

## APPG Nursery Schools, Nursery and Reception Classes, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2018

### Professional and workforce development in early childhood

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Focus on three things:

1. What international research tells us about effective workforce and professional development in EYs; 2. Early years initial teacher training and surrounding issues; 3. Where we are now.

Conclusion will highlight some of the things that are needed for the future.

#### 1. What international research tells us about effective workforce and professional development in EYs

Recent reviews of international research evidence including several meta-analyses, drawing on information from Europe, USA, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden and UK (Gomez et al 2015; Hadley et al 2015; Oberhuemer 2013; Waters, Payler and Jones 2018) tell us that for professional learning and development to be effective in making a difference to quality, it needs to be systematic, sustainable and transformative (Waters and Payler, 2015). To take each in turn:

- **Systematic** – there needs to be a system-wide framework with funding for diverse types as an entitlement to ensure access at all levels, based on a strategic approach with in-built evaluation.
- **Sustainable** – so that all settings and staff can afford to access prof development, know what best to access, can afford to employ well-trained staff at appropriate levels, and that courses should be founded in the day to day environments of ECEC.
- **Transformative** – one-off or short courses and workshops are not evidenced to have most impact on changing practice to benefit children's L&D. Instead, PLD needs to include of features such as mentoring and coaching over time, being setting based, bringing in outside expertise, collaborative work between staff, embedded evaluation, supportive leadership.

But I will raise questions about how far we are achieving systematic, sustainable and transformative approach in England.

#### 2. Early Years Initial Teacher Training and issues

Two types of specialist trained teachers for early years:

- QTS for work with 3-7 -year-olds (but apparently no figures kept on those in the government census);

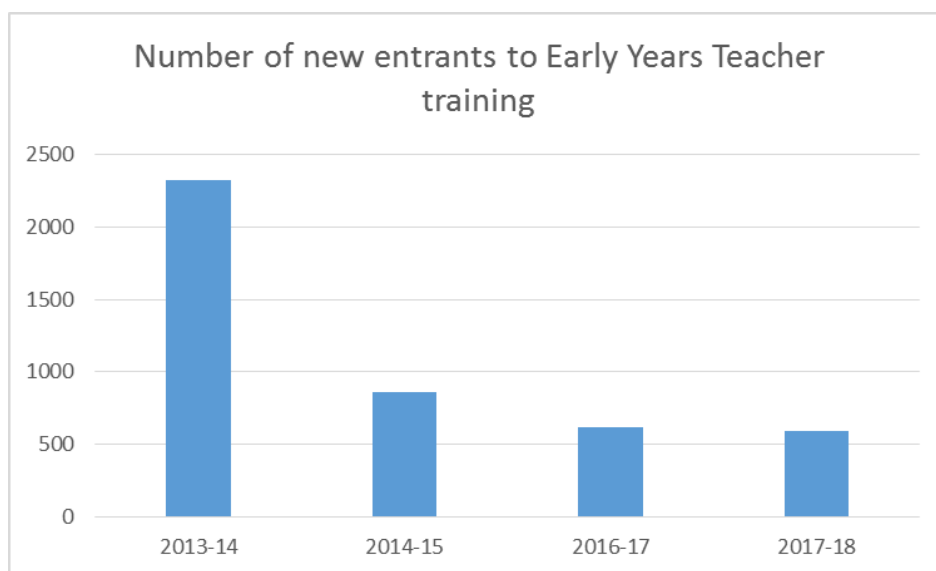
- Early Years Teacher (EYT) for work with birth-5 years.

Both have same entry requirements. However, only QTS can currently teach in maintained schools as 'teachers' and EYTs do not have the same status, conditions of service, salary or career opportunities as QTS.

EYT grew out of the Early Years Professional Status (EYPS, piloted in 2006, then introduced in 2007), changing to EYT in 2013 with new Early Years Teacher standards, new entry requirements matching those for QTS, and new forms of assessment. To reiterate, EYTs are specialist teachers trained and assessed to work to specially devised standards for teaching young children from birth to the end of the Foundation Stage, which includes Reception.

- **By Sept 2012, 10,000** EYPS had been trained since 2007, averaging 2000 per year.
- **2013-14, 2,327** candidates started funded places on an EYT programme. Gradual decline in numbers thereafter.

- **2017-18** only **595** new entrants to EYITT (535 on postgraduate routes; 60 on undergraduate routes) (DfE 2017a)



Primary ITT recruits went up this year, but we have no idea how many are training with an early years specialism. Most are for teaching 5 to 11-year-olds.

According to the figures available, it seems that we are training fewer and fewer specialist EYTs at a time when we need more.

### How many EY teachers do we need for settings?

Number of settings Dec 2017:

**Over 27,500 non-domestic settings plus 42,300 childminders, not including Reception classes** (DfE 2017b).

There are currently around **14,400-15,400** trained EYTs/EYPS, not accounting those who have already left the sector, which is insufficient to make highly qualified staff available to all funded children.

Having direct contact with specially trained graduates (EYTs, EYPS, QTS) is associated with better quality provision and better outcomes for young children (Mathers et al 2011; Save the Children 2016). **We would need approx.. 58,121 specialist early years teachers<sup>1</sup> if we were to cover all funded two and three-years-olds at a ratio of 1:13. This is a conservative estimate, not counting any 4-year-olds as most are in maintained schools.** We need to ensure that we are training sufficient early years teachers to increase and then maintain levels of access to the highest quality provision for all children, which is clearly not the case at present.

<sup>1</sup> Using figures from DfE 2017,

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/622632/SFR29\\_2017\\_Text.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/622632/SFR29_2017_Text.pdf):

163,250 2-yr-olds in funded places, 632,330 3-yr-olds, making approx. **795,580** children needing an early years teacher in preschool/nursery settings divided by ratio of 1:13 = **58,121** EYTs needed at the very least. This does not include any funded 4-year-olds in early years settings and does not allow for the ratios necessary to work with 2-year-olds, so is a **conservative estimate**. There are 685,330 4-yr-olds (79% of which are in maintained settings, mainly Reception).

Only 29% of group-based staff had a level 6 qualification, 39% of nursery staff and 8% of childminders (DfE 2016).

Based on figures from the recent Education Policy Institute (EPI 2018) report, **only around 50% of 3 and 4-year-olds** in funded places are in settings where there is a graduate (QTS/EYPS/EYT) in their classroom, with those most likely to benefit being 4-year-olds already in school, although that does not mean they are necessarily being taught by a teacher with an early years specialism. The figure is **lower for funded 2-year-olds at 44%** (EPI 2018: 24-26).

There is also a **'downward trend'** (EPI 2018) in qualifications in early years settings providing funded places, both for EYTs and for those with level 3 qualifications:

- Proportion of level 3 qualified staff in early years settings fell from **83 per cent in 2015 to 75 per cent in 2016** (NDNA Survey data cited in EPI 2018:3)
- 21 % of graduate staff are aged over 50 and approaching retirement in the next 10 to 15 years. Trends 'cast doubt on the capacity of the younger workforce to keep the proportion of graduates steady, let alone for it to increase. This potentially means that **the early years workforce in the future could be even less qualified than today'** (EPI 2018:3-4);

#### **Summary of EYITT issues:**

- Decreasing numbers of specialist EYTs being trained;
- Lack of readily available information about QTS training with an early years specialism;
- Lack of parity between two types of early years teachers: EYTs have poorer opportunity for progression, employment, status and T&Cs of service;
- Some recent reports (e.g. Sutton Trust, 2017, *Closing the Gaps Early* and Blanden et al. 2017) erroneously and inaccurately, in my view, give the impression that EYTs make no difference to the quality of early years education because they use data from the early introduction of EYPS to comment on the impact of EYT without acknowledging the changes introduced in 2013). This needs to be challenged as in the current climate it could mistakenly and inadvertently be used to argue the need for *fewer* rather than *more* specialist early years teachers that are needed.

A report released very recently by PACEY and Voice, *Improving early years graduates' prospects, career progression and reward*, based on a survey from Nov 2017-Jan 2018 found that:

- The majority of Early Years Teachers (EYTs) find it difficult to gain graduate-level employment.
- Schools are by far the employer of choice for the majority of current and prospective EYTs, though only a minority are currently employed by them.
- A minority EYTs have gone on to further courses to gain Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), but half of current EYT trainees think it is likely they will do so.
- Improved pay, conditions and recognition are crucial to recruiting and retaining specialist early years graduates and improving the Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) qualification.

### **3. Where are we now?**

From 2003 we started to see an increase in level 3 vocational and graduate level qualifications in early childhood settings. However, while qualification levels rose, this has not been reflected in policies requiring higher levels of qualification in EYFS *nor* reflected in status, pay, conditions of

service or career opportunities (Payler and Davis 2017). Most worryingly, recent declining levels of qualification mean that we are in danger of seeing a less well-qualified workforce in the future.

The **context** in which this is happening is also worrying:

- Loss of local authority funding for, and role in overseeing, quality improvement and professional development;
- No coherent structured, funded PLD framework for continuing professional development, leaving the under-funded sector to whatever it can provide and pay for itself. Although there are examples of high quality development going on (e.g. through PLA, PACEY, NEyTCO, Early Education), it doesn't cover the entire sector, isn't affordable for all and nor does it sit within a coherent framework.

The **Early Years Workforce Strategy for England** (DfE March 2017) acknowledged that local authorities have either reduced courses to just mandatory training or are charging for training, and that employers are concerned about cost and access to good CPD.

The Strategy promised a feasibility study to increase graduate workforce in disadvantaged areas (not yet done), a consultation on whether or not to allow early years teachers to teach in nursery and reception classes (completed but not yet reported), it encouraged practitioners to visit other EY settings, and promised an online portal of CPD opportunities (underway).

However, this certainly does not amount to a systematic, sustainable or transformative plan for early years workforce continuing professional learning and development.

#### **Conclusion: what is needed?**

- Coherence in early years teacher qualifications = QTS Early Years Teacher for birth to 7-year-olds;
- Ensure that only teachers specifically trained for early years (i.e. EYTs and specialist 3-7 QTS) teach as teachers in nursery classes, nursery schools and Reception classes in the face of challenging Primary teacher numbers;
- Accurate figures on the numbers of *all* entering early years specialism ITT each year, plus clear estimates of the numbers of early years teachers needed to allow direct access to them for all funded 2, 3, and 4-year-olds;
- Coherent strategic and systematic plan for CPD with funding support and pathways for career/qualification progression across all levels, overseen and supported by local authorities who have a closer view of provision and needs in their areas, but in partnership with voluntary and sector orgs and the highest quality settings (nursery schools);
- Underpinned by adequate funding so that settings can afford to enhance the training and qualification levels of their staff, can back-fill during training, and can – indeed are incentivised and supported - to pay suitable salaries.

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