

# Call for Evidence for the Independent Review of Early Education and Childcare Qualifications

Analysis of responses to the call for evidence

## Summary

### YOUR PRIORITIES

**Q1 In your view, what are the three most important things children need from adults who work with them in early education and childcare?**

There were 948 responses to this question.

532 (56%) respondents identified care, love, nurturing and empathy as the main things that children needed from adults who worked with them in early education/childcare. Softer skills, such as having a caring attitude, patience, warmth and the ability to bond with a child were suggested, along with being able to create a welcoming, warm and comforting atmosphere. It was noted that it would be helpful for adults working with children to have a knowledge of attachment theories.

334 (35%) respondents said it was important that adults working with children were able to understand and meet their needs. It was felt that they should be intuitive, responsive, attentive and able to take a child-centred approach. Respondents believed that children's emotional, personal and social needs should be looked at holistically and that adults working with them should have an appreciation of diversity so that they were aware of each individual child's needs and how to meet them.

319 (34%) respondents thought that a good knowledge of child development was essential, given that this formed the basis of good practice in early education/childcare. It was noted that this enabled those working with children to:

- understand why children developed as they did
- recognise normative child development and identify when there was any delay
- know how to support learning and development
- be aware of the ages and stages of development.

307 (32%) respondents highlighted security and protection as one of the most important things for children, along with the ability to place their trust in those who cared for them. It was acknowledged that every child needed to be safe in early education/childcare settings and that those adults working with them should know how to provide a secure environment, based on a good understanding of safeguarding, child protection and health and safety legislation/procedures.

295 (31%) respondents mentioned stimulation and learning opportunities to help children develop as a fundamental need. There were a number of suggestions for how adults working with children could support this, including:

- providing interesting and challenging experiences
- helping children to develop thinking skills and self-confidence
- providing encouragement, support and praise
- making learning fun
- knowing how to tailor the curriculum for each child
- providing a stimulating and enabling environment
- encouraging creativity and exploration
- helping children to reach their potential
- understanding the need for child-initiated and adult-led learning.

274 (29%) respondents rated interaction and communication within their top three priorities, given the importance of helping children to engage with others, form relationships and develop their language and social skills. They mentioned the need for adults to use eye contact and non-verbal language, to listen to children, acknowledge what they said and encourage them to express themselves.

158 (17%) respondents thought that children needed to be cared for by well-trained and qualified staff, i.e. those with the knowledge, skills and experience to ensure good practice. A good knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) documentation was thought to give early education/childcare workers a good understanding of health and welfare requirements, the early years curriculum, relevant legislation and observation, planning and assessment skills. A good standard of literacy and numeracy was deemed to be important, along with keeping up to date with new theories and research to support reflective practice.

150 (16%) respondents observed that children needed play opportunities, given that play helped children to learn, discover and explore. The importance of play for children was recognised and it was felt that adults could help support play by providing a rich play environment, creating and planning play ideas, joining in with play and introducing an element of risk and challenge through play.

136 (14%) respondents considered that consistency was important for children, such as providing a daily routine and establishing boundaries, rules and discipline. Having constancy of people around the child was mentioned and respondents supported the use of key workers for each child to support this.

126 (13%) respondents believed that adults working with children in early education/childcare should be enthusiastic and motivated. It was considered vital for staff to have a genuine interest in children and have a passion for their work. Respondents mentioned vision, inspiration, imagination, adventure and fun as being important qualities and skills for adults to have in order to provide the best care and education for children.

122 (13%) respondents said that children needed respect from the adults who worked with them. It was stated that adults should have respect for children's rights, opinions, autonomy and individuality.

**Q2 In your view, what are the three most important things families need from adults who work with their children?**

There were 946 responses to this question.

400 (42%) respondents felt that the main thing families needed from adults who worked with their children was good communication. It was suggested that practitioners needed to have excellent and effective communication skills in order to develop a working partnership with parents where they could be honest about their child's progress. Respondents observed that workers should keep lines of communication open between the setting and home on a daily basis and should make time to listen to parents, be approachable, and be able to offer meaningful feedback, both orally and in writing, in order to involve them in their child's learning and development.

398 (42%) respondents were of the opinion that families needed support and advice from those working with their children, given their knowledge and expertise in early education/childcare matters. It was also felt that they should be able to signpost parents to other services and sources of guidance. Respondents believed that practitioners were in a position to help parents to meet the care and developmental needs of their child, supporting them through transitions and helping the child achieve to the best of their ability.

316 (33%) respondents stated that they thought it was important for families to have trust and confidence in those who worked with their children and that they should be reliable. It was suggested that families needed to have faith in their ability to ensure their child's safety and understand and meet the child's needs, given that they were entrusting their children to their care. A number were of the opinion that parents needed to be able to trust practitioners to respect their views and ensure that the child's wellbeing and happiness were paramount while they attended the setting.

282 (30%) respondents recognised that families should expect adults who worked with their children to be able to offer reassurance that their child was safe and well cared for. It was highlighted that parents had to be confident in the knowledge that their child was secure and well looked after in a safe, happy environment which supported their development. There was a view that parents wanted to be sure that

the child would be as safe and well cared for as they would be at home. The meaning of safety in this context included safety of the physical environment, health and safety considerations and child protection and safeguarding issues.

242 (26%) respondents noted that families needed adults who worked with their children to respect their needs. It was mentioned that practitioners should have respect for families' life choices, culture and beliefs but, further than this, respect for the child's family as their prime carers and educators. Respondents acknowledged that family was the most important thing in a child's life and it was necessary to consider their views, however they decided to raise their children. It was observed that workers in early education/childcare should also take care not to undermine the child's respect for their family.

231 (24%) respondents were of the opinion that adults who worked with children should be well-trained in early years, child development and how children learn to ensure the best outcomes for the individual child. Some thought it important for practitioners to be willing to attend refresher training on a regular basis to ensure their continued professional development and so maintain and improve standards in the early education/childcare setting.

217 (23%) respondents acknowledged that early education/childcare workers must be able to provide stimulation and support children's development. It was noted that this would include creating an enabling environment and being able to provide interesting, age-appropriate activities which would promote children's learning and development.

186 (20%) respondents recognised the need for adults who worked with their children to be skilled at working in partnership. They highlighted the fact that workers should aim to foster a close relationship with parents, jointly sharing knowledge of the interests and needs of the child. There was also a view that a productive partnership with the family would benefit the child and help them to reach their full potential.

130 (14%) respondents believed that one of the things families wanted from adults who worked with their children was warmth and caring. Skills such as being easy going, friendly, approachable and kind were mentioned along with being enthusiastic, nurturing, inclusive and sensitive.

110 (12%) respondents felt that consistency was important in that parents should be able to have regular contact with the staff who worked closely with their child to enable them to discuss their progress and needs. It was also suggested that this could include consistency in messages to the child, for example in acceptable behaviours.

### **Q3 In your view, what skills and knowledge do early childhood practitioners need to gain from initial training and qualifications?**

There were 941 responses to this question.

779 (83%) respondents identified child development and how children learn as skills and knowledge early childhood practitioners needed to gain from initial training and qualifications. It was suggested that knowledge in this area would help practitioners to progress children's development as it would equip them to know how best to support children as individuals and cater appropriately to their age range. Some respondents mentioned that it would also help them to understand development which was within the 'normal' range so that children with additional needs could be identified early.

367 (39%) respondents thought that communication skills were important. It was noted that practitioners should have excellent verbal, written and listening skills in order to communicate effectively with children, parents and colleagues alike. Some respondents were of the opinion that communication was the foundation of learning. It was suggested that it would also be useful for practitioners to be skilled in how children communicated at different stages from birth.

274 (29%) respondents said that it was important that practitioners had a thorough knowledge of legislation surrounding early education/childcare and of EYFS documentation. It was observed that practitioners needed to have an up to date understanding of all legal frameworks on a national and local level including those relating to child safeguarding, health and safety, equality and diversity.

256 (27%) respondents felt that practitioners needed skills and knowledge in child protection and safeguarding. It was stated that all staff should have a good understanding of what constituted best practice in this area, including how to recognise child abuse, how to understand allegations against staff and their own safeguarding obligations.

249 (26%) respondents observed that stimulation and support of learning and development were skills and knowledge early childhood practitioners needed to gain from initial training and qualifications. It was felt that practitioners should be able to provide a range of stimulating activities which helped support children's learning through play. It was noted that they should be trained to be able to plan appropriate provision suited to the age and stage of the children in their care.

205 (22%) respondents believed it important that skills and knowledge in partnership with parents were gained by early education/childcare practitioners as this was considered key to establishing high quality outcomes for children. There was a view that engaging parents in their children's early learning made a valuable contribution to the child's welfare.

196 (21%) respondents recognised that training and qualifications should include observation skills. It was considered necessary for practitioners to know how to observe children effectively and be able to record and interpret the information gathered in order to plan appropriate activities. Observation was also considered important so that practitioners could monitor how a child was progressing and what might be needed to support their learning and development.

187 (20%) respondents mentioned practical experience in dealing with children and families, given that this enabled them to embed theoretical knowledge. Some noted that it would be best to gain the appropriate experience in a range of different early education/childcare settings.

169 (18%) were of the opinion that early education/childcare practitioners needed to know the value of play, including theory and practical models of play. It was recognised that workers needed to recognise the importance of play in children's learning and be able to provide a learning environment which encouraged quality play.

109 (12%) respondents acknowledged that the ability to be reflective was a skill required by early education/childcare practitioners. It was considered important that they were able to understand the need to reflect intelligently on their own and others practice, as this would impact on children's learning.

108 (11%) respondents felt that practitioners should have knowledge of health and safety and hygiene issues. There was a view that there was a responsibility on early education/childcare workers to ensure a safe and hygienic environment was provided while children were away from their homes.

107 (11%) respondents thought it necessary that practitioners had skills in planning. It was acknowledged that they should be able to plan age-appropriate, stimulating activities which were tailored to the learning needs of each individual child.

98 (10%) respondents observed that early education/childcare practitioners should have a good knowledge of issues relating to inclusion and special educational needs. It was highlighted that workers should understand that all children were unique and should be treated equally. Respondents stated that they should also be trained to know when to seek advice if they felt a child needed extra help with their learning.

84 (9%) respondents held the view that workers in the early education/childcare sector should be skilled in the assessment of children's learning, given that this would enable them to plan appropriate educational provision.

80 (9%) respondents believed that initial training and qualifications should prepare practitioners to work effectively in a team. It was noted that workers required this so that they could communicate within their teams to their co-workers, with other professionals and parents.

74 (8%) respondents noted that early education/childcare workers would need to be fluent in English, articulate and literate and that they would need a good level of education in the key skills of English and mathematics. It was considered inappropriate that practitioners without these basic skills could have a role in educating children.

70 (7%) respondents suggested that one of the skills needed to work in the early education/childcare sector was behaviour management. They observed that workers should be able to understand the type of behaviour that was considered normal and tackle challenging behaviour. It was also believed that practitioners should have an awareness of how their own behaviour impacted on others, both children and parents.

67 (7%) respondents acknowledged that workers needed to be skilled in multi-agency working, given that this was an increasingly important part of their role. They felt that practitioners should have awareness of, and the ability to develop, effective partnerships with other agencies in the community.

66 (7%) respondents thought that practitioners in early education/childcare should

have training/qualifications in first aid, particularly specialised paediatric training.

57 (6%) respondents highlighted that it was important for practitioners in the sector to be highly motivated and committed to their work and to the welfare and wellbeing of the children in their care.

## **THE FIVE KEY THEMES**

### **Status**

**Q4 There is a concern that looking after young children is perceived as 'easy' work, requiring no particular skills or experience. How do you think the early childhood workforce is perceived by the general public?**

There were 884 responses to this question.

Respondents agreed that there was a perception that looking after young children was 'easy' work, requiring no particular skills or experience.

404 (46%) respondents felt that there was a notion amongst the public that this work was a job for underachievers and something that anyone could do. It was believed that this myth was perpetuated largely by those advising young people on their future careers. Respondents said that working in the early education/childcare sector was promoted largely to girls who did not show academic promise or as a fallback option for those who had failed to achieve the qualifications needed for further study. It was considered by some that careers advisors were ill-informed as they understood the role to be menial, unskilled work. Respondents noted that the further education sector compounded the situation by failing to insist on basic entry requirements for early education/childcare courses and accepting unsuitable students. The lack of rigour in the qualifications was viewed as a further means of promoting the 'easy work' perception as it was considered impossible for anyone to fail an NVQ in early education/childcare.

320 (36%) respondents said that lack of awareness of the importance and challenge of early education/childcare work and its long term benefit to society had led to the perception of 'easy work'. Many thought that there was little recognition of the educational aspect of the role, such as following a curriculum, and the range of skills needed. Respondents stressed the need to raise awareness of the importance of the early years in supporting a child's development and laying the foundations to assist their passage to more formal learning at school.

229 (26%) respondents mentioned lack of pay, status and progression, given that this led to the belief that early education/childcare was low value, unskilled work which did not require qualifications. Instances of paying people the minimum wage, it was noted, led to the employment of unqualified staff who were unlikely to view the sector as holding long term career prospects.

193 (22%) respondents commented that people believed early education/childcare workers did nothing but play with children all day. This was viewed as being a particular problem for childminders who considered that people had little concept of the work they did in planning, observing, assessing and recording children's learning and development. Respondents said that there was still a view that learning only took place once children started school and that there was a general lack of knowledge of degree level early education/childcare qualifications.

168 (19%) respondents felt that people viewed their role as a babysitting service as many held the old perception of nannies and nursery nurses with little or no understanding of the educator role within the early education/childcare workforce. There was a view that young girls were encouraged to enter the profession if they had experience of taking care of younger siblings or had babysat. Many felt that some parents saw the early education/childcare sector simply as a place to leave their children which allowed them to work.

138 (16%) respondents said that the early education/childcare sector was generally perceived as a role best suited to women, based on the impression that childcare was a traditionally female occupation for which women had natural skills. It was also considered by many to be a job which fitted around family life for working mothers or which could be a stop-gap for women prior to starting a family.

117 (13%) respondents stressed the lack of parity with other professions, believing that the low pay and status of the sector contributed to the view that the early education/childcare workforce was the poor relation, particularly compared to teachers. It was suggested that the concept of education before compulsory school age was not well understood and that early years learning was not considered to be as valid. Respondents noted that the disparity in pay, conditions and status between sectors had led to the perception of early education/childcare being 'easy work'.

78 (9%) respondents were of the opinion that parents appreciated the role of the early education/childcare worker, given that they had first hand knowledge of how challenging working with children could be. It was suggested that parents valued practitioners as they could see how their support was helping their children to develop and trusted their advice, viewing them as experts in their field. Respondents also commented that parents' appreciation of early education was demonstrated by the increasingly common practice of using Ofsted reports when choosing a nursery for their child.

51 (6%) respondents believed that the perception of the sector was improving. Measures such as the introduction of the EYFS and the Early Years Professional Status in recent years, along with proposals for more stringent qualification requirements within settings, were considered to have helped to dispel the 'easy work' view by professionalising the sector.

**Q5 How do you think the public's perception of this workforce could be improved?**



There were 853 responses to this question.

The main way in which respondents thought that the public's perception of the workforce could be improved was through higher pay and status, with 402 (47%) mentioning this. It was believed that establishing a pay structure which gave financial recognition, according to level of qualification, would help to attract more graduates to the sector. It was also felt that this hierarchical approach would assure those at the lower end of the scale that there were prospects for improving their pay and status in line with developing their knowledge and skills. A number of respondents stressed the need for early education/childcare pay, conditions and status to be on a par with other professions.

367 (43%) respondents suggested that positive publicity for the sector would help to improve the public's perception. A variety of ideas were proposed, including:

- a government media campaign along the lines of that for teacher recruitment which stressed the importance and value of the role
- a 'fly on the wall' documentary based in an early education/childcare setting showing the daily routine and challenges faced by the workforce
- introducing a character or storyline relating to early education/childcare in one of the major soap operas to raise general awareness of the role/work
- having a 'champion' for the sector, such as a politician or celebrity to raise its profile and celebrate its work
- supplying promotional material to parents at ante-natal clinics, doctors surgeries etc.
- running open days for parents and encouraging them to volunteer in settings
- careers fairs, open days, websites etc. for students to encourage recruitment.

305 (36%) respondents identified the need for greater recognition of the importance of the early years phase. Many stressed that this stage of a child's life was crucial in laying the foundations for lifelong learning and that awareness should be raised of the benefits of early education and the responsibility of the workforce in supporting it. There was a suggestion that the sector was viewed as the 'cinderella' service in comparison to others; one proposal being made to bring it under the umbrella of the rest of the education sector to rectify this disparity. A number of respondents called for a stop to the increasing focus on 'cheap' and 'affordable' childcare which they felt devalued the sector.

239 (28%) respondents wanted to see the qualification requirements for entry to the sector raised and more rigour applied to those qualifications. There was a mix of views on the level at which the entry requirements should be set, ranging from level 2 to graduate status, though most were clear that unqualified entry was not acceptable. It was thought that qualification standards should be more stringent. Respondents commented that entry requirements for qualifications should be based on a certain

level of education and that they should be generally more difficult to obtain than at present, to help improve standards and to deter less able candidates.

161 (19%) respondents were of the opinion that promoting work in the early education/childcare sector as a career choice, rather than a job, was key to improving the public's perception. Careers advisors were understood to have an important role in changing attitudes in this respect. It was stated that they must gain a clear understanding of what the role entailed so that they would not promote it as an easy option or as a last resort to disinterested people who were not career-minded. The need for parity with other professions was stressed if this was to be realised.

149 (17%) respondents said that training and CPD should be improved to ensure that all workers had good basic training which was kept up to date. There was a call for a clear qualifications structure so that staff were aware of the pathways available to them to enhance their skills and knowledge. It was suggested that a requirement to undertake CPD should be introduced to align the sector with other professions which insisted on this to maintain standards of practice.

44 (5%) respondents believed that professionalising the sector would help to improve its image amongst the public. A number of suggestions were made, such as:

- requiring staff to be members of a professional body
- establishing a licence to practice system
- introducing a regulatory body to provide a professional voice for the sector and promulgate best practice
- using a quality mark for exemplar settings to help raise standards.

**Q6 There is no generic term by which we can collectively refer to people who work with young children. Please give any suggestions you may have for such a term.**

There were 653 responses to this question.

410 (63%) respondents suggested the term 'practitioner'. The majority of respondents favoured early years practitioner. Notably there was some support for the title 'childcare practitioner' and 'early childhood practitioner'.

125 (19%) respondents favoured 'professional'. 'early years professional' was supported by most although a significant number preferred 'childcare professional'.

108 (17%) respondents opted for the term 'educator', whilst 89 (14%) proposed 'teacher/teaching assistant'. It was considered that these titles would better convey the educational element of the work and would help to raise the perceived status of the profession.

51 (8%) respondents liked the term 'pedagogue' but had concerns that it would not

be well understood by the wider public.

A number of respondents suggested that a generic title would not be suitable for the early education/childcare workforce due to the diverse nature of the roles. Some thought that the job title should reflect the level of qualification held. There was support for the term 'practitioners for workers with lower level qualifications (level 1-3) and 'professionals' for workers with higher qualifications (level 4 and above). There was some concern that there were currently too many job titles for early education/childcare workers and that it would be helpful to have less. While some liked the respect commanded by the NNEB qualification others did not like the term 'nurse' as it was more suggestive of health care than early education/childcare. There was some support for the system used in northern Europe and a suggestion that the Department should take the lead from them as a good example with regard to job titles.

**Q7 To what extent do you feel that early education and childcare practitioners with whom you have had contact have been taught the right blend of skills, knowledge and capabilities?**

There were 913 responses to this question.

70 (8%) Very well  
283 (31%) Well  
292 (32%) Adequately  
164 (18%) Not well  
63 (7%) Not at all well  
41 (4%) Not sure

Almost three quarters of respondents who answered this question considered that early education/childcare practitioners with whom they had contact had been taught the right blend of skills, knowledge and capabilities either adequately, well or very well.

**Q8 If you have any specific views about the knowledge, capabilities or skills of practitioners, please describe these below. Please specify if the points you make relate to a particular group of practitioners, or those with a particular type of qualification.**

There were 636 responses to this question.

214 (34%) respondents thought that practical experience was essential in order to ensure practitioners were competent in their setting. They mentioned how reflective practice was necessary as knowledge alone was not enough to care for children. Respondents were of the opinion that skills were developed from working within the sector. Some commented that experience was as important as the qualification gained and that practitioners who worked in early education/childcare settings did not have the skills necessary due to lack of work experience.

207 (33%) respondents were particularly concerned about the quality of practitioners who had studied level 2 and 3 qualifications. They identified that training providers were not equipping staff with the basic skills for working with children and that this level of qualification was obtained too easily. A number of respondents stated that practitioners lacked knowledge about child development and fundamental aspects of childcare such as an understanding of the EYFS. They also commented that practitioners did not have the personal skills to communicate with both adults and children.

167 (26%) respondents advised that training provision varied across providers and described how this impacted on the capabilities and skills of the practitioners who worked in early education/childcare settings. Many respondents expressed concern about the standards within settings and were convinced that the quality of practitioners who had gained level 2 and 3 qualifications was directly linked to the quality of the setting/training provider. According to respondents, poor practice was due to:

- qualifications being completed too quickly
- poor settings that used trainee practitioners as cheap labour
- poor settings that had low expectations and conditions of service
- quality of qualifications that were accepted for working in the sector
- variability in the quality of how NVQ level 2 and 3 qualifications were delivered by learning providers.

159 (25%) respondents expressed concern that current qualifications lacked rigour and depth. They stated that new practitioners did not have an understanding of child development and current theories and practices such as the EYFS, in addition to being unable to link theory to practice. A number commented that they felt qualifications were rushed and that the 'checkbox' method of assessment meant that they were too easily achieved. Some respondents commented that NVQ levels 2 and 3 had lowered standards in early education/childcare settings and the workforce as a whole.

134 (21%) respondents were of the opinion that CPD was required to ensure staff continued to develop their skills and were adequately trained. Respondents commented that ongoing training and experience through practice was necessary to build on the skills of those who had entered the workforce. They were of the opinion that this was necessary to keep up to date with current practices such as gaining an understanding of the EYFS and safeguarding practice awareness. Some respondents commented that those with degrees were the better practitioners.

84 (13%) respondents stated that the knowledge, capabilities and skills of practitioners who worked in the sector was dependent on the attitude of the individual. A number of respondents commented that some practitioners were eager to learn, motivated, had a positive attitude and were committed to working in the early education/childcare sector. They identified that those who demonstrated a natural ability to work in the sector were not necessarily the most qualified.

Respondents also pointed out how some practitioners thought the early education/childcare sector was 'easy work' and may have been pushed to pursue this area as they were underachievers.

43 (7%) respondents compared the competency of practitioners who had gained the NNEB qualification against those who had obtained more current qualifications, such as NVQ level 2. They were of the view that those who held the NNEB were more competent and of a higher quality than those who had studied NVQs. Respondents explained that this was due to a rigorous structure and depth of content of the NNEB course, which ensured the right balance between practice and theory and included knowledge of child development. Some respondents mentioned there should be a minimum entry qualification for working in an early education/childcare setting.

### **Q9 How well do you rate the general standard of delivery of qualifications and training courses?**

There were 863 responses to this question.

43 (5%) Excellent  
248 (29%) Good  
265 (31%) Satisfactory  
86 (10%) Poor  
17 (2%) Very Poor  
171 (20%) Too varied to say  
11 (1%) No recent experience of course delivery  
22 (2%) Not sure

260 (30%) respondents highlighted how standards varied across providers who delivered training courses and qualifications. A high number of respondents mentioned this was a concern as courses and delivery of qualifications ranged from excellent to poor. They identified how there was no standardisation in delivery of courses which had resulted in practitioners who held the same qualification having differing levels of capability and knowledge. Some respondents suggested that there should be better quality assurance for courses that were delivered and qualifications issued in order to overcome the disparity between providers.

101 (12%) respondents expressed concern about the quality and standards of qualifications and training courses for practitioners who studied level 2 and 3 qualifications. They identified that some providers lacked knowledge and were not up to date with the latest developments in the early education/childcare sector. Respondents were also critical of how training was delivered and stated that some assessors did not give adequate support to student practitioners. Some respondents questioned the ability of the assessors/tutors who delivered early education/childcare training. They were also of the opinion that qualifications were achieved too quickly and training providers passed students who did not have the aptitude or capabilities for working in the sector.

54 (6%) respondents identified that practical experience was essential in the delivery of training courses and qualifications. It was stated that course content required a strong practical element that ensured hands-on experience and allowed for reflective practice. One respondent commented that good practitioners were excluded from the early education/childcare workforce as 'theory-based' learning was too academic and had resulted in a loss to the profession of those who were described as 'talented and expert practitioners'.

53 (6%) respondents were of the opinion qualifications and training courses were well delivered within the sector. Those respondents who expressed this opinion mainly commented positively about training at post-graduate and graduate level. Some commented that the courses they had undertaken in higher education establishments were excellent, and were up to date with current practices. There were fewer positive comments about training completed in settings for qualifications below graduate and under-graduate level.

**Q10 Please give your views about learning and training done in early education and childcare settings. For example, about the type or amount of learning. If you can, please be specific about particular qualifications.**

There were 563 responses to this question.

Most respondents focused on the difficulties faced when learning and training in an early education/childcare setting. There were some respondents who commented positively about training undertaken in their setting. NVQs particularly featured in respondents comments.

199 (35%) respondents stated there should be more emphasis on practical experience as working in a setting and dealing with children on a daily basis enabled practitioners to reflect upon the theory they had learnt and put it into practice. Respondents also identified that there needed to be a balance between theory and practice; one respondent commenting that 'theory underpins practice and practice informs theory'. It was also felt that there needed to be a combination of classroom-based and work-based learning. Some respondents were concerned that practical experience might not be significant enough in academic qualifications.

191 (34%) respondents were of the opinion that standards of learning and training varied significantly and were dependent on the setting. They identified how the quality of a setting was strongly linked to the quality of training and support offered to practitioners. Respondents mentioned this was determined by the setting's good practice, the attitude they had to training and development, and how experienced the staff and management were.

116 (21%) respondents pointed out how difficult it was to complete learning and training in early education/childcare settings due to the cost and difficulties in making time available. Some expressed concern about the lack of training that was available and how this was linked to the financial climate. Respondents also pointed out the problems they faced in facilitating training as there was a lack of funding to provide the cover they required to maintain staff to child ratios. Respondents mentioned this affected their attendance at external training courses as well as day to day training in

the setting that they were offered or expected to undertake.

113 (20%) respondents expressed concern about aspects of NVQ training that were taking place in individual settings. A number of respondents commented that the quality of NVQ training was dependent on the quality of the setting and the training provider. Those that raised concerns about NVQs achieved in settings mentioned that:

- students were not always supported adequately within the setting by staff who were not able to offer them quality time
- students lacked experience in working in a variety of settings and with differing age ranges
- the NVQ assessment process was varied depending on the provider and in many instances assessment was poor
- the qualification was achieved too quickly and was often just a tickbox/paper exercise
- students lacked theoretical background once they had achieved their qualification
- NVQs were not of the same quality as the NNEB qualification.

82 (15%) respondents advised that those trained in settings required mentoring and support. It was identified that these student practitioners did not receive enough support from their training provider. Some respondents focused on the fact that there was a lack of support from placement providers and insufficient guidance on how to mentor and train student practitioners.

72 (13%) respondents expressed reservations that students who had undertaken training in a poor setting would be exposed to poor practice and therefore would not have been trained appropriately. They identified that this became evident when the practitioner moved to a setting where standards of practice were higher as their skills and competencies were found to be lacking. Some respondents suggested that students should only be trained in settings that were of a high standard.

### **Coherence and inclusivity**

#### **Q11 How do you view the range of current qualifications available for those working in the early education and childcare sector?**

There were 889 responses to this question.

383 (43%) Too many  
242 (27%) About right  
129 (15%) Not enough  
135 (15%) Not sure

There was a mix of views on the issue of the range of qualifications available for those working in the early year/childcare sector, though the majority believed that there were too many.

**Q12 Do you feel that different training providers deliver qualifications in a way that ensures consistent outcomes for learners? Please explain any views you have.**

There were 863 responses to this question.

115 (13%) Yes      550 (64%) No      198 (23%) Not sure

Most respondents did not feel that different training providers delivered qualifications in a way that ensured consistent outcomes for learners.

322 (37%) respondents believed that there was too much variation in provision of training which led to lack of consistency for learners. It was noted that disparity across providers existed in a number of areas, such as:

- the quality of tutors, i.e. their level of qualification and experience
- pass levels and rigour applied to assessment
- course content and interpretation of the content
- levels of support, i.e. access to a tutor and resources provided
- ratio of work-based practice and taught sessions.

Respondents considered that this lack of standardisation across the provision of early years/childcare training led to very different experiences for learners, depending on the provider they had chosen. Many respondents cited instances of recruiting staff to the workforce and witnessing the paucity of training received by candidates holding early education/childcare qualifications. It was noted that employers had to fill the gaps left by inadequate training by providing instruction 'on the job' for new employees who lacked basic knowledge and skills. Respondents recommended reducing the number of providers and improving quality assurance, so that there were fewer providers, but of a higher calibre.

169 (20%) respondents felt that there was too much variation in early education/childcare qualifications and that there should be more consistency. The main problem identified was a lack of standardisation, which meant that holding, for example, a level 3 qualification, did not necessarily guarantee the expected benchmark of ability or knowledge associated with that level. NVQ, CACHE and BTEC awards were mentioned as leading to the same level of qualification, whilst having varying levels of academic/practical content. Respondents noted that some qualifications were prized more highly by employers and would be more acceptable for entry to higher education. Other inconsistencies across the range of qualifications identified included:



- length of courses, ranging from a few months to two years
- course content, particularly where students could choose from a range of modules
- entry criteria for courses, which should require a standard level of education.

83 (10%) respondents were concerned that assessors were able to pass unsuitable students, particularly in cases where there were financial incentives associated with pass rates. It was felt that such providers did a disservice to those students who were clearly unsuitable by allowing them to continue their courses and achieve a pass. Respondents also criticised those providers who placed profit before quality, where students were steered through the quickest possible route to gaining a qualification, thereby lacking any depth of knowledge or practical experience. The 'tickbox' method of assessment was also highlighted as failing students, many of whom, it was said, had little contact with their tutor throughout their course, and whose aptitude was therefore not properly measured.

Respondents were clear that the lack of consistency in qualifications and provision led to the need for minimum standards to be established and for rigorous, external moderation.

**Q13 Do you feel that the early education and childcare workforce is sufficiently inclusive and diverse? (e.g. gender, ethnicity, age). Please explain any views you have.**

There were 893 responses to this question.

257 (29%) Yes      538 (60%) No      98 (11%) Not sure

The majority of respondents did not feel that the early education/childcare workforce was sufficiently inclusive and diverse.

489 (55%) noted the low ratio of male staff, at practitioner level, compared to female and suggested that measures should be taken to attract more men into the sector. Many respondents mentioned the beneficial aspects of employing male staff, particularly the positive impact it had on boys and the importance of providing a male role model for those growing up in single parent families. Lack of male applicants for early education/childcare training was found to be disappointing, many believing that it was not promoted as a career choice for males. Instances of male students dropping out of courses were given, due mainly to feelings of isolation and exclusion within a female dominated community. 33 (4%) respondents also highlighted problems associated with the attitude of some parents towards men looking after their children, based on their fears of paedophilia.

216 (24%) respondents mentioned the low pay and status of the early education/childcare sector, believing that this was the main factor which determined the composition of the workforce. This was viewed by many as the most significant reason why men did not view early education/childcare as a career option. Respondents considered that low levels of pay and lack of status had led to the

sector being mostly comprised of young, inexperienced women who saw it as a stop-gap before starting their own families and working mothers for whom the hours provided flexibility around their own childcare arrangements. It was noted that, unless pay levels increased, the sector would be unable to attract high calibre staff.

Views were mixed on the question of the ethnicity mix within the workforce with 68 (8%) respondents believing this to be lacking, whilst 38 (4%) considered it sufficient. It was noted that ethnicity mix tended to reflect the ethnic composition of the local community. There was some concern however that minority groups were under-represented in managerial posts.

On the issue of age range, respondents commented that the workforce largely comprised younger staff, which tended to be commensurate with levels of pay. Whilst the experience associated with older staff was thought to be beneficial, it was noted that they were less likely to have the relevant qualifications and/or be unwilling to acquire them.

**Q14 Do you think current training and qualifications promote inclusivity and diversity? Please explain any views you have, and give any ideas you have for how inclusivity and diversity might be improved.**

There were 841 responses to this question.

425 (50%) Yes      165 (20%) No      251 (30%) Not sure

Just over half the respondents who answered this question agreed that the current training and qualifications promoted inclusivity and diversity.

Many respondents were of the opinion that inclusivity and diversity were covered within the current range of qualifications, though some had reservations. It was felt that these aspects could be treated in a tokenistic way for a number of reasons, including:

- the value placed on them by the provider i.e. they could be non-mandatory modules of the course
- the location of the course i.e. they were more likely to be relevant in multi-ethnic communities
- the level of the qualification i.e. there was generally more in-depth coverage in higher level qualifications.

There was a view that this could be improved by making inclusivity and diversity compulsory parts of each qualification, weaving them holistically throughout the course rather than ticking them off as completed modules. Respondents also believed that these subjects were currently taught in a theoretical manner and that more should be done to provide practical experience of how they could be applied in the workplace.

Whilst many respondents agreed that early year/childcare training and qualifications were open to anyone, 78 (9%) considered that the low level of pay and the lack of status associated with the profession could exclude some from making it their career choice. The over-representation of young women in the workforce was thought to be largely due to the fact that the low wage suited those able to live with their parents as it was insufficient to support independent living. It was believed that improvement in remuneration would encourage a broader range of people, particularly men, to consider early education/childcare when thinking about career options. Respondents noted that the sector lacked the status of other professions, such as teaching and nursing. It was suggested that measures should be taken to rectify this situation, such as making clear the progression routes and establishing a recognised title for members of the workforce.

61 (7%) respondents expressed the view that early education/childcare was largely perceived as a job for women, based on a view that they had an innate tendency towards caring professions, which created a barrier to men joining the workforce. This, it was felt, explained the high proportion of working mothers attracted to the sector. It was proposed that this could be improved by encouraging careers advisers to promote early education/childcare to males, rather than, as it was understood happens currently, pushing girls with limited academic ability, or no real career ambitions into this area.

41 (5%) respondents stated that the qualification requirement could be restrictive for some. Older workers, possibly returning to the sector after raising their own families, it was suggested, could find themselves lacking the required qualifications. Respondents believed that there should be some credit given for the experience of such workers, even if they did not hold the necessary academic awards. A number of respondents mentioned the difficulties associated with working towards higher level qualifications, such as degrees and Early Years Professional Status. Many of the issues associated with accessing this avenue of progression were thought to be particularly problematic for older workers, such as:

- meeting the entrance requirements
- accessing financial support
- maintaining work-life balance
- adapting their learning style to a more academic qualification.

**Q15 Do you feel that the current range of training and qualifications sufficiently meets the needs of those currently in the workforce as well as new entrants? Please explain any views you have, and give any ideas you have to improve this.**

There were 868 responses to this question.

189 (22%) Yes      483 (56%) No      196 (22%) Not sure

Over half of those responding to this question said that the current range of training and qualifications did meet the needs of those currently in the workforce as well as new entrants.

139 (16%) respondents stressed the need for CPD. This was thought to be particularly important for those who had gained their qualifications some time ago, as a means of refreshing their knowledge and skills and keeping them up to date with new theories, practices and initiatives. Areas such as health and safety, first aid and safeguarding were mentioned as subjects in which practitioners would benefit from ongoing training. There was some support for recognising the qualifications and experience of more mature practitioners.

138 (16%) respondents thought that new entrants to the early education/childcare sector were lacking both in knowledge and practical experience, indicating that the training and qualifications provided were not meeting their needs. It was noted that those entering the profession, particularly at level 2 and 3, did not have a good understanding of child development, and the theory behind it, and had scant knowledge of the EYFS. Level 3 qualifications were viewed by some as lacking in content, failing to equip people to take up supervisory posts in early years/childcare settings and not instilling the study skills required to progress to higher level qualifications.

110 (13%) respondents identified lack of funding and financial support as a barrier to meeting the training needs of the workforce. It was noted that less training was being provided by local authorities in the current financial climate, which restricted the opportunities for development open to many practitioners. Whilst there was support for initiatives such as the Graduate Leadership Fund, respondents highlighted that it had not been universally available, leaving many to self-fund degree courses. Rising tuition fees, coupled with low pay, it was believed, made entering into higher education a daunting prospect and one which few would be keen to undertake. Respondents also highlighted the lack of financial reward within the early education/childcare sector for gaining qualifications, suggesting that many were tempted into other professions, such as teaching, which offered better pay.

72 (8%) respondents considered that there were too many qualifications and suggested that they needed to be streamlined. Problems for employers were mentioned, in that they found it increasingly difficult to assess the competence and suitability of candidates amongst the plethora of qualifications they were presented with. Respondents thought that there was too much change, with some qualifications being shortlived and others being introduced to replace them. A simpler system was advocated to help all concerned to better understand the qualifications framework.

### **Career pathways and progression**

**Q16 How well do you think that the existing framework of qualifications supports career progression within, across and beyond early education and childcare?**

There were 896 responses to this question.

36 (4%) Very well

179 (20%) Well  
283 (32%) Adequately  
245 (27%) Not well  
91 (10%) Not at all well  
62 (7%) Not sure

There was a mix of views on the question of how well the existing framework of qualifications supported career progression within, across and beyond early education and childcare. Most respondents thought this was done adequately or not well.

113 (13%) respondents mentioned the lack of training and progression opportunities. Management training and multi-agency training were suggested as areas which should be made more widely available. Many noted that there was little in the way of progression for an early education/childcare practitioner unless they wanted to manage a setting. Few were aware of any opportunities to progress beyond manager status. Respondents also thought that the prospects for moving across and beyond the sector were limited. It was considered that practitioners holding level 2 and 3 qualifications would find it particularly difficult to move to other areas of work, as their awards were sector-specific. Respondents also said that many, at this level, lacked the necessary basic qualification requirements, such as good GCSEs in English and mathematics which would enable them to move into areas such as teaching, nursing, and social work.

86 (10%) respondents suggested that qualifications did not necessarily help members of the early education/childcare workforce to progress across and beyond the sector. The Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) award was mentioned by many as lacking in currency and transferability. Respondents questioned the value of this award as it was not generally recognised outside the sector and was not acceptable for becoming a teacher in Reception or Key Stage 1, despite its equivalence with Qualified Teacher Status. Respondents cited instances of those holding EYPS having to acquire further teaching qualifications in order to move into the maintained school sector.

81 (9%) respondents said that lack of funding was preventing early education/childcare workers from progressing. Access to training and higher level qualifications was believed to be threatened by the current economic climate and the impact of reduced local authority budgets. It was stressed that this had a direct effect on the training opportunities available and the provision of financial support for gaining qualifications.

78 (9%) respondents highlighted the lack of reward for gaining qualifications which acted as a disincentive to progression. A number made reference to excellent practitioners leaving the sector because of the failure to provide levels of pay which were commensurate with the qualifications they held. Respondents felt that there should be some benefit to the commitment made in working towards higher levels of qualification to halt the loss of valuable staff to better paid occupations.

60 (7%) respondents thought that there were too many qualifications which made progression pathways confusing. Clearer information was requested which illustrated what particular qualifications could lead to and which qualifications were appropriate for various avenues of progression, both within and beyond the early education/childcare sector.

31 (3%) respondents highlighted the problem of the lack of a level 4 qualification in early years/childcare, to replace the NVQ Level 4 CCLD (Children's Care, Learning and Development). It was felt that, for those holding a level 3 qualification, the next step was to access a foundation degree course, yet for some this represented a leap too far. Respondents said that whilst many practitioners at level 3 were keen to progress, many lacked the study skills, such as critical thinking, that would be needed to gain a degree. A level 4 qualification, which was less academic and included practical elements, was recommended to fill this void. A number of respondents also highlighted that the Children and Young People's Workforce Diploma did not hold sufficient UCAS points to enable holders of this qualification to access a foundation degree, which would make a level 4 qualification an ideal stepping stone.

**Q17 Would you like to see qualifications equipping people to move more easily between early education and childcare and other parts of the children's workforce, e.g. from health to day care, and vice versa?**

There were 912 responses to this question.

269 (29%) Yes, I think this is vital

404 (44%) Yes, this seems sensible

143 (16%) No

96 (11%) Not sure

Most respondents said that they would like to see qualifications equipping people to move more easily between early education/childcare and other parts of the children's workforce, e.g. from health to daycare, and vice versa.

136 (15%) respondents were concerned that any move towards more generic qualifications could result in the dilution of those specific to early years/childcare. A number of respondents envisaged practitioners becoming 'Jack of All Trades', lacking the specific expertise required for the sector. It was suggested that a general qualification could provide less value for each sector and that courses might lack the depth of specialist knowledge needed.

74 (8%) respondents thought that there were skills which were transferable across the different sectors. They believed that there were certain aspects of working with children, such as pedagogical skills and first aid training, which could provide the core content for universal qualifications. It was proposed that this could form a basic award which might then be supplemented by top-up, specialist modules, allowing people to access the sector-specific pathway of their choice. Respondents recognised the overlap in basic skills and knowledge between sectors and

considered that generic qualifications would provide an easier means of progression for those wishing to work across sectors.

73 (8%) respondents were of the opinion that qualifications which equipped people to move more easily between sectors would support multi-agency working. The increasing importance of collaborative work was acknowledged and respondents could see a number of advantages to developing universal qualifications, such as:

- providing a more holistic service for children
- breaking down the barriers between services and engendering mutual respect
- giving students a better understanding of different roles within the children's workforce
- creating a more versatile, flexible and adaptable workforce.

46 (5%) respondents believed that a qualification which provided transportability would widen the career opportunities available to the workforce. It was noted that the current qualifications framework failed to support movement across sectors and any measures to help people to diversify their skills and increase their employability were welcomed. It was suggested that the proposed qualifications could help to enhance the early education/childcare sector by opening up promotion and progression opportunities. This was noted as being particularly relevant to childminders who traditionally found it more difficult to move out of their current positions.

29 (3%) respondents reiterated the need to bring pay structures in the early years sector on a par with other sectors, given that improving progression pathways could lead to the loss of early years staff to higher paid posts with other agencies.

#### **Q18 Do you think clear career pathways and progression routes exist?**

There were 899 responses to this question.

297 (33%) Yes      422 (47%) No      180 (20%) Not sure

Views were mixed on the question of whether clear career pathways and progression routes existed, with a third of respondents believing that this was the case.

63 (7%) respondents said that it was difficult to move out of the early education/childcare sector, particularly for those who were unable to commit to long term study programmes. Many recognised that there were few opportunities to progress for those working within small settings or working independently as childminders. Gaining higher level qualifications was viewed as the main way in which people could broaden their career prospects. However, some respondents stated that even after achieving degrees and EYPS, the avenues of progression open to them were still limited. It was suggested that the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and the National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership (NPQICL) held more currency for those wishing to teach or work in

Children's Centres. Respondents noted that it appeared to be easier for those from other sectors to move into the early education/childcare sector as the qualification requirements were less stringent.

62 (7%) respondents felt that there was a lack of advice on the career pathways and progression routes available. They were convinced that they must exist but were not aware of them. Respondents said that they had to do their own research to find the various options available to them in the absence of clear guidance. It was proposed that more could be done by colleges and training providers to make students aware of the most appropriate qualifications and the career pathways which they could lead to, both within and beyond the early education/childcare sector.

50 (6%) respondents believed that there were too many qualifications which made it confusing for those within the profession, or considering it as a career, to understand which they should consider. It was noted that employers also found the plethora of awards on offer too complicated when selecting candidates for positions. Respondents proposed that the number of qualifications, and providers, should be reduced in order to streamline the pathways for progression and make the process easier for all to understand.

#### **Q19 Are these well enough understood by those outside or considering a career in the profession?**

There were 881 responses to this question.

87 (10%) Yes      605 (69%) No      189 (21%) Not sure

The majority of respondents believed that career pathways and progression routes were not well enough understood by those outside or considering a career in the profession. Indeed, 76 (9%) respondents believed that they were so unclear that they were largely misunderstood by those *within* the profession. It was believed that there was a general misconception that working in early education/childcare did not represent a career or profession, based on the lack of awareness of the possibilities for progression beyond being a practitioner or manager. Respondents mentioned the view that many people outside the profession held that early education/childcare was an easy option, attracting low pay and lacking in status.

99 (11%) respondents said that there was a need for better advice and information for those considering a career in the early education/childcare. Lack of awareness, amongst careers advisors, of the pathways available was thought to be at the root of the problem. Respondents believed that they failed to promote the sector as a career or advise prospective students/staff fully of what the job entailed. It was felt that early education/childcare was largely offered as an 'if all else fails' option to underachievers, who might have little interest or aptitude for the work. It was suggested that those considering working in the sector could be helped by:

- ensuring that careers advisors and tutors were better informed



- promoting the sector more widely, e.g. via the internet, open days, awareness sessions in school/college
- including information on the progression pathways within and beyond the early education/childcare sector within the content of each course.

35 (4%) respondents mentioned the misunderstanding of the EYPS by those outside the sector. It was felt that the role of the early years professional was unclear, as were the implications of achieving it, such as what it qualified people to do and its equivalence to other qualifications.

**Q20 Do you think that there are sufficient opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD), (both accredited and non-accredited)?**

There were 900 responses to this question.

355 (39%) Yes      356 (40%) No      189 (21%) Not sure

There was no real consensus of opinion on this question, with an even split of respondents believing that there were sufficient opportunities for continuing professional development as those who felt there were not.

The main issue for respondents was the lack of funding available for CPD with 213 (24%) respondents commenting on this. They stressed current budget constraints across local authorities and settings had resulted in reduced funds for training. Respondents considered that accredited CPD had been the biggest casualty with many unable to access the Graduate Leadership Fund and having to finance their own CPD. It was noted that people over the age of 25 found it particularly difficult to access financial support.

82 (9%) respondents said that the opportunities available for CPD depended largely on the area in which they lived. It was considered that the amount of funding devoted to training varied across local authorities. This, it was felt, resulted in a 'postcode lottery' where the ability to access CPD, irrespective of need, was dependent on location.

Similarly, 72 (8%) respondents were of the opinion that the opportunity to access CPD was reliant on the level of importance placed on it by local authorities and managers. It was felt that, where they viewed the development of the workforce as a priority and made funds available, staff were able to make the most of CPD opportunities. A number of respondents noted that managers in the maintained sector were more likely to be proactive in this area than those in the private, voluntary and independent sector, for whom financial considerations could be the deciding factor.

51 (6%) respondents thought that there were insufficient opportunities for CPD, in that places on courses could be limited. Some gave instances of training events being so scarce that they were often over-subscribed. Other considerations included:

- the lack of accredited CPD
- the lack of specialist training, such as speech and language therapy
- the focus on CPD for staff at level 2 and 3 and the lack of higher grade CPD.

41 (5%) respondents mentioned the problem of having to cover staff ratios within early education/childcare settings and the impact this had on releasing staff for CPD. Where courses were run during session times, it was stated that it was often impossible to send more than one person per setting. Given that ratios of staff to children were statutory requirements, respondents felt that those who might benefit from CPD opportunities could miss out by being unable to attend. Financial considerations were again viewed as being at the heart of the problem as, for each member of staff released from work for CPD, the setting had to provide cover in order to meet ratio requirements.

**Q21 Please give any specific concerns/barriers to accessing CPD, or ideas for improving CPD.**

There were 663 responses to this question.

475 (72%) respondents identified the cost of training, backfilling for staff undertaking training and the lack of funding as the main barriers to accessing CPD. Many said that the expense incurred could be prohibitive, particularly for small, voluntarily run settings and independent childminders. Respondents believed that CPD was underfunded and, where subsidies were not available, the workforce had to contribute financially for their own CPD. This appeared to be the case particularly for those working towards higher level qualifications. Respondents suggested ring-fencing of early intervention funding to enable local authorities to provide CPD, given that investment was essential to develop the workforce, raise standards and improve quality within the sector.

For 291 (44%) respondents, the lack of time to access CPD was a specific concern. They stressed that the early education/childcare sector was characterised by long working hours and the need to have sufficient staff cover for the number of children in the setting. Respondents stated that this limited their ability to release staff for CPD. Many stated that it was common practice for staff to attend training sessions in their own time, after the setting had closed or at weekends, in order to avoid failing to maintain adult:child ratios. It was suggested that the early education/childcare sector should adopt in-service training days, in line with the maintained sector, so that time could be devoted to CPD without the restrictions of ensuring staff cover.

113 (17%) respondents found the availability of courses to be problematic. It was noted that staff found it difficult to access CPD unless courses were available in the evening or at weekends and were funded. Family and other commitments, it was stated, prevented some from making the most of CPD opportunities and it was suggested that more online training could be made available which they could complete at home. Respondents also mentioned that the courses offered tended to be general in nature and linked to welfare requirements, such as safeguarding and

health and safety, rather than specific areas that might be of more interest, such as early intervention strategies. It was proposed that CPD should stem from the appraisal process and be more targeted to individual need rather than local authority objectives.

89 (13%) respondents considered that the lack of value placed on CPD by managers could be a barrier, though it was acknowledged that restrictions around cost, time and cover often made this a difficult compromise. It was suggested that there needed to be a commitment to CPD for the sector from central and local government to ensure that its importance was recognised. There was some support for a more formal structure for CPD, such as making it a statutory requirement, like in other professions, and creating a body to oversee CPD and its accreditation.

47 (7%) respondents identified the location of courses and lack of transport as a concern. Inaccessibility for those in rural areas and for younger staff who did not drive were mentioned as being particularly problematic. Travel expenses were noted as adding to the cost of CPD and it was suggested that more in-house training would be helpful.

35 (5%) respondents highlighted the lack of reward for accessing CPD, given that there was no guarantee of higher pay or status as a result of committing time, effort and expense to gaining higher level qualifications. The inability of settings to pay highly qualified staff was acknowledged, leading to valuable members of the workforce leaving the sector. A salary structure, based on level of qualification, was proposed to ensure that pay was commensurate with the skills, knowledge and ability of the individual.

32 (5%) respondents thought that lack of motivation and apathy amongst the workforce led to reduced take-up of CPD opportunities. There were a number of reasons cited, including:

- unwillingness to undertake CPD in their own time and at personal expense
- lack of incentive, as little prospect of financial reward or promotion
- lack of self-confidence or the will to move their career forward
- lack of basic academic requirements to access higher level qualifications
- intransigence of older, more experienced staff.

20 (3%) respondents suggested the sharing of good practice as a means of improving CPD, such as networking across settings, shared training and the establishment of 'teaching schools'. It was thought that this would provide a more localised, and less costly, solution to develop the knowledge and skills of the workforce.

## Standards

### **Q22 Do you think that there are any particular problems with the quality assurance process for qualifications and training?**

There were 844 responses to this question.

410 (49%) Yes      134 (6%) No      300 (35%) Not sure

Views were mixed on the question of the quality assurance process for qualifications and training, with almost half of respondents who answered this question believing that there were problems in this area.

The main problem, identified by 206 (24%) respondents, was the inconsistent quality of both qualifications and providers, based on the lack of rigorous quality assurance. It was believed that the variable standards in provision were due to:

- lack of objectivity, for example where the trainer/assessor role was undertaken by the same person, there could be a conflict of interest and poor candidates were unlikely to be failed
- variable levels of knowledge and experience of assessors; examples were given of assessors lacking sector-specific knowledge and skills and holding the same level qualification as those they were assessing
- lack of moderation, which allowed poor providers to go unchallenged, for example those who were too lenient with unsuitable students, providing too much support and awarding passes where they were not warranted
- pressure on providers to accept unsuitable students onto courses and award passes, regardless of ability, due to imposed targets and the link between student numbers and funding.

62 (7%) respondents considered that confusion surrounding the extensive number of qualifications and providers available made the quality assurance process unmanageable and suggested that the system needed to be simplified. It was proposed that rationalisation could be achieved by drastically reducing the number of both, particularly qualifications. There was a view from some that there should be one universal early education/childcare qualification. Establishing national standards for course content and setting a benchmark for each level of qualification were also proposed as measures to support rigorous quality assurance. A number of respondents believed that qualifications had been 'dumbed down' and that some, particularly NVQs, were too easy to obtain. It was felt that entry requirements, assessment procedures and pass levels should be more stringent in order to drive up standards. One suggestion was to introduce grading of vocational qualifications, such as NVQs, to replace the current pass level, to acknowledge the achievement of higher ability students.

**Q23 How do you think this process could be improved (e.g. strengthening the role of awarding bodies)?**

There were 373 responses to this question.

131 (35%) respondents agreed that the role of awarding bodies should be strengthened. Suggestions included:

- developing a code of practice to improve standards of assessment
- imposing more rigorous external validation to ensure assessment was fair and accurate
- encouraging stricter quality assurance of providers.

84 (23%) respondents said that consistency was needed in order to improve the quality assurance process. It was thought that there had to be more uniformity, both of qualifications and providers, to ensure that there were similar outcomes no matter which qualification was taken, and whichever provider was used. It was believed that parity could be established by imposing minimum requirements and standards in each of the following areas:

- entry requirements e.g. literacy and mathematics qualifications
- course content/curriculum, e.g. core mandatory requirements included in each qualification
- length of course
- time spent in settings to gain practical experience
- guided learning hours to ensure depth of knowledge and understanding
- qualification requirements of tutors and assessors
- inspection regimes to ensure providers were meeting standards.

71 (19%) respondents felt that there should be more rigorous inspection and moderation of providers. Ensuring that awarding bodies made regular checks was thought to be an important factor in identifying quality issues and imposing action plans where there were problems. It was suggested that external verification of qualifications would support objectivity and consistency across the early education/childcare sector.

58 (16%) respondents reiterated the need to standardise and reduce the number of qualifications, with a focus on fewer, but higher quality programmes, in order to promote more effective quality assurance.

51 (14%) respondents considered that standards of assessment and inspection should be improved. External scrutiny was advocated, such as greater levels of

observation, more stringent checks on portfolios of work and strengthening Ofsted's role within the sector. There was some support for assessment via formal, written examination, externally marked and moderated, to replace the more subjective assessment used by tutors currently. It was noted that this would test standards of literacy and knowledge and would help to reduce current poor practice of plagiarism, tutor support and reworking of portfolio evidence.

48 (13%) respondents wanted to see the streamlining of awarding bodies, or even the establishment of a single awarding body, in line with the request by many to reduce the number of qualifications. It was believed that this would result in tighter quality assurance procedures and a more coherent and easier to understand qualifications framework.

31 (8%) respondents were in favour of regulation as a means of raising accountability, for example imposing a set of rules and establishing a regulatory body. There was also a view that some form of rating system or quality mark should be applied to signify that providers and awarding bodies met certain standards and/or followed a code of practice. It was suggested that this would help students to choose an endorsed provider and employers to be assured of the quality of qualifications.

Several respondents mentioned using feedback from students, as a means of quality assurance, to rate the effectiveness of providers and the suitability of the qualifications offered.

**Q24 During the Tickell Review of the Early Years Foundation Stage many people raised the Nursery Nurse Examining Board (NNEB) qualification, which is no longer available to new learners, as a qualification for practitioners that defined standards and conferred status. Which aspects of it do you think have relevance now and how might we learn from it?**

There were 457 responses to this question.

Respondents showed a great deal of support for the NNEB qualification, suggesting that the principles on which it had been based should form the basis of today's early education/childcare qualifications.

205 (45%) respondents specified that the NNEB had been characterised by high standards and rigour. It was stated that the selection process for gaining access to an NNEB course included five GCE O level passes and an interview, which ensured that only those who were suitable were accepted. Respondents said that NNEB students were required to commit to a full time, two year, college-based course, during which they would be expected to complete a number of practical placements. Assessment, it was noted, was in the form of marked assignments, tutor observation and a final written examination, for which the grades of 'pass', 'merit' or 'distinction' were awarded. Respondents stressed that if students failed to be graded they were deemed not to have reached the required standard for a career in early education/childcare. It was considered that the rigour of the entry requirements, the course and the assessment regime meant that achieving an NNEB qualification represented a high standard of achievement, discipline and professional conduct.

178 (39%) respondents thought that the depth of knowledge required for the NNEB qualification was relevant to today's early education/childcare workforce. The focus on taught sessions, delivered at college over a two year period, it was felt, allowed for consolidation of knowledge and greater understanding of theory. It was mentioned that the NNEB course had only one optional unit so employers could be assured that candidates holding the award had a good grounding in early education/childcare knowledge.

140 (31%) respondents said that the focus on child development and how children learn was a key element of the NNEB. It was noted that this underpinned good practice by supporting observation and planning. Respondents believed that this had become less of a feature in more recent qualifications and that it should be a compulsory element of any early education/childcare qualifications.

121 (26%) respondents highlighted the value of practical skills which were a fundamental component of the NNEB course and which complemented the taught sessions. NNEB students, it was understood, were required to undertake a range of placements in a variety of settings, such as nurseries and hospitals, and working with children from birth to age five. Respondents thought that such experiences helped students to consolidate their knowledge, supported reflective practice and prepared them for the world of work.

112 (25%) respondents said that the NNEB was held in high regard and that its name conveyed respect and status, both to parents and employers. It was stressed that the NNEB was the only early education/childcare qualification available, in its time, which ensured that it was universally recognised. Respondents believed that the NNEB was characterised by its stringent standards and represented the gold standard in early education/childcare qualifications. It was suggested that an NNEB award guaranteed a level of professionalism and provided the holder with clear avenues of progression into childcare, education or health.

89 (19%) respondents stated that observation skills were developed as part of the NNEB and that this was a key area of early education/childcare expertise which was relevant to today's workforce. Observation was considered to be important in giving students a good knowledge of child development, helping them to analyse children's learning, showing them how to interact and supporting planning. Respondents mentioned that observation within placements formed part of the assessment of the NNEB which ensured that students had an aptitude to work with children.

Whilst many respondents were convinced that there was some aspect of the NNEB which could benefit today's learners, 35 (8%) felt that the qualification was not relevant to the early education/childcare sector of the twenty first century. There was a view that there was misplaced nostalgia for the award and that it lacked a focus on important facets of current early education/childcare work, such as:

- education and children with learning difficulties
- social policy
- diversity and inclusion

- partnership/multi-agency working
- leadership.

Respondents thought that the title 'nursery nurse' was no longer suitable for the current workforce as it stressed the care aspects of the work, whilst failing to reflect the educational part of the role. It was proposed that the title might also be a deterrent to men entering the profession.

**Q25 The Government is committed to promoting a minimum Level 3 qualification for those working in the sector - how do you think this might be achieved?**

There were 618 responses to this question.

268 (43%) respondents said that funding would be essential if the commitment to promote a minimum level 3 qualification for those working in the sector was to be achieved. The cost of upskilling those practitioners who held qualifications below level 3, along with paid release time for training, were noted as being major financial considerations. Respondents were keen that such expense should not be passed on to parents through increased childcare costs. The need for more competitive salaries was envisaged, to enable settings to attract higher qualified staff and to incentivise those at level 2 to gain a level 3 qualification.

178 (29%) respondents thought that the most effective way to ensure a minimum level 3 workforce was to make it a legal requirement. Many commented that it should be stipulated within the EYFS as part of the welfare requirements. It was also suggested that it should be written into Ofsted's inspection criteria as a means of encouraging settings to comply. Respondents recognised that imposing minimum qualification requirements could be problematic for some and proposed that a transition period was allowed to enable those below level 3 to work towards the higher level.

129 (21%) respondents identified the need for more accessible training, given that an extensive development programme would be needed to upskill the early education/childcare workforce. It was noted that training would need to be more affordable and that consideration should be given to free provision for those over the age of 25.

101 (16%) respondents believed that the quality of qualifications and training providers would need to be improved if level 3 was to become the minimum requirement for early education/childcare staff. Many stated that standards for level 3 qualifications should be more rigorous, for example imposing stringent entry requirements to ensure that students had a good level of literacy before embarking on the course. The quality of providers was also thought to be important in ensuring that only those learners who met the level 3 standards of competency gained awards.



67 (11%) respondents were of the opinion that introducing a minimum qualification requirement would raise the profile of the early education/childcare sector. It was felt that the level 3 standard would give the job higher status, in line with other professions, and give staff greater recognition and respect for the work they did.

51 (8%) respondents had reservations about the impact on level 2 workers, given that many were excellent practitioners but were either unable or unwilling to gain a level 3 qualification. It was noted that some would lack the academic ability required whilst others did not want a supervisory role, but were nonetheless valued staff. Respondents felt that a level 3 award did not necessarily make an effective practitioner, citing examples of level 2 staff with valuable experience and skills which were more employable than level 3s who showed no natural aptitude for the job. It was suggested that there should be some form of accreditation for experience and prior learning for level 2 staff unable to attain a level 3 qualification, rather than lose them from the sector.

### **Q26 Do you think that the aspiration for all settings to be led by a graduate level leader is right?**

There were 916 responses to this question.

621 (68%) Yes

48 (5%) No, too difficult

164 (18%) No, shouldn't be a priority

83 (9%) Not sure

The majority of respondents agreed that the aspiration for all settings to be led by a graduate level leader was right.

216 (24%) respondents said that there was a need to value experience within the early education/childcare workforce, rather than placing the focus on the need for setting leaders to be graduates. It was highlighted that a degree did not necessarily make someone a good leader. Instances of leaders having qualifications in unrelated fields, such as arts degrees, topped up by a year long EYPS course, were viewed by some as being no more suitable to lead a setting than someone with a lesser qualification but many years of relevant experience. There was a view that the requirement should be an early years related degree, which would better equip leaders to use their learning to improve their settings. Respondents advised that existing leaders should not be stopped from practicing if factors such as family commitments or lack of academic qualifications prevented them from studying for degrees.

154 (17%) respondents believed that a requirement for graduate leaders within settings would improve standards. Several mentioned various research projects, such as the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project, which had evidenced the link between graduate leadership and improved outcomes for children. Respondents who were currently on degree courses described the difference higher level study had made to their perceptions and the improvements it had brought to

their practice. There were a number of advantages expressed, including improving the ability of graduate leaders to:

- share their knowledge of new ideas, research and theories with their staff
- review, revise and improve practice within their setting
- be inspirational by setting a good example about the value of CPD
- act as a mentor to those working in their setting.

120 (13%) respondents considered that having graduate level leaders would improve the status of the early education/childcare sector in that it would bring parity with other professions, such as teaching. It was also felt that it would engender greater respect from both the public and other professionals and demonstrate the importance and value placed on the early years age group.

96 (10%) respondents stated that pay levels within the early education/childcare sector must reflect graduate status, as it was unreasonable to expect people to gain higher level qualifications without the associated financial recognition. One respondent suggested that salaries for setting leaders were likely to be less than for a newly qualified teacher, which would inevitably make it harder to attract graduates into the early education/childcare sector and retain them. There was some concern that small private/voluntary/independent settings would find it hard to provide graduate-level salaries.

#### **PART 4: YOUR FURTHER THOUGHTS AND SUGGESTIONS**

**Q27 If the questions we have asked have not given you opportunity to make all your views known, please use this space to add any further comments you would like to draw to the attention of Professor Nutbrown.**

There were 136 responses to this question.

109 (80%) respondents believed that action should be taken to address pay issues and create parity with other sectors. The general view was that workers were passionate about their work with young children but that morale was low because too much was expected of them for too little reward. One respondent thought it outrageous that shop workers earned more than workers in the early education/childcare sector even after they had qualified. Respondents highlighted issues such as the amount of paperwork, long hours and the effort made to gain higher qualifications which were not matched by appropriate increases in pay.

54 (40%) respondents raised concerns about funding for training. A number suggested that recent government cuts to funding and the removal of ring-fencing would lower the quality of training. Factors mentioned included the lack of funding allocated by local authorities to support training in the sector, ceasing of funding for the Foundation Degree and the raising of tuition fees in higher education.

## Organisations that responded to the consultation

### Organisation

Abbeyfields Day Nursery  
Acorns Day Nursery, The  
Action for Children  
Aigburth Training Opportunities  
All Saints Pre-School  
Alleyn Court Pre-Prep School  
Anne Frank Montessori Ltd  
Ann-Marie's Childcare Services  
Ashton Gate Out of School Care  
Association of Educational Psychologists  
British Association of Professional Nannies  
Barbados Playgroup Ltd  
Barnardo's  
Barnes Montessori Nursery  
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council  
Beckenham Montessori Pre-School  
Beechtree Steiner Initiative  
Belsay Daycare Ltd  
Birmingham Early Years and Childcare Team  
Blackpool Council  
Blenheim Playgroup, Kirklees  
Booktrust  
Bradford College  
Bradford Metropolitan District Council  
Brent Local Authority  
Bright Horizons Family Solutions  
Brighter Beginnings Day Nurseries Ltd  
British Heart Foundation National Centre for Physical Activity/Health  
Broadway and Towerview Playschool  
Buckinghamshire County Council  
Busy Rascals  
Butterfly Nursery School  
Buzz Clubs Out of School Play and Care  
CACHE

## Organisation

Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council  
Calmore Pre-School Playgroup  
Canterbury Christ Church University  
Castle Pre-School  
Caterpillars Under 5's  
Chapel Lane Pre-School  
Chartfield School  
Chelsea Open Air Nursery School and Children's Centre  
Cheshire East Local Authority  
Childbase Partnership  
Childcare Company, The  
Childcare Consultancy  
Childcare Corporation, The  
Children's Ark Nursery  
Children's House Montessori  
Childrens Links  
Children's Workforce Development Council  
Children's Workshop, The  
Chiltern College, The  
City College Plymouth  
City of York Council  
Clevedon Montessori Nursery School  
Communications Trust, The  
Cots r Us  
Cragside Nursery  
Cranbrook Primary Out of School Club  
Cuckoo's Nest Childcare  
Cumbria Local Authority  
Daisy Chains Nursery  
Daisychains Nursery  
Daycare Trust  
Denning Montessori School, The  
Devon County Council  
Dorset County Council  
Duchy College

## Organisation

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council  
Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network  
Early Excellence  
Ellacombe Church Playgroup  
Evolution Kids Club and Nursery  
Explorers Nursery  
Family Information Group, The  
Farnham Montessori School  
Fledgelings Day Nursery  
FutureWise Solutions Ltd  
Garden Room Montessori Nursery, The  
Gill Dickers Coaching  
GMB  
Hadlow Community Pre-School  
Halstead Nursery  
Hammersmith and Fulham Council  
Hampshire County Council  
Happy Hours Pre-School  
Henley in Arden Montessori Primary School  
Hertfordshire County Council  
HI5 Out of School Club  
Hiawatha Montessori School Ltd  
Highfield Road Pre-School  
Highwood Nursery  
Holding Hands Pre-School Nursery  
Holly Lodge Montessori Nursery  
Hounslow Local Authority  
Hull City Council  
I CAN  
Indigo Dyslexia Centre  
Institute of Education (SENJIT)  
JHP Group Limited  
Kensal Green Under Fives  
Kent and Sussex Montessori Centre  
Kidsunlimited Ltd

## Organisation

Koinonia Playgroup  
KOOSA Kids Ltd  
Leeds City College  
Leicester City Council  
Leicestershire County Council  
Lenham Nursery School  
Lincoln College  
Lincolnshire County Council  
Lincolnshire Montessori  
Linden Lea Pre-School  
Little Chicks Pre-School  
Little Echoes Day Nursery  
Little Gems Nursery  
Little Learners Montessori School  
Little Oaks Nursery; Little Oaks Too  
Little Tugboat Day Nursery  
London Borough of Barking and Dagenham  
London Borough of Bromley  
London Borough of Camden  
London Borough of Harrow  
London Borough of Havering  
London Borough of Hillingdon  
London Borough of Lambeth  
London Borough of Richmond upon Thames  
London Centre for Steiner Waldorf Teacher Training  
Lullabies  
Magpie Pre-School  
Major Providers Group, The  
Manchester City Council  
Manor Farm Montessori Nursery School  
Manor Grove Montessori Ltd  
Manor House Nursery (Montessori)  
Marylands Private Nursery School  
Melcombe Children's Centre  
Mencap

## Organisation

Merrydays Montessori Nursery School  
Monique's Montessori Day Nursery  
Montessori Assessment and Education Ltd  
Montessori at Brook Green  
Montessori Centre International  
Montessori House, The  
Montessori Partnership  
Musicaliti  
Myrtle Street Montessori  
NASUWT  
National Association of Head Teachers  
National Campaign for Nursery Education  
National Childminding Association  
National Day Nurseries Association  
National Union of Teachers  
New Dawn New Day Ltd  
Newcastle College  
Norfolk Lodge Montessori  
Norland Agency  
Norland College  
North East Lincolnshire Council  
North Warwickshire and Hinckley College  
North Yorkshire County Council  
Northamptonshire County Council  
Nottingham City Council  
Nottingham Trent University  
Oak Tree Children's Centre  
Oaklea Montessori Community Interest Company  
Oakwood House Nursery  
Ofqual - Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation  
Open University - Early Years Team, The  
Orchard House Montessori School  
Our Lady's Bishop Eton Primary School  
Out of School Alliance  
Ovingham and District Under 5s

## Organisation

Oxenhope Pre-School  
Oxfordshire County Council  
Parents Early Education Partnership  
Pearson International  
Pen Green Centre, The  
Peterborough City Council  
Phoenix Montessori Nursery and Day Nursery  
Pied Piper Pre-School  
Pippa Popins  
Pre-School Learning Alliance  
Professional Training Solutions  
Rainbow Day Nursery  
Rainbow Montessori  
Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council  
Rhodes Pre-School  
Ribblesdale Children's Centre  
Robins Nest  
Rosewood Montessori Nursery School  
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames  
Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists  
School Food Trust  
Scope  
Seedlings Montessori Nursery  
Sheffield City Council  
Sheffield Hallam University  
Slade Nursery School and Children's Centre, The  
SNAP! 4 Kids Ltd  
Southampton City Council  
Spring Close Montessori  
St Andrews Play Group  
St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College Childcare Department  
St Hilarys Pre-School  
St Margarets Nursery  
St Mary Magdalen Montessori  
St Peter's Methodist After School Club



## Organisation

St Peter's Prep School  
Stannington Village Pre-School  
Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship  
Steiner/Waldorf Movement in UK  
Stepping Stones Pre-School  
Stockton Borough Council  
Stoke Bishop Montessori  
Stonewall  
Streatham Montessori Nursery and Day Care  
Suffolk County Council Early Years Training Unit  
Sunderland City Council  
Sunflower Montessori Nursery School  
Sunny Days Pre-School  
Sunshine Pre-School and Day Care Ltd  
Sure Start Berwick Children's Centre  
Sure Start West Riverside  
Surrey County Council  
TACTYC  
Teddybear Nursery Ltd  
Telford and Wrekin Council  
Thorner Pre-School  
Tigglets Montessori Nursery School  
Training Depot Nursery  
UNISON  
University Campus Suffolk  
University of Worcester, Institute of Education  
Village Montessori Nursery School  
Village Montessori, The  
Voice the Union  
Wandsworth Council Children's Services  
Welwyn Hatfield Council  
Westfield Nursery School  
Weyhill Montessori  
Whitney Crocodiles Pre-School  
York College

## **Organisation**

York Montessori Nursery

Youth Sport Trust

## **Next steps**

The results of the call for evidence have fed into Professor Nutbrown's interim report. Professor Nutbrown will publish her final report, including her recommendations, in the summer. The Government will then consider her recommendations and provide a public response. Depending on what Professor Nutbrown recommends, and on how the Government responds, the Government may conduct a full consultation about the proposed changes.