinspection support is properly the responsibility of the LEA, as set out in the Code for LEA—school relationships.

**46. We recommend that the inspection should include the self evaluation undertaken in the setting, so that it will be more effective in improving the quality of provision.**

The Government agrees that selfevaluation in settings should be integral to their quality improvement plans. Self evaluation will form part of the regulatory system under new arrangements being developed by OFSTED's new Early Years Directorate which is scheduled to operate from September 2001. The Department is in discussion with OFSTED colleagues to determine how this might operate within the inspection frameworks.

**47. We expect to subject the performance of the OFSTED Early Years Director to regular scrutiny as part of the accountability of OFSTED to Parliament, specifically to this Select Committee.**

The Committee's view is noted. We welcome the Committee's ongoing interest.

**48. We recommend that the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships should continue to be supported in every way, but particularly in the consistent training for members and Chairs.**

The Government agrees that Partnerships should continue to be supported and that consistent training for members and Chairs is important. This is why we are adding a major new training element to the support programme we have for partnerships this year. Over £0.25 million is being invested in a programme running over the first half of this year designed to help Chairs and members make the most of the skills and competences they have, to help them identify areas for development and to provide training and development opportunities. We will also be continuing our extensive partnership support programme and enhancing this with the introduction of a mentoring programme to help Partnerships learn from each other and to share good practice and experience.

**49. We recommend that all Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships should work towards establishing an independent Chair who is acceptable to all members.**

The Government agrees with the recommendation. The Partnership planning guidance for 2001-2002 again makes clear that the Government would like to see more independent Chairs and that it is good practice for the Chair to be elected by members at the first meeting of the Partnership each year. The Chair should be independent in their action, regardless of the sector they come from, encouraging all members to participate and be heard. Many Chairs from the local authority sector are nonetheless admirably independent in the way they chair meetings.

**50. We recommend that quality should be monitored closely by the DfEE where Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships are not working well and that these Partnerships should be identified, supported and have the opportunity to observe and emulate good practice where it already exists.**

The Government agrees with the recommendation. We have recently recruited eight Partnership Advisers, most coming directly from Partnership backgrounds, to work with all Partnerships across the country with the intention of helping all to reach the level of the best. These new advisers are being well received by the Partnerships and are already having a positive impact. Together with our extensive Partnership support and development programmes, the advisers have a key role in raising quality, spreading good practice and developing the expertise of local partnerships.

**51. We recommend that every meeting of an Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership should be open and that members of the public should be invited and encouraged to attend.**

The Government agrees with the recommendation. The Partnership Planning Guidance for 2001-02 again makes clear the Government's view that Partnership meetings should be open to the public. If a Partnership decides against open meetings the reasons must be fully recorded for scrutiny.

**52. We recommend that the increased Government investment in early education and care should be sustained over a longterm period.**

The Government is grateful for the Committee's recognition of the huge investment it has made in early years education and childcare services. This will continue into the future with a doubling of the funding for early years education from £1 billion in 1996-97 to £2 billion by 2003-04.

Funding for childcare will more than triple from the current level of £66 million in 2000-2001 to more than £200 million a year by 2003-2004. This includes a massive investment of more than £200 million over 2001-2004 in the new Neighbourhood Nurseries initiative. £155 million new money will also be available through the New Opportunities Fund for support of childcare initiatives in disadvantaged areas, in addition to the £170 million currently available through the Fund for out of school childcare

Funding for Sure Start will increase from the current level of £184 million to £499 million in 2003-04.

**53. We recommend that those responsible in the DfEE should continue to review the relative fairness of access to funding for places, staff, resources, capital, and training across the sectors in the Early Years.**

The DfEE will continue to keep under review access to funding to ensure that it remains as fair as possible.

**54. We recommend that the longterm aim of DfEE Early Years funding policy should be to ensure the development of a diverse and innovative preschool sector which meets the need of children and parents in all situations.**

The aim of this Government is to increase diversity and choice in preschool education for all parents. Whilst valuing the contribution of the maintained sector a good proportion of the initial funding for three year olds has gone to the private, voluntary and independent sectors. This has ensured that there is currently a wide diversity of provision available in many areas, in a variety of settings, for parents to choose from.

**55. We recommend that the advances in knowledge about brain development should be kept under examination by DfEE funded researchers in the education field so that Early Years policy is kept up to date and consistent with the available scientific evidence.**

The Government supports the recommendation that early years policy development should be informed by the latest research. We continue to monitor all relevant research.

20 March 2001



[previous page](#) [contents](#) [next page](#)

[House of Commons home page](#) [Parliament home page](#) [House of Lords home page](#) [search page](#) [enquiries](#)

[index](#)