

Making the difference

The impact of staff qualifications on children's learning in
early years

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1. Overview of main findings of report

This report looks at the changing role and development of qualifications of pre-school staff and how this impacts on children's learning experiences across the sector. Through gathering information on staff qualifications during pre-school inspections we are able to comment on the different types of qualifications of staff in relation to what we found while evaluating practice.

Evidence for the report was gathered from 336 Education Scotland pre-school inspections from August 2010 until June 2012 in local authority nursery schools and classes, family and children's centres and partner centres in the private and voluntary sectors.

Information was also gathered from contacts and visits to local authorities, a range of case studies, Scottish Government census information, providers of the BA in Childhood Practice and the Scottish Social Services Council.

The evidence from inspections highlighted similar characteristics which led to very effective professionals in early education.

In the most effective practice, high quality experiences for children resulted from the combined strengths and talents of the range of professional staff involved. Staff demonstrated an understanding of early years methodology and were committed to putting this into practice to support and develop children's learning. High quality learning experiences were provided in an enjoyable and supportive environment for all children. Settings showed strong leadership which allowed staff to develop their skills. Through improvements in self-evaluation staff were able to reflect on practice and make changes which were leading to improvements for children.

This effective practice was due in some cases to the ability to access a pre-school teacher particularly with a background in early years methodology and in others due to the increasing impact of higher qualifications for staff who achieved additional qualifications such as, the BA in Childhood Practice.

2. Background

The Early Years Framework was launched in December 2008 by Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA). It set out a clear timeline for addressing the issues affecting the life chances of Scotland's children. It seeks to see a move from investing in a situation of crisis management to early intervention and prevention. The framework highlights the need for national and local agencies, including the third and independent sectors, to be working together to improve outcomes for young children. Three other policy initiatives sit alongside the Early Years Framework in determining change for Scotland's children, *Equally Well* which reports on health inequalities, *Achieving our Potential* which is addressing issues of poverty, and *Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)* as the approach for delivery of the key priority of improving life chances for children.

Education Scotland, formerly HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE), has, since the launch of the Early Years Framework, supported its development by undertaking key tasks as part of its commitment to identify, collate and disseminate good practice in the implementation of the Early Years Framework. In 2009, HMIE produced a publication *Positive Start, Positive Outcomes*, which highlighted best practice and issues from inspection in the implementation of the Early Years Framework. We were able to identify a range of case studies to show how the delivery of services are being organised across a range of authorities. It was clear that all those working with young children support the vision of the Early Years Framework and were keen to provide high quality early education.

In January 2011, Scottish Government produced an interim publication *The Early Years Framework – Progress so far*. This set out key messages and priorities for action alongside the progress made. One of the elements, 'Putting quality at the heart of service delivery', sought to deliver systems to improve the core qualifications of staff working with young children.

In order to provide evidence in this particular area, Education Scotland undertook work from August 2010 to report specifically on the skills, competencies and qualifications of staff and their impact on outcomes for children. The work was based on what we found from our pre-school inspection activity, case study information and contacts with local authorities. We also looked at the implications for the quality of children's learning and leadership within early years centres and the current use of teachers as part of the access to pre-school teacher arrangements.

Since August 2010, pre-school centres inspected were asked to record the qualifications held by each member of staff. The information for this publication is based on 336 pre-school centres inspected between August 2010 and June 2012.

Each centre was evaluated against five quality indicators from *Child at the Centre* used by HMI on inspections. Centres covered a variety of types, with information collated from education authority nursery schools, nursery classes, family and children's centres, and private and voluntary centres. The impact of staff qualifications in centres on the level of performance was evaluated using the five quality indicators. The qualifications of all staff were analysed and we noted if staff held a teaching degree in education or in early childcare.

Additionally, we met with and gathered information from meetings with local authorities and held specific sessions with a range of early years providers. Information was collated from representatives from colleges and teacher education institutions to determine in particular how the BA Childhood Practice Award qualification is being delivered.

The evidence base covered by this report focuses on the staff qualifications of the workforce at that time. The situation is ever changing and it is important that the findings of the report are seen as a particular snapshot in time.

The following sections detail what we found.

3. Development of the early years workforce

Inspection findings provided information on the qualifications of all staff working in each pre-school centre from August 2010 until June 2012 including nursery classes as part of a primary school inspection. This helped to give us information on a number of key points.

- Whether managers are improving their own qualifications.
- How much time pre-school teachers spend and the role they undertake in any pre-school centre.
- The effect higher level qualifications may have on children's experiences.

The issues surrounding the early years workforce are complex, and difficult to define as they sit within a constantly changing environment. It requires us to think about the context and recent background to early years developments. There are a number of factors, such as the impact on pre-school of the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010, the consultation on the Children and Young People's Bill and staff registration requirements with the SSSC.

3.1 Access to teachers in pre-school settings across Scotland

We drew on previous work undertaken by HMIE in the 2007 report *The Key Role of Staff in Providing Quality Pre-school Education*. This report looked at the relationship between the quality of provision offered to young children and the qualifications and training of those adults working with them. It identified the importance of high level qualifications and training in early education and their impact on delivery of quality provision for children.

The document concluded that highly effective centres show common characteristics which make for very good practice. These were most often, **but not always**, where teachers were deployed. Evidence from inspections showed that children's experiences were often of a higher standard in centres where, traditionally, teachers were deployed, **or** staff had undertaken higher level qualifications and training.

However, in centres where staff demonstrated effective practice, and there was no teacher deployed, the report found that staff had often undertaken additional higher level qualifications and training. This, alongside tailored, continuing professional development (CPD) and high quality support from the local authority, led to a positive impact on practice.

Case Study 1

In a rural private centre the head has just completed her BA Childhood Practice Award and feels it influences her every day work. She believes her study has kept her up-to-date with current practice and legislation. She uses knowledge gained to upskill her staff. As a result of this her staff put theory into practice. Working closely with staff the centre head identifies areas for improvement. She oversees and coordinates continuing professional development in the centre which is closely linked to the Improvement Plan. Staff are able to access helpful training opportunities from their authority.

3.2 Scottish Government's commitment to teacher access

Within the Concordat¹, Scottish Government made a commitment to ensure all three and four year olds had access to a teacher. This was then refocused in 2011 on those from the most deprived backgrounds to ensure access to pre-school teachers and continuing expansion of nursery education. The findings of *Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project*, stated that highest quality was to be found where qualified teachers worked alongside other well-qualified early years staff, emphasising that pre-school settings benefit from having a range of professionals playing complementary roles. Scottish Government *Guidance on Pre-school Teacher Deployment*, 2009 acknowledged this and included details that teacher involvement was part of a broader workforce strategy, including the introduction of higher level qualifications for managers or lead practitioners. In addition, there was a clear expectation that play workers and/or equivalent staff would also be qualified to a suitable level.

Case Study 2

Staff in a nursery centre feel that being able to share skills and knowledge with all staff is the most important factor in determining the effectiveness of teacher input. The teacher oversees the curriculum for three to five year olds, advises staff and has developed her role over a number of years. This includes working with two year olds. She has a good knowledge of the curriculum and challenges staff in discussion about curricular issues such as assessment.

When the Scottish Government *Guidance on Pre-school Teacher Deployment* was published in 2009 the research evidence was not conclusive on the question of how much of a teacher's time is required to improve children's outcomes; and therefore no basis for setting a minimum threshold. However, it was noted that occasional or ad-hoc support from a teacher is unlikely to make a difference. This has not changed, but has led to a varied interpretation of what access to a teacher means in different authorities.

The Scottish Government yearly census statistics on pre-school education is not able to provide detailed information on the actual amount of teacher time or what the teacher's role is when in a centre. In order to find out more about the quality and quantity of teacher access in pre-school, information was gathered to review current practice.

Variation in teacher access

- In reorganising early years provision a number of local authorities are changing stand alone nursery schools into large nursery classes, as part of a primary school with the headteachers of those primary schools as the overall manager of the school and nursery class. In some instances headteachers had little or no previous experience of managing pre-school education or leading staff in early years methodology.

¹ Guidance on pre-school teacher deployment Scottish Government 2009

- Overall, where teachers are employed, local authority staff report that there has been a positive effect on children's experiences. However, local authority officers report that terms and conditions offered in the private sector have proved to make retention of teachers difficult. A small number of managers and/or owners of private establishments in partnership with the local authority employ teachers who may not necessarily have relevant early years experience. We found that in these situations the impact on children's experiences was limited.
- Some local authorities which offer no teacher access to partner providers encourage their partner centres to buy in teacher support available from the authority. This can result in centres in these authorities deciding not to purchase the teacher support. Other authorities provide partner centres with support from authority staff as part of their partnership agreement.

Teacher deployment

- In local authorities where teachers continue to be employed in nursery schools and classes, they tend to lead curriculum implementation and related developments. This is to ensure that children receive a high quality of experience and appropriate outcomes for learning. Evidence shows that, in some instances, as teachers in nursery schools and classes leave, authorities are replacing them with other staff, for example a senior early years worker. There is as yet no substantial evidence to say that this affects the quality of experiences provided.
- In local authorities, peripatetic teacher services are changing. The reasons for this include geography, recruitment, and cost. Peripatetic teachers often support smaller nursery classes. Peripatetic services vary in terms of time allocated to supporting partners and also to the qualifications and experience of staff employed. For example, some teachers work directly with children to offer a value added experience. Others focus on giving advice and consulting with staff to ensure that children's experiences are rich and of high quality.

Case Study 3

The centre receives a five week block of peripatetic teacher input once a year. The teacher works on an agreed aspect of the improvement plan. This resulted in more regular group times to help facilitate discussions with children and provide regular opportunities for planning and reflection. The impact was felt by both staff and children through improved quality, focus and regularity of group times. Curriculum for Excellence was taken forward and some progress was made in developing systems to track children's progress. Having a teacher in the centre meant that staff could focus on developing a piece of work with support.

Overall, we found that when teachers have additional early years experience and can implement early years methodology, this was the most beneficial use of a teacher's skills and had an impact on quality of provision. However, where establishments had access to a teacher but the individual had little or no specific early years experience their impact was limited on the experiences for children. We also noted that the impact of teacher access or the lack of it in pre-school centres is not often formally evaluated by the local authority.

Case Study 4

In one local authority, partnership centres appear to have no access to a pre-school teacher, although a few have recruited them by themselves. These appointments tend to be inconsistent. In local authority centres peripatetic teachers support nursery classes while all other authority centres have full-time teachers. Centres supported by peripatetic teachers have expressed appreciation for the work these teachers do.

3.3 Qualifications and training of early years staff

In taking forward Scottish Government's commitment to ensuring higher level qualifications for staff a decision was taken to increase expectations of key staff, managers or lead professionals by the SSSC.

In 2011 Scottish Ministers asked SSSC to change the current qualifications for managers and practitioners of a day care of children service from the 1 December 2011. This means that when managers/lead practitioners either register or re-register (after every five years) they need to have or will be working towards new practice level 9 award. This was set as a condition for re-registration after the 1 December 2011. *SSSC, December 2011.*

As part of this report we wanted to find out whether or not changes to early years qualifications are making a difference to the quality of outcomes for children. We looked at the requirements for registration which all early years staff, apart from teachers, who are registered with GTCS, are required to meet through the SSSC. This national body is responsible for registering staff who work in day care of children and social services and for regulating their education and training. It is pivotal in ensuring the regulation, training and education of the early years workforce and seeks to promote continued education and training.

We took into account staff who had achieved additional higher level qualifications and in particular, we focused on the BA Childhood Practice Award to ascertain the impact of staff gaining the qualification on children's learning. This award is one of the first work-based awards in Scotland where entry is based on Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) and the experience people have gained in their career to date. The qualifications are the result of the Standard for Childhood Practice which was launched in 2009.

The SSSC recognise that it will take time for early years staff to achieve required qualifications and have agreed to phase access to registration to allow staff enough time to achieve their required qualifications. The BA Childhood Practice Award is delivered through a number of Scottish universities. It can be delivered in different ways, for example distance learning, e-learning, seminars and tutorials on weeknights and weekends over a period of between three to six years.

Through our staff audit from inspection evidence and links with local authorities, we found an increasing number of staff in management positions in local authority provision, where there is no teacher, upskilling their original qualification in line with SSSC requirements. Almost all authorities are organising additional CPD opportunities and providing accredited training for authority staff to meet the minimum requirements of SSSC. (Appendix 2). Staff who are supported must show a commitment and have recognised experience in a pre-school setting. Through varied financial support and, for example, Workforce Development or European Social Funding arrangements, access to funding for qualifications is improving and demand increasing.

However, these increased expectations have significant issues for partner provider centres, such as voluntary playgroups and private nurseries, where a significant percentage (40%) *Pre-school Education Statistics, 2011* (National Statistical Bulletin) of pre-school education is delivered. Many of these services, particularly in the voluntary sector, have grown out of a local need and are managed and run by parents. We already know that in more rural settings, particularly where accommodation is shared, voluntary sector groups are being subsumed into management of the local primary school. This, in turn, alleviates the need for the pre-school group's manager to undertake the additional SSSC requirements.

In centres where staff demonstrated effective practice where there was no teacher deployed, we found that staff had often undertaken additional higher level qualifications and training. Staff demonstrated a high level of commitment in undertaking these qualifications. We looked at information gained from interviews and visits made to selected pre-school centres where the lead practitioner or manager is currently or about to complete additional degree level qualifications. They are mainly, but not exclusively, from the private sector where the uptake for additional qualifications has been most common.

Case Study 5

The playgroup is in partnership with their local authority. The manager has a National Nursery Nurse Examination Board certificate (NNEB) and is currently undertaking a BA qualification. The manager's experience of undertaking the qualification is extremely positive. She believes it has been a great personal and professional development opportunity and has impacted strongly on the work of the playgroup. The manager and staff use the information to lead continued improvements in the playgroup. Areas of practice which have significantly improved include, involving parents more in their children's learning, transitions to the local nursery class and allowing children to take the lead in their learning. The manager has a better awareness of how individual staff members carry out their roles and this allows her to deploy staff in the most effective way to meet the needs of the children.

Our evidence would suggest that in almost all centres surveyed, staff, who either have the BA Childhood Practice Award or are undertaking the qualification, believe that it is having a significant and positive impact on children's learning. Theoretical studies build very well on staff's practical experience. Staff have a clearer understanding of child development and feel more confident and motivated in delivering the curriculum. We know that staff are using their new knowledge and skills to improve learning for children, for example outdoor learning. They are delivering more child-led learning which promotes deeper and challenging learning experiences.

Case Study 6

In the centre three staff have attained their BA and three are currently studying towards their qualification. Staff who are studying are supported by their manager who feels it is important to impart knowledge to others who are less confident. Staff already qualified to BA level are used to support others. Those working towards the qualification report that their study has made them more analytical of practice and has given them increased confidence in taking on responsibility. Staff are able to make links between their learning and research. Staff working towards their qualification have improved their practice in relation to outdoor play and children are more engaged and confident in their outdoor learning. Appropriate training is identified through the professional development and review process. Curriculum for Excellence is developed through staff working parties.

Most members of staff with the qualification (or studying for it) share their new knowledge with colleagues. This takes different forms, such as training, sharing good practice, professional dialogue and mentoring. It encourages staff to become more reflective of their practice which improves children's learning. Most staff who have gained the BA believe that, while it is very hard work, it has been an excellent CPD opportunity. A few managers believe it gives them a clearer focus when identifying appropriate CPD to meet the needs of individual staff members and the centre as a whole. We found that although these views have been gathered from individual staff we also found that no centre appeared to have a formal plan to up-skill staff with knowledge gained from the BA qualification; it appears to develop more naturally.

Case Study 7

The owner/manager of the centre has a BA qualification and the depute manager is currently undertaking the BA. All staff are undertaking additional qualifications. CPD is linked to the Improvement Plan and to many other areas the centre is working on. Most training opportunities are in-house and staff value the opportunity to share and disseminate good practice. The owner ensures each member of staff has a protected period of 20 minutes per week which is to be used exclusively for professional development and research and reading.

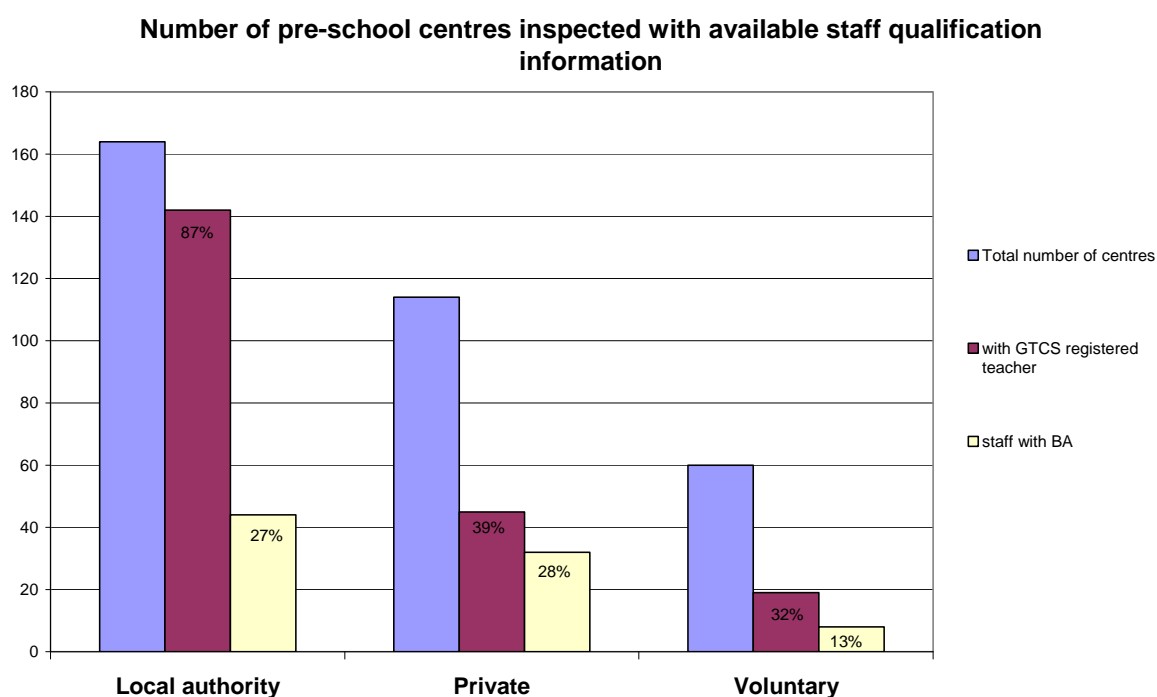
4. Statistical information from pre-school inspections.

Information was gathered from inspections from August 2010 until June 2012.

Given that the information on qualifications is held only for the 336 centres inspected, it is too early to identify a conclusive correlation between staff who are GTCS registered and staff who have the BA Childhood Practice Award. However, there would appear to be some evidence that centres with staff with degree level qualifications generally perform better.

Therefore the following information needs to be considered in this context.

We gathered information across different types of pre-school sectors to show the numbers of GTCS registered teachers and staff with a BA Childhood Practice Award.



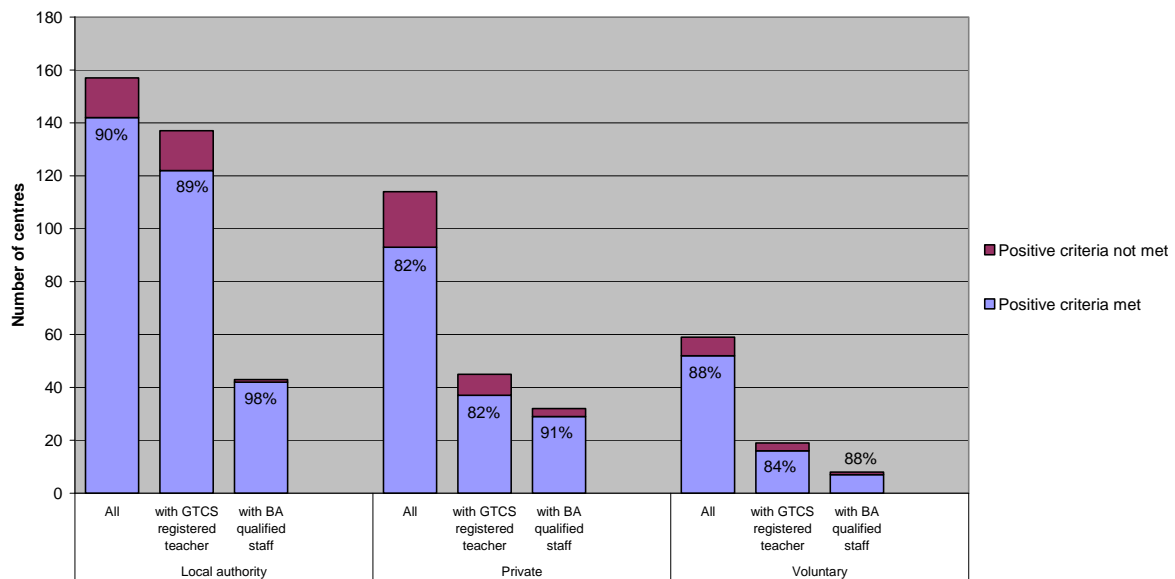
In local authority establishments 164 centres were inspected. Of these,

- 142 (87%) had one GTCS registered teacher. This however does not show the actual time the teacher spends in an establishment which is variable across authorities. When looking at the BA Childhood Practice Award 44 (27%) centres had one member of staff with the qualification.
- In the Private sector 114 centres were inspected. Of these 45 (39%) had one GTCS registered teacher. There is no indication of the actual time the teacher spends in each centre. When looking at the BA Childhood Practice Award 32 (28%) centres had one member of staff with the qualification.
- In the Voluntary sector 60 centres were inspected. Of these 19 (32%) had one GTCS registered teacher. There is no indication of the actual time the teacher spends in each centre. When looking at the BA Childhood Practice Award 8 (13%) centres had one member of staff with the qualification.

We looked further at the numbers of centres achieving positive evaluations across all five quality indicators and broke these down to show the percentage in each sector of the impact of a GTCS registered teacher and staff with the BA qualification.

The positive criteria used across all QIs was an evaluation of satisfactory or above.

Percentage of pre-school centres achieving positive evaluations across all five quality indicators



- Most of the centres achieved satisfactory or above in all five QIs.
- When centres are achieving evaluations of satisfactory or above in all five QIs most of them had at least one GTCS registered teacher.
- Across all sectors almost all had at one member of staff with the BA Childhood Practice Award.
- Of the 16 local authority centres achieving good or above in at least one or more QIs centres none had a teacher. However of these, 13 centres had a member of staff with the BA Childhood Practice award.
- Of the 15 local authority centres achieving weak or unsatisfactory in at least one or more QIs all had a GTCS registered teacher. Only one centre had a member of staff with the BA Childhood Practice Award.
- Of the 34 private centres achieving good or above in at least one or more QIs none had a teacher. Of these, 14 had a member of staff with the BA Childhood Practice Award.
- Of the 21 private centres achieving weak or unsatisfactory in at least one or more QIs none had a teacher and three centres had a member of staff with a BA Childhood Practice Award.

- Of the 25 voluntary centres achieving good or above in at least one or more QIs, 20 did not have a teacher and of these 20, three had a member of staff with a BA Childhood Practice Award.
- Of seven voluntary centres achieving weak or unsatisfactory in at least one or more QIs, three had access to a teacher. Of the remaining four, only one centre had a member of staff with a BA Childhood Practice Award.

Early indications are that having staff with relevant higher level qualifications has a positive effect on practice. It is important to be aware of the myriad of variable factors which come into the equation and may play a role in the performance of an individual centre. These factors include the type of provision. Local authority establishments have a far higher proportion of qualified staff than the private or voluntary sectors. For example, local authority nursery classes and schools, private nurseries and voluntary playgroups and community groups all deliver diverse approaches to children's learning and the management of the centre. The impact of that diversity is difficult to measure.

Access to a teacher, as previously discussed is another important variable fact. Our evidence suggests that this is most effective when the teacher has a background in early years methodology and practice. Some settings will have access to a GTCS registered teacher as well as a member of staff with the BA qualification. What is clear is that this skill mix provides higher quality experiences for young children.

5. High level points to consider

In drawing the information together for this publication, a number of important messages became evident. In considering past evidence from reports and statements, a consistent message is the necessity to have a highly skilled workforce. The publication *The Key Role of Staff in Providing Quality Pre-School Education* a number of the key recommendations are still relevant today. For example:-

- The workforce needs to be equipped with the right knowledge, skills mix and training needed to meet the changing and increasing demands required of a high quality, early years service.
- Where centres aim to improve their performance, service providers should take steps to improve management and leadership skills to ensure a higher quality of provision and improve the outcomes for pre-school children's learning.
- Less qualified staff need to be well supported to gain qualifications and improve skills through access to training, taking account of the SSSC requirements for staff.

Following on from the above, the key findings from this report are:-

- When a teacher has a background in early years methodology this contributes to making a positive difference to children's learning.
- The impact on the quality of children's experiences was less where staff had no higher level qualifications.
- There is a significant variation in access to a teacher across the early years sector.
- The BA Childhood Practice Award is beginning to show a positive impact on children's learning in the early years.
- Findings show that the best experiences for children are found where there is a range of staff with complementary skills and relevant higher level qualifications.

In continuing to make a difference for children there is a need to:-

- Continue to support staff who are undertaking higher level qualifications such as the BA Childhood Practice Award or similar.
- Provide opportunities for upskilling the teaching workforce in specific early years methodology to help improve the delivery of quality experiences for children.
- Upskill the non-promoted workforce in early childhood methodology through relevant continuing professional development to help in the delivery of quality experiences for children.
- Continue independent evaluation of the impact of the investment in upskilling the workforce to ensure that higher level qualifications are making a difference.

6. Conclusion

The early years sector is unique in many ways. Pre-school education for our youngest children is delivered in local authority, private and voluntary settings by an early years workforce who are dedicated to the care and development of young children. The range and different qualifications of staff are complex and at times difficult to unravel. What we can say with certainty is that the unique mix of staff and settings make a rich tapestry in which young children learn and develop.

There has never been a time where the early years sector has had so much invested in its potential. We naturally want the very best for our youngest children and what this publication is beginning to show is that particular higher level qualifications do make the difference to young children's learning. The commitment of staff to undertaking additional qualifications while in work cannot be underestimated. It is essential that this positive start to helping young children learn, fulfils its potential, and is built upon and improves future achievement.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1: Additional information submitted from education authorities regarding teacher access

The information below has been collated under four sections to simplify for ease of reading. In some cases information could equally sit within more than one section. Please note that the information below has been gathered on behalf of submissions from 20 Local Authorities.

Partner provider access arrangements.

In all Local Authorities who submitted responses there are common approaches to providing teacher access with private partner establishments. Some examples are:

- Regular support through visits from the Education Development Officer and support teacher.
- Partnership support from a teacher on a needs basis. These staff take on a variety of roles, working with management and staff in the playroom.
- Teacher access is provided, on a needs basis, by teachers who may be based in stand-alone nurseries and centres to a number of local partner provider centres.
- Centres may be paired with a neighbouring school enabling access to any in-house early years CPD. Regular cluster network meetings are organised where all early years educators including teachers come together to share aspects of practice.

Local authority centres access arrangements

- Instead of having stand-alone provision, some primary school nursery classes (PSNC) have been expanded. This has led to some very large nursery classes in primary schools. For example, one has 80 FTE children. In these situations the leadership of the PSNC is the responsibility of the headteacher of the Primary School who may have little experience of early years methodology.
- At present, when teachers are employed in local authority nursery classes and centres they generally focus on improving the implementation of the curriculum and supporting the provision of high quality experiences for children.

Use of peripatetic teaching staff

Peripatetic teachers are used in a variety of ways within many Local Authorities to support Partner Provider establishments.

- Peripatetic teachers in PSNC are additional to minimum staff/child ratios. While in the class they may work directly with children to offer a value added experience, model good practice and may help to lead planning of children's learning experiences.
- In some areas a team of teachers support authority nursery classes and partner centres which are organised in geographical areas within their authority. For

example, each teacher may have four or five settings which they work with over the year. They spend blocks of time (six weeks approximately) in each, with an agreement being made with the partner provider that this is the priority. There is also an option of returning when appropriate.

- In most cases support to centres focuses on the development of Curriculum for Excellence and in the best cases also links to promoting self-evaluation and quality assurance.

Evaluation of teacher access

Responses from local authorities indicated that:

- The impact of teacher involvement can be monitored through quality assurance systems and visits from the authority early years team where these systems are in place.
- Early years teachers provide support to staff regarding observation and assessment.
- Our information shows that in most local authorities no formal evaluation of the impact of teacher access has been carried out.

Appendix 2: Requirements of Scottish Social Services Council for registration

Managers/lead practitioners in day care of children services are defined as workers who hold responsibilities for the overall development, management and quality assurance of service provision including supervision of staff and the management of resources; this is usually the person who is the named manager registered with the Care Inspectorate. On the 1 December 2011 the qualification criteria for managers changed to an award at [SCQF Level 9](#) made up of 360 credits.

Staff must obtain one of the following qualifications. A qualification from the list [acceptable for practitioners](#) plus one of the following:

- BA Childhood Practice;
- Postgraduate Diploma in Childhood Practice; or
- SQA Professional Development Award Childhood Practice (360 credits at [SCQF Level 9](#)).

or

- BA (Hons) Social Work (or equivalent).
- Degree or Diploma in Community Education or equivalent as recognised by the Standards Council for Community Learning and Development for Scotland Approvals Committee.
- A qualification meeting the registration requirements of the GTC, Nursing and Midwifery Council, General Medical Council or the following professional groups regulated by the Health Professions Council:
 - Occupational Therapists;
 - Art, Music and Drama Therapists;
 - Physiotherapists;
 - Speech and Language Therapists; and
 - Practitioner Psychologists.

plus

- An award with 60 credits of management that has been mapped to the Standard for Childhood Practice (at [SCQF Level 9](#)).

(Information courtesy of SSSC website)

Appendix 3: Information on providers of the BA Childhood Practice Degree

Ordinary degrees in Scotland are made up of 360 credits.

Aberdeen University

Aberdeen University offers a BA Childhood Practice award with the intention that it is undertaken by practitioners working with children ages 0-16 years. Students undertake this course online by distance learning. Entrants must work in a relevant education setting and employed for a minimum of 12.5 hours per week having done so for a minimum of two years. They need to evidence characteristics consistent with the HNC Early Education and Childcare and be IT literate. Students are encouraged to work in small cohorts. They have a personal tutor they may contact by email, telephone or arrange to visit at the university.

Duration of the course: it takes two years to complete each level therefore, a minimum of six years to complete three levels. A Postgraduate Certificate in Early Years Education qualification has been developed that provides 60 credits at Masters. This is a distance learning course with materials available online. This will be supported by work based reflective practice on the part of the student.

Edinburgh University

Edinburgh University offer a BA in Childhood Practice that evolved from their Childhood Studies degree. This change reflected the demands of the SSSC. The university worked with key stakeholders in consultation to develop the standard.² This is a part-time work based programme. Applicants are expected to have five years experience of working or volunteering within an early years or childcare environment and should have relevant qualifications that total 120 credits at Level 7/8.

² The Standard explains in detail what is required of a person working in the sector who wishes to register as a manager/lead practitioner with the SSSC. It identifies key knowledge, skills and values that are required of learners undertaking the new awards. The Standard provides clear guidance for Colleges and Universities in developing the level 9 award; it also makes clear what is expected of the relevant workforce within the sector.

Dundee University

Dundee University offer a BA in Childhood Practice that is flexible on entry and exit. The duration of the course is between two (undergraduate certificate), four (undergraduate diploma) and six (BA degree) years. They will accredit prior learning up to a total of 180 points.

Entrants need to have two/three years consistent work experience and a relevant professional qualification, for example SVQ Level 3, HNC or HND. During the course students need access to work with children 0-16 years on a regular basis. It does not stipulate the setting or the need to be volunteering or in employment.

Students follow a modular online programme with professional development online support, telephone tutorials and email. Workshops are provided where students numbers make this viable.

Glasgow University

The BA in Childhood Practice has been designed to enable practitioners to gain an academic and professional qualification whilst remaining in employment. Applicants will be required to have completed an HNC, SVQ3, SVQ4 or equivalent professional qualifications in Children's Care, Learning and Development or Playwork Students must currently be working in a pre-five setting or similar working environment and have a minimum of four years experience in a childhood practice setting. Teaching is delivered through a combination of lectures, work in groups and other method. Applicants will be expected to draw on their own practice.

Stirling University

Stirling University does not offer a BA in Childhood Practice.

As part of their primary initial teacher training programme - BA Hons Degree, they do provide an option to specialise in the Early Years Framework. These students are placed in an early years setting as part of four school placement experiences³.

Open University

The Open University offers a BA in Early Years as either an unclassified degree (300 credits) or Honours (360 credits) and would take approximately three years to complete. Minimum entry requirements are six months full-time experience or 12 months part time working in a suitable environment. During the course, students must be in an early years setting for at least five hours a week in a paid or voluntary capacity. The employer's approval is essential in order to provide the necessary support and allow the student to embark on work-based assignments. Study is flexible and part-time through distance learning. Accreditation for prior learning is awarded up to 180 credits for the unclassified degree and 240 credits for the honours degree.

³ This equates to a total of 7 weeks in a nursery setting.

Strathclyde University / University of Highlands and Islands

The BA in Childhood Practice is aimed at meeting the developing professional needs of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce. It is a collaborative venture between the University of Strathclyde and the University of the Highlands and Islands Millennium Institute (UHI) working in partnership with further education colleges, local authorities and the independent sector. The University and UHI have a long history of developing early years and childcare professionals. This degree closely matches the Standard for Childhood Practice in Scotland and is designed to develop degree-level professionals and future leaders in the sector. The degree is a part-time programme and modules can be delivered either through traditional sessions with tutors or in a blend of e-learning and group instruction.

University of the West of Scotland

The BA in Childhood Practice is offered on an evening or day release basis. Students will have completed SCQF Levels 7 and 8 via a mixture of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and taught SCQF Level 8 units. Applicants require the approval and agreement of their employer and be in a role which allows demonstration of skills and knowledge which meet the Standards for Childhood Practice.

PDA Childhood Practice at SCQF Level 9

Scottish Qualifications Authority have developed a Level 9 PDA Childhood Practice Award. This award offers an alternative option for staff who may wish to acquire a Level 9 qualification. The award is offered through colleges and training providers. The award is grounded in work-based learning. Entry to the PDA is through Recognition of Prior Learning and Experience (RPLE). The learner must meet the entry requirements of 240 credits at SCQF Levels 7 and 8.

This award is recognised in the same way as the BA Childhood Practice award and managers/lead practitioners of day care of children services will be able to use this to meet SSSC requirements for registration.

8. Reading List

The first report of the Early Years Framework by HMIE “*Positive Start, Positive Outcomes*” HMIE 2009.

“*The Donaldson Review of Teacher Education: Teaching Scotland’s Future*” G Donaldson, Scottish Government 2010.

“*Joining the Dots. A Better start for Scotland’s Children*”, Professor Susan Deacon.
“*Early Years Framework, Progress So Far*”, COSLA January 2011.

“*A consultation on the Common Core of Skills, Knowledge & Understanding and Values for the Children’s Workforce in Scotland*”, Common Core Skills Working Group.

“*Moving On – A professional journey in Childhood Practice*”, B Thomson and J Menmuir, SSSC, March 2011.

“*Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) Project*,” Sylva, Blatchford, Taggart, Sammons and Melhuish 2004.

“*A guide to Getting it right for every child*” Scottish Government, May 2012.

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