

The Early Years: Foundations for life, health and learning

An Independent Report on the Early Years Foundation Stage
to Her Majesty's Government

Dame Clare Tickell

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Response to the Minister of State for Children and Families



The earliest years in a child's life are absolutely critical. There is overwhelming international evidence that foundations are laid in the first years of life which, if weak, can have a permanent and detrimental impact on children's longer term development. A child's future choices, attainment, wellbeing, happiness and resilience are profoundly affected by the quality of the guidance, love and care they receive during these first years.

While children spend considerable amounts of time with their parents or carers during these early years, they also spend increasing amounts of time in a wide range of early years settings. Parents and carers are the people who have the most important influence on children's early development – but evidence shows that good quality early years provision also has a large impact on children's longer term outcomes.

In 2008 the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) was introduced to provide a framework which could deliver consistent and high quality environments for all children in pre-school settings, recognising the importance of this period in a child's life. The EYFS is an overarching framework for early years providers, based on what we know from research evidence. It is intended to provide clear information on how children learn and develop in these earliest years in a format that is easily understood and applied by practitioners. It was unashamedly ambitious in intent, seeking to break new ground as an international exemplar.

Two years on, there is much to be proud of. The emphasis in the EYFS on children's learning and development in the early years has played a crucial part in contributing to a system that has indeed received international recognition and plaudits. More importantly, there is clear and unambiguous evidence that outcomes for young children are improving. Notwithstanding this, less than half of children (44%) are still not considered to have reached a good level of development by the end of the year in which they turn 5.

This review was promised when the EYFS was introduced. It was recognised then that, after a period of bedding in, the impact of the EYFS on children's outcomes and on those working in the early years should be evaluated. My terms of reference were clear that I should ensure that my review was evidence-led, building on what works well in the current EYFS, and improving those areas that are causing problems.

It has been apparent from the start of the review that the EYFS has had a positive overall impact on children in early years settings. There is strong evidence from those with an interest, whether as parents or carers or professionals working in the field, that they like the approach and it is encouraging good reflective practice. The EYFS was deliberately designed to be an inclusive framework, pulling together a number of different approaches within early years. As such, it has managed what might have seemed impossible, namely the active participation from a wide and varied group of early years practitioners. Significantly, it is also very much valued by parents who appreciate the support their children receive, and the information it gives about their child's progress; parents are reassured by the regulatory framework that sits behind the EYFS.

However, although there is strong support for the EYFS, it is not perfect and there are clear areas where it can be improved. It was right to review the original very broad approach taken in the EYFS, and there are important ways in which the framework can be strengthened and simplified.

The EYFS has been successful in its intention of ensuring that children received the same support, regardless of the type of early years care they received. That said, there are clear instances of repetition which contribute to the frustrations expressed by many that the EYFS can be both burdensome and cumbersome. It is unsurprising that these frustrations should be articulated now, as many practitioners can navigate their way around the EYFS with increasing confidence, and with an empirical understanding of what adds value to their work with children. I have noted this and responded to it by suggesting ways that the areas of development and early learning goals can be presented more simply and effectively. As part of this, the approach to assessment should be compatible with, and valuable to, primary school teachers so that a child's transition into Key Stage 1 is managed effectively and well. There are important opportunities here to recognise the value of reception as a transition year for children.

Where parents and carers are actively encouraged to participate confidently in their children's learning and healthy development, the outcomes for children will be at their best. The review offered an important opportunity to consider how this principle could be emphasised and supported at an early stage, establishing partnerships that endure throughout a child's journey to adulthood. In particular, I have carefully considered how information is presented to encourage and assist this principle.

I have paid particular attention to how we can ensure that children who have specific needs, or come from particularly disadvantaged backgrounds, are identified and supported as early as possible given the overwhelming evidence of the positive impact that this has. Ensuring a close working relationship between those people in health, early years and education alongside parents and carers is an absolute pre-requisite to this. I have considered carefully what improvements could be made in this area. Many people

have told me that more needs to be done to oil the wheels of multi-agency working, particularly for children who need additional support. This is a particularly important issue in the current economic climate where effective use of scarce resources is paramount.

In the evidence I have received, there were a number of recurrent themes which need to be heard and acknowledged. Some are outside the terms of reference of my review, but the points made are important because the continued success of the EYFS is dependent, to greater and lesser extents, on each of them.

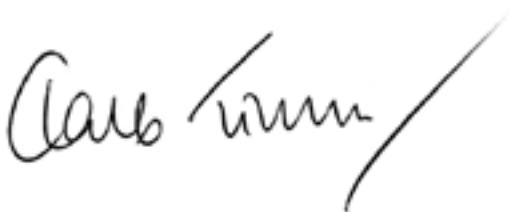
Repeatedly people reinforced the importance of an experienced, well-trained and supported workforce, and the international evidence supports this. Indeed, there is strong evidence that under-qualified and under-supported staff have a detrimental impact on outcomes for children. I have therefore made recommendations on how the status of working in early years might be enhanced and developed.

There was also a strong and repeated emphasis on the importance of an appropriate, proportionate regulatory framework delivered by an inspectorate with a deep understanding of early years.

Finally, and very importantly, the current economic context needs to be acknowledged as a significant factor informing the approach taken to the review.

Much of the resource initially provided to support the implementation and development of the EYFS is being phased out. This creates an imperative to ensure that the revised EYFS is as easy to access and understand as possible. I have given considerable thought to how it can be presented to those people who are most likely to rely very heavily on it without the benefit of interpretation and support from others.

The EYFS provides a time limited and unique opportunity to set the scene for a positive and life enhancing period of healthy learning and development for each child. My review supports the development of a high quality and accessible framework that is resilient and relevant to current and future contexts and challenges.



Dame Clare Tickell
Independent chair of the EYFS review

Executive summary

This summary covers the main recommendations from my review. These are the recommendations with the greatest impact, and direct relevance for a wide range of people and organisations. I have made 46 recommendations in all, described in full in my report.

The EYFS has contributed to improvements in quality across the sector. To sustain this momentum, in the interests of all children and families, I recommend that there should continue to be a framework that applies to all providers working with children in the early years. I am aware, however, that specific representations have been made by parts of the sector wishing to opt-out of the learning and development requirements. I therefore recommend that the Government consider whether the exemptions process should be extended to organisations acting on behalf of groups of independent schools where they are willing and able to ensure the delivery of high quality provision in the schools that they represent.

The EYFS calls for practitioners to work in partnership with parents and carers. However, I think that it could go further, and I am therefore recommending that a greater emphasis is given in the EYFS to the role of parents and carers as partners in their children's learning. To improve the accessibility of the framework for parents and practitioners, I recommend that for any revised EYFS and guidance, the Government seek a plain English crystal mark. I also recommend the development of a high-quality and interactive online version of the revised EYFS, with clear navigation to help people find what they are looking for.

Evidence shows that early identification of need followed by appropriate support is the most effective approach to tackling disadvantage and helping children overcome specific obstacles to learning. For this reason I am recommending the introduction of a requirement for practitioners to provide to parents and carers, a short summary of their child's communication and language, personal, social and emotional, and physical development between the age of 24-36 months. Ideally, this should be shared with health visitors, where the timing is right, to allow the professional knowledge of early years practitioners to inform the health visitor led health and development review at age 2.

To overcome potential barriers around information sharing, I propose that an insert is included within the existing Red Book with the purpose of allowing parents and carers to enter this information and share it with other professionals.

Evidence shows that personal, social and emotional development, communication and language and physical development are essential foundations for children's life, learning and success. Therefore, I am recommending these are identified as prime areas of learning in the EYFS. Sitting alongside these, I am proposing that literacy, mathematics, understanding of the world, and expressive arts and design are identified as the specific areas of learning in which these prime skills are applied. I believe this model for the areas of learning is clear, unambiguous, and simple and should help all early years practitioners to understand better how to support children's development.

Many practitioners told me that they would like to see the early learning goals – which define the level of development most children should have reached by the end of the year in which they turn 5 – reduced and simplified, and made more sensitive to the needs of summer born children and to those children who are fast developers. To address this, I recommend that the early learning goals are reduced in number from 69 to 17. I also recommend that for each goal, a simple three-part scale is established which sets out what working towards, what achieving, and what exceeding each goal looks like.

Many people spoke to me about tensions with the current formal assessment of children's level of development at age 5 – the EYFS Profile. In consequence, I am recommending this is radically simplified, and reduced in size from 117 pieces of information to 20 pieces of information that capture a child's level of development in a much less burdensome way.

Keeping children safe is of course a non-negotiable element of any early years framework. The EYFS is comprehensive in its requirements on safety and welfare in general, and while these were well supported, I think they could be made clearer and more succinct. I recommend that the relevant section is redrafted to improve clarity and to remove repetition, and is renamed as the safeguarding and welfare requirements. My findings also indicate that more could be done to raise awareness of child protection within early years settings, and so I recommend that this is made clear in child protection training. To reduce the burden that paperwork introduces, I am also recommending practitioners should not have to undertake written risk assessments when they take children out, but instead be able to demonstrate, if asked, the ways that they are managing outings to minimise risk.

The question of the number of staff who should be with children in early years settings was also raised a number of times, particularly in the context of reception classes. Many people think that there should be more than one person to 30 children in reception classes. However, I do not think that there is clear evidence about this, and so I am recommending that government investigate this further as a matter of priority.

The importance of a strong, well-qualified early years workforce was a consistent theme throughout my review. I believe that there should continue to be a level 3 and a graduate ambition, and have made recommendations to that end. I also think that more should be done to make the early years an attractive career option for more people, both men and women, and that there should be a clear route of career progression for people working in the early years. To help with this, more work needs to be done to improve the quality and consistency of early years training courses, and I am recommending that a new professional qualification is introduced that robustly combines practical experience with the development of expert knowledge.

Finally, the system within which early years practitioners have to operate was another theme that came up repeatedly during my review. It was often difficult to distinguish when talking to people where the pressures they faced came from. Often complaints attributed to the EYFS were actually about interpretation by Ofsted or local authorities, or practitioners' interpretation of what these were asking for. What is clear is that early years practitioners are under pressure. I have made recommendations to ease this, through the drafting of the EYFS and through other means. I also recommend that Ofsted and local authorities work together to produce clear, consistent advice on the things that early years settings have to do, and do not create unnecessary burdens by asking for things that are not specified in the EYFS.

1. Strong foundations for all children

“Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.”

– **Henry Ford**

- 1.1 The evidence is clear that children’s experiences in their early years strongly influence their outcomes in later life, across a range of areas from health and social behaviour to their employment and educational attainment. The most recent neuroscientific evidence highlights the particular importance of the first three years of a child’s life. A strong start in the early years increases the probability of positive outcomes in later life; a weak foundation significantly increases the risk of later difficulties.¹
- 1.2 These findings are reflected in children’s educational outcomes. Most children who are developing well at the end of their early years go on to exceed expectations in reading and in maths at the end of Key Stage 1.² These results also show that children in the lowest achieving fifth in terms of their learning and development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are six times more likely to be in the lowest fifth at Key Stage 1.³ Children’s experiences in their early years provide the essential foundations for both healthy development and their achievement through school.⁴ These clear links illustrate why it is important to ensure that children’s early experiences equip them with the skills that they need for life – a fact underlined recently by the Frank Field review on poverty and life chances and the Graham Allen review of early intervention.
- 1.3 The most important influences on children’s early development are those that come from home. Children benefit most when they experience the consistent support and presence of caring adults – carers, parents or other family members – from the earliest possible age.⁵ Evidence shows that the most positive impact comes from families in terms of improved outcomes for children.⁶ This is followed by access to good quality early years provision which has the next largest impact on children’s development by the age of 5.⁷ The evidence strongly shows that this is particularly important for disadvantaged children, and often helps parents to develop effective home learning environments. This good practice must continue and it is therefore

very important that the EYFS is accessible and understandable to parents and carers, recognising the importance of practitioners working in partnership with them.

- 1.4 In reaching my recommendations, I gathered a wide range of evidence, views and opinions from people working in the early years sector, from parents, carers and children, from local authorities, from representatives of professional organisations, and from academics. I received over 3,300 responses to the call for evidence between August and September 2010, a larger response than was received for the consultation on the original EYFS. My evaluation of the evidence, published alongside this report, examines the data in detail and I have made sure that my recommendations are supported by the evidence. The key points from this evidence are cross-referenced where appropriate in the following chapters.
- 1.5 My recommendations aim to build on the strengths of the existing framework, retaining what works and revising what doesn't. I have received strong feedback that the underlying philosophy, and many of the key elements of the EYFS, should be retained. For example, people working with the EYFS have been very clear in their endorsement of the existing four themes and principles, and in particular the emphasis on the concept of the unique child, and the play-based approach of the EYFS. They assert strongly that this has led to an improved focus on the needs, interests and developmental stages of each child, enabling an active approach to guiding and supporting their development. Improving the experiences and life chances of all young children must remain at the heart of the EYFS.
- 1.6 There are clearly parts of the framework where improvements should be made. In some areas it is unwieldy and more elaborate than it needs to be, and I have made recommendations that should help to make it slimmer, more relevant and easier to use. I know that some providers perceive a conflict between their particular approaches to supporting young children, and the EYFS learning and development requirements. I have heard how the EYFS can sometimes be hard to navigate and I have considered ways to make the language more accessible to a wider range of parents, carers, practitioners and providers. I also propose a renewed emphasis on healthy development for all children, with better and earlier identification of developmental needs, delivered by closer working between parents, carers and professionals – including health professionals. I have used the term 'healthy development' in this report to describe strong development across all areas of learning because I believe it is critical that we signpost the inter-relationship between early years and health.

- 1.7 The EYFS is one aspect of a wider system of support from pre-birth to 5 years. Children and their parents and carers come into contact with a range of different professionals contributing advice and support from their particular areas of expertise, for example midwives, early years practitioners, health visitors and GPs. It is imperative that these professionals work together across organisational boundaries, respecting different professional perspectives, and with parents and carers to understand and respond to children's needs. Children who most require support and intervention have the most to gain when professionals share information and build up a full picture of their needs.
- 1.8 I have looked closely at the role of parents and carers and how this is supported by the EYFS. I know that practitioners in many settings work very closely with parents and carers to good effect. This practice needs to be spread more widely and to become more consistent. It can require extra effort and planning, with parents and carers who lead very busy lives and can find it difficult to find time for discussions about their child's development. In some cases, parents and carers are not yet aware of the value of working with early years practitioners. Making the EYFS more accessible and easier to understand will help promote closer collaboration between parents and carers and practitioners.⁸
- 1.9 Stronger partnerships with parents and carers will only succeed if people working in the early years are knowledgeable, motivated and supported in their work, and if providers continue to ensure they meet the needs of local families. My recommendations on strengthening the early years workforce are included in Chapter 5. Paperwork should not dominate, and my recommendations propose slimming down certain areas of the existing framework to provide flexibility for providers to spend more time where it counts – working directly with children, and supporting parents and carers.

Embedding the EYFS in a changing landscape

- 1.10 The EYFS has been implemented on a large scale, with growing enthusiasm across the diverse early years sector. Over seven in ten people responding to my call for evidence thought that the EYFS was successful. This level of support for the current framework is striking. Many people have told me that the EYFS is popular because it reinforces the very best approaches of skilled practitioners working with young children from birth to five years.

- 1.11 A small percentage of respondents to the call for evidence advocated making the EYFS a voluntary framework. However, I am convinced that there is further work to do before all providers are in a position to realise the full benefits of the EYFS. It is simply too soon to expect a major change of this nature to be embedded, across a very diverse sector. Major changes go through a process which cannot be circumvented: people need sufficient time to take on board the changes and overcome their initial uncertainty.
- 1.12 If the early years sector is to continue to grow in stature, it must continue to build on the existing momentum and focus clearly on its next steps in achieving high quality and continuity for all children, particularly the most vulnerable. My recommendations are designed to make this possible. In particular, my recommendations for improving the framework's flexibility and accessibility are made with the whole sector in mind, but are also made as a response to the specific concerns and obstacles faced by particular providers. I am aware that some of these concerns are prompted by the current economic climate which presents significant challenges for the whole sector and which cannot be ignored. My recommendations are designed to help the sector tackle these challenges – and in this context I have taken care not to propose too many changes which would add to the workload.
- 1.13 I am also mindful of the links between this review and the review of the National Curriculum announced in January 2011. One of the key pressures that people highlighted was the perceived disconnect between the EYFS and Key Stage 1. I believe that more could be done to ensure stronger links between the EYFS and the National Curriculum, and have made recommendations to this end. As the review of the National Curriculum progresses, I encourage the Government to continue to recognise that the early years provide the foundation for Key Stage 1 and beyond, and to reinforce the connections.
- 1.14 An improved EYFS will give all those working in the early years an opportunity to work together to meet the challenges highlighted by many – not least Frank Field and Graham Allen and in the Special Educational Needs and Disability Green Paper. This means doing what it takes to offer all children the best possible start in life, and to do so in the context of an uncertain economic landscape where the resources available for local and national support networks are under considerable pressure. While I recognise these difficulties and pressures, I urge everyone involved in children's lives to sustain the momentum they have worked so hard to build. There is much to be proud of.

2. An inclusive, accessible and flexible EYFS

“Things should be made as simple as possible, but no simpler.” – Albert Einstein

A framework for all children

- 2.1 The EYFS is a framework for all young children from birth through to the end of the reception year in all types of early years provision, for example nursery care, childminders and reception class in schools. By bringing together welfare and learning and development requirements, the EYFS was designed to raise standards and improve access to positive experiences for all children. In considering whether the framework should continue to apply to all early years providers, I have heard a wide range of views from all types of early years provider, and their representative organisations, as well as from parents, early years academics, and bodies who represent the interests of young children.
- 2.2 I have generally found widespread support for the requirements in the EYFS which set the standards designed to help protect young children from harm – the welfare requirements. They are needed and used by practitioners and I have concluded that they should remain in place for all early years settings. Practitioners have confirmed that mandatory welfare requirements are essential for children’s basic safety, security and health. The requirements also reassure parents and carers that their children will experience a good level of care in all settings. That said, I am aware that independent schools also have to meet the welfare standards set out in the Independent Schools Standards. **I recommend any revised welfare requirements are checked against the Independent School Standards to ensure there is no conflict between the two.**
- 2.3 However, some parts of the sector have found it difficult to deliver the learning and development requirements of the EYFS. Given the diverse nature of the early years sector, it was perhaps inevitable these would be easier for some providers to implement than for others. Representatives of independent schools, the playwork sector and some childminders disagree with all or parts of the EYFS learning and development requirements – as shown in Chapter 2 of my report on the evidence.

- 2.4 I have set these views against strong evidence to support the learning and development requirements. My review has confirmed that the EYFS captures, in the main, how the best settings support young children's learning and development. The EYFS has gone further than this. Its implementation has improved the quality of the early years sector – as evidenced by the increase in the proportion of childcare providers judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding from 56% in 2007/08 to 68% in 2009/10.⁹ As I described in Chapter 1, there is powerful evidence to show that many children's healthy development depends on high quality early years provision. Best practice in learning and development is an essential part of high quality provision.
- 2.5 I have also looked at the history of the early years sector, as well as experience of major change in other sectors. It takes a good period of time to win hearts and minds, and representatives of the early years sector have made it clear that more time is needed for the learning and development requirements to bed in. This is reinforced by Ofsted inspection, which shows that just under one in three providers are still being judged inadequate or merely satisfactory, suggesting that there is still progress to be made. I believe that we have yet to reach a point where the skills and capacities of the early years workforce have developed far enough for greater self-regulation to become viable. Until that point is reached, a framework applying to all providers in the early years sector offers the promise of greater consistency and continuity for children, and their parents and carers, and stronger partnership and professionalism for practitioners. The importance of the early years, and the evidence on the impact of good quality early years provision is compelling. I believe that to remove the EYFS would adversely affect the life chances of children.
- 2.6 Therefore **I recommend that there should continue to be a framework that applies to all providers working with children in the early years.** This should continue to apply to settings whether or not they receive public funding through the free entitlement – the entitlement of all 3- and 4-year-olds to 15 hours of free nursery education for 38 weeks of the year – in the interest of quality across the whole early years sector, particularly for those children between birth and age 2. Allowing opt-outs for providers who do not receive public funding could encourage some of them to move to a low-cost service, opening the door to lower standards. This would be particularly unwelcome because those parts of the country where lower standards are more likely, are those areas where disadvantage and deprivation is at its worst. The children in greatest need of higher quality early years support are the very children most likely to suffer.

2.7 That said, I believe that there will come a point soon when the early years sector is indeed ready to offer more of its own assurances about quality. Some providers are already following sector-owned quality schemes. I would be pleased to see this practice become widespread, as it will signal the emergence of a sector even more capable of offering the high quality services all children need and deserve.

Greater flexibility for providers

2.8 A specific set of arguments have been put to me by representatives of independent schools, seeking opt-outs from the learning and development requirements. These arguments hinge on two main bases. The first is that these are non-maintained schools where parents are choosing to opt-out of state control and who find the EYFS too prescriptive in this respect. The second argument put to me is that these schools are of a uniformly high quality, easily exceeding the learning and development requirements of the EYFS and that their adherence to the EYFS is therefore more a bureaucratic impediment than an aid to driving up quality. While a number of different types of provider argue that they have philosophical objections to delivering the learning and development requirements of the EYFS, the difference with independent schools is that inspection results show that these tend to be of consistently higher quality. However, I am not convinced that all independent schools want to be exempted from the learning and development requirements, and I am also not convinced that every independent school achieves the same high quality of provision as those represented by the organisations with whom I have spoken.

2.9 **I therefore recommend that the Government consider whether the learning and development exemptions process could be widened to allow professional organisations representing groups of independent schools to seek exemptions on behalf of the schools they represent who do not wish to deliver the EYFS learning and development requirements. This would apply in circumstances where the professional organisations can show both support from parents whose children attend the schools seeking the exemption, and demonstrate how the professional organisations would continue to ensure delivery of high quality early years provision.** This applications process must be robust, ensuring strong ministerial oversight and responsibility, based on the evidence and ongoing scrutiny of quality provided by these bodies.

- 2.10 In addition, almost all exemption applications received so far have been from settings belonging to the Steiner-Waldorf Foundation, and Ministers have consistently agreed that there is a conflict between the philosophy of these settings and some of the early learning goals, and have granted exemptions from the affected goals to this end. **I recommend that the Government extend the exemptions from these early learning goals to all settings within the Steiner-Waldorf Foundation.**
- 2.11 While I am clear that there should be no relaxing of the criteria for exemptions from particular learning and development requirements, it should be possible to streamline some of the administrative procedures for applicants. **I recommend simplifying the procedure for exemption applications for providers meeting the existing stringent criteria described above – by replacing the requirement to consult local authorities with a requirement to inform them.**

Greater flexibility for delivery

- 2.12 While I believe the case for a quality framework for early years providers is compelling, I am in no doubt that the EYFS should be made more flexible. This is about enabling practitioners to do their jobs, and enabling providers to deliver the EYFS in line with their individual philosophies and circumstances. I have considered carefully the views of those providers who have particular concerns about working within the framework and listened to specific arguments about areas where the EYFS is not flexible enough. Most of these concerns have been focused on the learning and development requirements, and how practitioners and teachers should work with young children, and that is what I focus on here.
- 2.13 The learning and development requirements, especially those relating to assessment, have presented particular challenges for some providers who offer support for only limited times in the day or specific parts of the year. These providers offer services that wraparound other early years provision – for example nursery provision – as well as services during school holidays, meeting the specific work patterns of busy parents or carers. For these providers, working with children for specific periods of time, flexibility is paramount.
- 2.14 Many have endorsed the broad approach set out in the EYFS, but have questioned what this means for their practice. I have heard several times the example of a child who is looked after by a childminder for two hours after being in nursery or school all day, who is tired and wants to sleep. In circumstances like this, I agree it is

neither feasible or desirable to try and fit in activities that cover all of the areas of learning that are included in the EYFS – and indeed I believe that trying to do this would go against the principle of the unique child, which recognises that each child is different.

2.15 It would be extremely difficult and messy to try and define this type of provision in law, and I do not propose that this is attempted. The most obvious way of addressing this tension is through inspection. Ofsted has already issued guidance about how inspection should take account of the specific characteristics of wraparound and holiday provision. For example, these providers should not be put in a position where they feel it necessary to complete inappropriate records, detracting from the quality of support for children. Nor should they be expected to provide the same breadth of support for learning and development as full time nursery or school settings. I am encouraged by the guidance that Ofsted has produced specifically for wraparound and holiday provision, and **I recommend that guidance for wraparound and holiday provision is embedded in the EYFS and that Ofsted continues to ensure that it is embedded throughout the inspection process.** Local authorities should also take account of this when working with settings to improve their quality.

2.16 The EYFS sets out the number of staff that should be present according to the number of children present, and the types of qualifications these staff should have. One of the requirements of the EYFS is for half of all staff who work with children to have a 'relevant' level 2 qualification, at least 5 GCSEs at grades A* – C, which cover the things people working with young children need to know. Some holiday providers have explained that they find it difficult to meet this level 2 requirement as their provision often only runs for a short period of time, and it can be difficult to hire specifically qualified early years staff for this small amount of time. In addition, they often cater for a large proportion of children who are older than 5, and the provider's ability to support these children can be hampered by the requirement for staff to be qualified to work with the youngest children rather than being able to support children's play more generally. Some providers have responded to these difficulties by refusing to take children aged 5 or under. I can see that this could reduce the opportunities available to young children, and fail to meet parents' and carers' needs. Therefore, **I recommend that the Skillsactive playwork level 2 award is included as a relevant early years qualification for holiday providers.** This would mean that holiday play schemes are still run by skilled staff, but that more freedom is given to play providers through this recognition of the

types of qualification that playworkers are more likely to have, increasing their ability to meet the adult to child ratios required by the EYFS.

A clear, accessible framework

2.17 While improving the flexibility of the EYFS for specific providers, I am more generally concerned with improving its accessibility and clarity. The language should be revised to replace jargon and unnecessary complexity, as far as possible using terms which everyone will recognise. This is critical if the revised framework is to be fully effective as a vehicle for bringing parents and carers into closer discussion with professionals. Recognising that there will be less support in the future to help early years providers improve, **the EYFS must be redrafted in such a way that the framework is easy to access, understand and navigate, incorporating what is known about how young children learn and develop and highlighting the importance of protecting their welfare. I recommend that any revised EYFS and guidance for inspectors are both subject to a plain English review, and should seek to be awarded the plain English crystal mark.**

2.18 I am also aware that we need to capitalise on the potential of the internet as a source of information, advice and expertise – and indeed on the potential of multimedia more widely. Information on the EYFS is currently hosted on a number of websites. Instead this information should be made available through a distinctive, high-quality online version of the EYFS which has been designed with easy navigation in mind. Visitors should be able to find the specific piece of information they are looking for without prolonged searching. **I recommend the development of a high-quality and interactive online version of the revised EYFS, with clear navigation to help people find what they are looking for.** I am aware that not all types of early years provider have ready access to the internet and that this is particularly true for childminders. Therefore, I would encourage the Government to ensure that information is available in a range of different formats that meet the needs of parents and different types of provider.

2.19 I would particularly like to see parents and carers more involved and working in close partnership with practitioners. I am aware that many settings have adopted their own successful practice to engage parents and carers as partners and involve them in their child's learning. The role of a named practitioner, or key person, assigned to each child has also helped in this respect, encouraging positive relationships with parents and carers and support for home learning. However, the EYFS should set out more clearly how practitioners could work closely with parents and carers. In particular, **I recommend that when a child starts**

in an early years setting, their parents should be provided with a brief, simple, explanation of what the EYFS is and what they can expect.

2.20 Improving the language of the EYFS is essential and I know there is a range of existing resources designed to train and support practitioners to engage with parents and carers. These resources can be used more widely by practitioners to increase parents' and carers' understanding of how they can use the EYFS to help their child develop at home. Therefore, **I recommend that the Government increases the emphasis within the EYFS on the role of parents and carers as partners in their children's learning, and in addition ensures that all practitioners continue to have access to the necessary resources needed to support the incorporation of effective parental engagement into their practice.** In particular, it is my belief that good practice examples would help guide practitioners in this valuable aspect of their work, and enable settings to take a more strategic approach to parental engagement.

3. Equipped for life, ready for school

“A child is not a vase to be filled, but a candle to be lit.” – François Rabelais

- 3.1 During the early years a strong start in learning and development is an essential foundation for progress through life. If children are left behind when they are very young, they will struggle as they get older. In Chapter 2, I explained my rationale for retaining the learning and development requirements. However, I think that improvements can be made to these requirements to increase the prominence of the most important areas of young children’s development, slim down the assessment scales, and introduce a sharper focus on earlier identification of additional needs. In this chapter, I set out my recommendations on these improvements.

School unreadiness

- 3.2 In my review, I was asked to consider how the early years can provide the right foundation for all children, including the disadvantaged and vulnerable, and prepare them for good progress through school. This is an issue attracting strong feelings and powerful arguments. My view is that the skills a child needs for school are part of the skills they need for life. We all want our children to lead happy, enquiring, active childhoods, recognising that this provides the foundations for fulfilled and productive adulthoods. The time spent in school is a huge part of this. However, I know that some people interpret the term ‘school readiness’ as implying that children could be pressured to learn to read and write at inappropriately young ages. Others have a wider concern about leaving children free to enjoy their early years without pressure, and argue that schools should be ready for children, not the other way around. Balanced against this, some feel that we do children no favours if we fail to prepare them for the realities of the school environment, where skills such as literacy are at a premium.
- 3.3 To avoid the more ambiguous and emotive connotations of ‘school readiness’, I have considered it from the perspective of its opposite: school *unreadiness*. I have found this a helpful way of thinking through the problem and finding a way forward. Most children begin reception class at age 4, and for most parents and carers this is when school life begins. If children are not ready for this transition or the move to Year 1

because, for example, they are not yet toilet trained, able to listen or get on with other children, then their experiences of school could present difficulties which will obstruct their own learning as well as other children's. The evidence is clear that children who are behind in their development at age 5 are much more likely than their peers to be behind still at age 7, and this can lead to sustained but avoidable underachievement. My recommendations tackle this as a matter of utmost importance.

The foundations of healthy development

- 3.4 The contribution of parents and carers to their child's early development cannot be overstated. Strong bonds between parents and their children, forged from the outset, are critical for the development of wellbeing. Children begin to develop language from birth, and their progress depends on warm and positive interaction in safe, stimulating environments. A flow of conversation that is responsive to a child's interests and abilities is essential to their language and wider development. Children need opportunities to move and to explore their surroundings through all their senses, to talk with adults and to play with them. Without this, a child's development is likely to suffer, limiting their capacity to engage with new people and situations, and to learn new skills.
- 3.5 The guidance children receive in early years settings should complement and build on their experiences at home. Currently, this guidance is structured around the six areas of learning set out in the EYFS. These areas are popular with the vast majority of early years practitioners, and are supported by the latest evidence on child development. However, the evidence also suggests that while children develop in all six areas from birth, three areas are particularly important for the youngest children. These play a crucial role in stoking a child's interest and capacity for learning and for life, and in laying the cornerstones for healthy development. Without secure development in these particular areas during this critical period, children will struggle to progress.
- 3.6 The evidence shows that the areas of personal, social and emotional development, communication and language, and physical development are the essential foundations for healthy development, for positive attitudes to relationships and learning, and for progress in key skills such as reading and writing. They also cover early development of physical movement and dexterity, as well as healthy eating and exercise, the key starting point for their understanding of how to remain healthy in later life. Monitoring progress in these areas is key to identifying special educational needs and disability, especially needs that might not be immediately recognisable, so

that more specialist support services can be alerted. These same areas inform the work of health visitors as part of the 2 year health and development review in the Healthy Child Programme. It is when those foundations are not strong that we can see children struggle, finding it difficult to focus, to adapt to routines, and to co-operate with others. Therefore, **I recommend that personal, social and emotional development, communication and language and physical development are identified as prime areas of learning in the EYFS.** The detailed research underpinning this recommendation is at Annexes 8 to 10 in this report. My recommendations on the areas of learning continue later in this chapter, where I describe the four specific areas of learning I believe should sit alongside these three prime areas.

Early identification and intervention

- 3.7 There are many reasons why some children are more ready for school than others. Some children receive support from their families regardless of social and economic disadvantage, and develop well through their childhood; others do not. Some children may have special educational needs, others might develop more slowly or quickly than their peers. The reasons vary but in many cases there is too great of a risk that children will not get the support they need early on.
- 3.8 By the time children start school, important opportunities to identify needs may have been missed and for some children the struggle to catch up has already begun. The evidence is clear that pregnancy and the first years of life are a critical period when the foundations of future health and wellbeing are laid down. This is when parents and carers are particularly receptive to understanding how they can best guide their child. It is a missed opportunity if children's needs, including any special educational needs and disabilities, are not identified during this period.
- 3.9 Evidence on neurological development shows how babies build connections in their brain which enable the development of speech and language, self-confidence and good relationships with other children and adults. Research shows that children who are safe and happy and developing well are better able to relate to other children and adults, feel comfortable in their environments, and do well at school and in life more generally. It is imperative that children's healthy development in their first years of life is supported.
- 3.10 Identifying children's strengths and needs requires input from a number of professionals. Parents and carers will be in touch with midwives, health visitors and their GPs and may also use early years services – nurseries, playgroups or

childminders. Some children receive guidance from specialist professionals, such as speech and language therapists, or special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs). However, despite this contact with a range of professionals, by the age of 5, nearly half (44%) of children are not reaching a good level of development.¹⁰

- 3.11 Unsurprisingly, many people agree that age five is too late to identify school unreadiness, particularly as nearly all children are by then at the end of their first year in reception class. This is why many organisations and local areas have put in place a variety of programmes that are designed to pick up the things that young children can do well and the areas where they need further support. An example of such a programme is the Every Child a Talker programme, which I have been particularly impressed by. Knowledge gathered through these schemes is then used by people working with children to look at how best to guide and support each individual child. In nearly all of these schemes, the views of parents and carers are an essential part of the process.
- 3.12 This way of working needs to become much more widespread. All services designed for children should contribute to identifying children's strengths and any additional support they may need. There is a clear opportunity for professionals to come together around the time of the Healthy Child Programme health and development reviews carried out by health visitors – both the review when a child is one-year-old and in particular around the time of the 2 year health and development review. This 2-year-old review looks at areas including physical and emotional development and communication skills and support of positive relationships in families. I have been struck by the strong overlap between these areas and the prime areas of learning that I am proposing for the EYFS. In addition to the assessment, parents should be offered guidance on their child's health and development through the review.
- 3.13 For those children who are already in early years provision before their Healthy Child Programme health and development review, this review provides an excellent opportunity for early years practitioners to share with health visitors the picture they have formed, through ongoing regular observation, of children's development. This is particularly relevant in the context of the Government's free offer for disadvantaged 2-year-olds. Where a child may need extra help, early years practitioners are then well-placed to work with health visitors to intensify the support they provide to children as part of the Healthy Child Programme health and development review. Such early intervention should help to reduce significantly the proportion of children who are school unready.

- 3.14 There are other ways in which this information could be used to guide children's ongoing development – for example, to support the transition between early years settings, such as between a childminder and a nursery class. For those children who haven't been in early years care before, health visitors could, if needed, liaise with the early years setting to ensure appropriate support is provided. Where children move from one type of early years care to another, the rich information already gathered should be shared to provide smooth support for ongoing development.
- 3.15 Therefore, **I recommend that the EYFS should include a requirement for practitioners, including childminders, to provide on request to parents and carers, at some point between the ages of 24 – 36 months, a short written early years summary of their child's development in the prime areas.** The purpose of this early years summary should be to inform parents and carers about their child's level of development, and to support – if the timing is right – the Healthy Child Programme health and development review carried out by health visitors, as well as transition to nursery provision at age 3. The early years summary should be based around the overlap between the core areas of the 2 year health and development review and the prime areas I have set out above. It should capture the relevant professional knowledge that early years practitioners have developed about each child that they support. Parents and carers should be involved at all stages, and should have control over who the information contained in the early years summary is passed to.
- 3.16 This recommendation should not add significantly to the content of the EYFS. Early years practitioners are already required to engage parents and carers and undertake ongoing observation to guide children's development, and this – which will form the basis of any report – should continue unchanged. They are also required to report progress and achievements to parents and carers on an ongoing basis.
- 3.17 The EYFS should not prescribe the specific point at which this early years summary should be produced, or the exact content – this should be left to the judgment of early years practitioners, working in partnership with parents and carers to agree the most useful information to share with health visitors and with staff in nurseries. If a child is in early years provision prior to the health and development review taking place, then ideally the early years summary should be produced before the health and development review. Early years practitioners should also talk with parents and carers about the health visitor's health and development review, and

encourage them to share the results of the early years summary with health visitors, and discuss how to guide their child's transition into the next phase of their early years care.

- 3.18 I do not envisage that this early years summary would form a comprehensive measure in itself of a child's development. Instead, it should be a signpost, focusing on those areas in which children excel, or where they are in need of extra help. Health visitors should then, if the child is aged between 2 and 2½ years and the summary is available, consider it when they are carrying out their health and development review as part of the Healthy Child Programme where these flags have been raised, and staff in settings could use this information to target their support for a child's development. This joint working will, however, only serve children who are in early years provision. This is why it is essential that the coverage of the health and development review, which is not currently universal in all areas, will also need to increase in line with the expansion in the number of health visitors to ensure that all children are reached.
- 3.19 These types of reviews and joint working between professionals are already happening in many local areas. I have included examples of this in Annex 7. To me, these are excellent examples of local leadership at its best, and I do not want to suggest the introduction of a top-down way of working that reduces flexibility; local solutions are already in place and can be built on. That said, it would not be efficient for every local area to start from scratch, and so at Annex 4 I have set out a series of statements focusing on what typical development looks like in the prime areas for children aged 24 – 36 months. I have also done this for children aged 36 – 48 months, which feeds into my proposed assessment framework for the end of the EYFS. I discuss this in more detail later in this chapter.
- 3.20 One of the challenges involved in this way of working will be the sharing of information between different sets of early years practitioners and with health visitors. I have heard a great deal about the difficulties that can be caused where information is not shared. For example, where the health visitor review at age 2 has flagged up that a child needs additional support in developing communication and language, but where this was not known to staff when the child started nursery, leading to wholly unnecessary delays in providing support. I have also heard of cases where information from early years settings was not passed to health visitors. It is clear to me that the solution is a parent-held record in which, together with professionals, parents and carers enter information about their child's progress, and use this to share information between professionals.

- 3.21 Parents and carers should of course own all information about their child, and they should be the ones to choose whether or not to pass on information from the early years summary. Therefore **I recommend that an insert is added to the early childhood health record, known as the Red Book, to encourage parents and carers, or their nominee, to enter information arising from this early years summary and from children’s interaction with other professionals, for example speech and language therapists.** This would supplement the information that parents and carers can already add to the Red Book based on their own observations.
- 3.22 Graham Allen recently published his recommendations for better, earlier, identification of those children who are most vulnerable to the effects of deprivation and dysfunction. Graham made a compelling case for investment in early intervention to prevent these children becoming adults struggling to participate in mainstream society. In his review on poverty and life chances, Frank Field offered recommendations aimed at raising the status of the early years and intervening early to tackle issues at their roots. There are several points of agreement between our approaches, and I believe this early years summary of development will help early years and health professionals to work together more effectively. Only through professionals working together in this collaborative way, can the full benefits of early intervention be achieved. However, the full benefits of this way of working will only be realised when the Healthy Child Programme 2 year health and development review becomes 100% universal. At this point, I urge local commissioners to increase coverage of the Healthy Child Programme and **I recommend strongly that the Government works with experts and services to test the feasibility of a single integrated review at age 2 to 2½.**
- 3.23 There is broad agreement on the vital importance of children’s centres and other support services in helping children and their families, and children’s centres should be well placed to guide this joined-up working. Few would disagree with the importance of identifying children who need extra support as quickly as possible – be that because of special educational needs and disabilities or for those children who are gifted and talented. This is the driving force behind my recommendation to produce an early years summary of development. In order to capitalise on this, there must be a local infrastructure available to provide any additional support services identified through the early years summary. This local infrastructure needs to include children’s centres, speech and language therapists, special educational needs coordinators and outreach workers. As local authorities redesign the services that are available to children and their families, particularly early years services, I cannot

emphasise enough how important it is to understand the pivotal role of these services and ensure that they are retained. A vibrant local infrastructure for early support should be considered nothing short of indispensable – a professional infrastructure capable of responding early enough to prevent developmental problems from escalating. A truly integrated set of services can provide support for children and their families that goes beyond the sum of its parts, helping to develop a more holistic understanding of each child, and ultimately increasing the certainty that children will receive the support that they need.

Meeting the needs of all children

- 3.24 I have heard from many practitioners in the early years sector who have found that following the requirements of the EYFS helps them to respond to children's individual needs and take account of socio-economic disadvantage – as well as important differences such as gender, ethnicity, language, and ability. Others consider that the requirements set out in the EYFS could encourage more focus on each child's own pace of learning and on their interests, and enable activities to be tailored around each child. My recommendations address this point by aiming to improve the accessibility and flexibility of the tools available to professionals, parents and carers, and by calling for early years practitioners to work more closely with health professionals to identify needs at an early stage.
- 3.25 Some types of additional needs can be easily identified, but some are not always apparent and some cannot always be easily categorised. An example would be speech and language and communication difficulties, where it may not always be apparent if a child is having difficulties or is simply developing more slowly. Where a child's particular needs remain unclear, they are at risk of falling behind if they do not get appropriate support. I believe that my recommendations for an early years summary of development between the ages of 24-36 months and for a focus on the prime areas, will secure a better service for these children.
- 3.26 I am aware that bilingualism is an asset, conferring positive advantages for children's learning and development. The development of skills in their home tongue is critical for children's progress in oral language and social understanding and I am clear that parents should be encouraged to continue to support a child's first language. However, I am concerned that children's English language skills need to be sufficiently developed to allow them to take full advantage of Key Stage 1 and the opportunities that schools offer. For this to be possible, in reception class, children with English as an additional language should receive the necessary support.

Extending the free entitlement to disadvantaged 2-year-olds means that more children, and their families, will benefit from access to early years services and therefore support for language development from an early age.

- 3.27 However, I am conscious there is a high risk of creating perverse incentives if a blanket rule is introduced that would mandate early years settings in this respect. Therefore, **I recommend that the Government investigate urgently how the development of children’s English language skills can be effectively supported and assessed.**

The areas of learning

- 3.28 By identifying three prime areas, my proposal for a reconfigured model of learning and development offers renewed focus on the earliest experiences which are the foundations for life, learning and success. **Alongside the three prime areas of personal, social and emotional development, communication and language and physical development, I propose four specific areas in which the prime skills are applied: literacy, mathematics, expressive arts and design, and understanding the world.** All the existing content is covered by this new model, with areas of learning now described in clear and unambiguous terms by titles which are as simple as possible. Practitioners working with the youngest children should focus on the prime areas, but also recognise that the foundations of all areas of learning are laid from birth – for example literacy in the very early sharing of books, and mathematics through early experiences of quantity and spatial relationships. Any focus on the prime areas will be complemented and reinforced by learning in the specific areas, for example expressive arts is a key route through which children develop language and physical skills. As children grow older and approach five, the balance should shift towards a more equal focus across all of the prime and specific areas, progressively adapting to a child’s developing capabilities and interests, but always ensuring that any child whose progress in the prime areas gives cause for concern receives the support they need. I discuss this further at the end of this chapter.
- 3.29 All early years practitioners will need to understand the different ways in which children learn, in order to provide effective support. While implicit in the current EYFS, I believe the EYFS would be a better product if these were made explicit. **I therefore recommend that playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking critically, are highlighted in the EYFS as three characteristics of effective teaching and learning,** describing how children learn across a wide range of activities. These characteristics are drawn from the

commitments of the EYFS and describe how children learn rather than what they learn. They begin at birth and are lifelong characteristics which need to be fostered and developed during the early years as they are critical for building children's capacity for future learning.

3.30 My intention behind this change in presentation is to help clarify exactly how practitioners, parents and carers can effectively guide children's development, as well as the relationship between the different areas of learning. Skilled practitioners, parents and carers already understand how to do this, and I believe that making it clearer for all will encourage the spread of excellent practice. I also believe this proposed model offers a more effective dovetail between the EYFS and the National Curriculum, one of the main tensions that people have highlighted to me in relation to the current EYFS. I discuss this further at the end of this chapter.

The role of play

3.31 The EYFS currently includes a requirement for the areas of learning to be delivered through planned, purposeful play with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. I support this focus on play as the route through which the areas of learning should be delivered and firmly believe this should be retained as one of the foundations of the EYFS. It is clear from the evidence that play helps young children to develop the skills they need in order to become good learners – for example helping children to develop flexibility of thought, build their confidence, and see problems from different perspectives. However, there is confusion about what learning through play actually means, and what the implications of this are for the role of adults.

Supporting learning

3.32 One of the most sensitive issues I have uncovered through this review is the question of how children's learning and development should be supported in the early years. Currently, the EYFS states this should be through planned, purposeful play with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. This matches the evidence I have seen, summarised in my evidence report, which supports the use of play-based approaches combined with instructional yet playful teaching.¹¹ The key element here is the adoption by professionals of a flexible approach to teaching, based on the level of development of the individual child.

3.33 However, there remains some confusion about how to interpret the EYFS requirement for planned, purposeful play. I understand some providers have been advised that any element of adult direction or teaching would contravene the

requirements of the EYFS. I am clear this is not the case, and indeed believe that it is not possible to separate out child-initiated from adult-guided or directed learning. When working with young children, the exchange between adults and children should be fluid, moving interchangeably between activities initiated by children and adult responses helps build the child's learning and understanding. Throughout the early years, adults should be modelling, demonstrating and questioning. To exclude elements of teaching from the early years would increase the risk of children not being ready for the move to Key Stage 1. The provision of meaningful interaction between adults and children to guide new learning is an essential element of the EYFS.

- 3.34 Some practitioners argue that having to approach their interaction with children from the perspective of supporting learning and development conflicts with what they see as their role. For example, many playwork providers view it as against playwork principles to observe children with the intention of guiding them to their next level of development. Likewise, some childminders argue that they are there to provide a home from home environment, in line with parents' and carers' wishes, and that they are not 'educators'.
- 3.35 In considering these issues, I considered what supporting children's learning and development should actually mean in practice. A definition I found very helpful describes this support as the difference between what a child can do on their own, and what they can do when guided by someone else – either an adult or a more able child.¹² This simple concept captures many of the valuable interactions between an adult and a child, and is the type of relationship that the requirements of the EYFS are intended to support. When considered from this perspective, all of the interactions between a child and parents, carers, early years practitioners, other adults or other children, could be described as learning or teaching interactions. The purpose of the EYFS is to ensure that when these types of interaction take place between children and early years practitioners, practitioners recognise these and can consciously build upon them. I believe it is right that all early years practitioners are, in this way, expected to guide children's learning and development.

Simplifying assessment

- 3.36 The way that practitioners are expected to guide children's learning and development is set out through the EYFS requirement for practitioners to observe the things that children can do, and to respond to these to help children progress to their next level of development. This way of working is described as ongoing, or

formative, assessment. However, as well as the issues described above, arising from the principle of supporting children's learning and development, assessment also lies at the heart of a number of other difficulties with the current EYFS.

- 3.37 Prominent amongst this is the issue of the paperwork associated with ongoing assessment. In general, practitioners are clear about how to do this, but I also received feedback from practitioners who are overwhelmed by the amount of paperwork they feel obliged to keep. On closer investigation, I found that large amounts of paperwork are not needed to support ongoing assessment. This is not a requirement of the EYFS – only a small number of key achievements need to be recorded periodically – and skilled practitioners should spend most of their time interacting directly with children to guide their learning rather than writing things down.
- 3.38 When I looked at the views of practitioners who felt they needed to keep considerable paperwork, there was a mixed picture about what drove this. Some practitioners think they have to keep very detailed records of children's activities to meet EYFS requirements. Others feel they need extensive paperwork to justify their judgements about children's level of development, to others, for example Ofsted and local authorities, rather than actually to guide children's learning. Some choose to keep extensive records to illustrate to themselves and to parents just how much progress children have made.
- 3.39 It is clear that if practitioners are spending considerable time writing things down because they think this is needed to guide child development, then they should review their practice and ask whether the level of their record keeping is necessary. It is the interaction between practitioners and children that helps promote the rich learning environment the EYFS is seeking to create. This cannot be achieved if practitioners are making notes, instead of talking and playing with children. It is also clear to me that Ofsted and local authorities should not be asking to see overly detailed records, but rather talking directly to practitioners about their methods for checking children's progress. I discuss this further in Chapter 5. That said, I agree that observational assessment is integral to effective early years provision. The evidence clearly shows this type of assessment lies at the heart of providing a supporting and stimulating environment for every child¹³ and that if the objective of the EYFS to create environments where practitioners understand children and can tailor their provision and teaching to support their development is to succeed, then observational assessment needs to be retained.

- 3.40 **Practitioners have told me how helpful they find the non-statutory guidance on ongoing, formative assessment, Development Matters, in tracking children’s learning and development from birth through to reception. I therefore recommend that this is retained but is reviewed and slimmed-down, and is aligned with my proposed new areas of learning.** In particular, I support the involvement of children in assessment activities, which I think is both empowering for children and a good learning experience in itself. In addition, I strongly support the involvement of parents and carers in ongoing, formative assessment and **recommend no changes to the EYFS requirements on formative assessment.** To be clear, however, **I recommend that the EYFS explicitly states that paperwork should be kept to the absolute minimum required to promote children’s successful learning and development.**
- 3.41 The early learning goals describe the things that most children should be able to do by the end of the reception year. It is clear that these need to be simplified and slimmed-down. There are currently 117 scale points that flow from the 69 early learning goals. Research tells us that many practitioners consider that 117 scale points are more than they are able to work with.¹⁴ I commissioned work to reduce the number of goals, removing those which are not easily observed, are not sufficiently distinct, and are not unique to age five as a particular stage of development. The findings of that work show that it is possible to reduce the number of early learning goals from 69 to 17, while still reflecting the full range of children’s learning and development. **I recommend that the Government adopt this reduced set of early learning goals to provide a framework which defines the expected level of children’s development by the end of reception year.** This reduced set of early learning goals is included as Annex 5.
- 3.42 Feedback on the early learning goals suggested these are not always appropriate for younger children, particularly summer-born children who, by virtue of their age, have had less time to learn and develop, and for children who need more stretching activities. Many people also highlighted the disconnect between the early learning goals and the levels in Key Stage 1, and strongly felt that this caused problems in supporting children’s continuing development. **Therefore, I recommend that for each early learning goal a simple scale is established. This should define what emerging, expecting and exceeding means for each early learning goal. I also recommend that the level of exceeding the early learning goals is set to be consistent with expectations in the current National Curriculum, and evolves in a way that is consistent with expectations to be set out in the new National Curriculum Programmes of Study for Key Stage 1 in the**

relevant subjects. In this way, I believe that teachers will be better able to support very young children, gifted and talented children or children with additional needs, and that Year 1 teachers will see more clearly how the learning and development requirements in the early years fit with the National Curriculum. I have set out my recommendations on these two additional bands, together with my proposed early learning goals, in Annex 5 to this report.

3.43 This new set of early learning goals builds on the set of development areas I have suggested for the 24 – 36 month early years summary. To create a bridge between the two, I have also included in this report a similar table for children aged 36 – 48 months. If practitioners choose to follow this model, then it offers the advantage of setting a clear developmental pathway from 24 months up to 60 months and beyond – enabling early identification and clear support for all children. Therefore, **I recommend that, as part of the review of the Development Matters guidance, the Government develops an additional column setting out clearly the key milestones of development for children aged under 24 months.**

3.44 I have also talked to people about the best ways to assess the learning and development of children with special educational needs, and they have told me that the early learning goals are often appropriate for use with all children. This is recognised in the EYFS, which suggests that providers should use alternative assessment systems of their own local authority or other systems according to the needs of children. However, the EYFS is no more specific than this, and I believe that the sector would welcome explicit guidance on how to recognise the progress that is being made by children with special educational needs. I am clear that the EYFS is an inclusive framework, however, it remains important that all children's progress is recognised and valued. Therefore, **I recommend that the EYFS is made more explicit about the different approaches to assessment that practitioners may wish to consider for those children with special educational needs.**

Assessment at the end of the EYFS

3.45 Throughout the review, I have heard mixed and strong views on the topic of assessment at the end of the EYFS – the EYFS Profile. On balance, the majority agree we should retain a summative, or summary, assessment at the end of the reception year, but it is also clear that the existing EYFS Profile is too detailed and complex. More could be done to maximise the value of the information, particularly

to Year 1 teachers. Many have spoken to me about the burdens they feel have been introduced by this assessment, through paperwork and through moderation and inspection processes.

- 3.46 There are strong arguments for retaining summative assessment at the end of the EYFS. An improved framework for assessment at the end of the EYFS would ensure consistency of practice between different settings, and therefore consistency of experience for children – in terms of the support they receive while in early years settings, and the information shared with parents and carers to help them understand how their child is doing. If successful, it should also help to make the transition between the early years and Key Stage 1 as smooth and effective as possible.
- 3.47 A universal assessment would also allow local and national data to be collected on children’s readiness to begin formal schooling at age 5. Given the crucial importance of the early years, and the gaps already apparent at this age between different groups of children – for example between boys and girls, or between children from different ethnic backgrounds – it is essential we know how young children are getting on, and whether the support they are receiving is successful. This measure could also be used as a baseline from which to measure children’s subsequent development through school.
- 3.48 The use of such a measure echoes recommendations from both the Frank Field and Graham Allen reviews. However, I do not think this measure should be used for school-level accountability, owing to the different rates at which young children develop and the subsequent risk of children being inappropriately pushed to do things they are not ready for. Instead, as at present, results should be published at national and local level so that the general public can hold government and local authorities to account for the quality of early years services, and local authorities can better plan the support needs of children and responsiveness of settings in their area.
- 3.49 In considering all of these arguments, I have concluded that **the assessment at the end of the EYFS, the EYFS Profile, should be significantly slimmed down and made much more manageable, based on my 17 proposed new early learning goals, and have clearer links into the National Curriculum.**
- 3.50 My proposed replacement EYFS Profile is set out at Annex 6. It requires practitioners to report on 20 items of information for each child – a considerable reduction from the former 117 scale points that teachers were previously required to

report on. The first 17 of these 20 items consist of a report against each of the 17 early learning goals, simply saying whether, at the end of the reception year, each child's learning and development is 'emerging', 'expected', or 'exceeding' against the descriptors for each goal. This should build on the 24 – 36 months early years summary to help identify children who may have special educational needs, and also those children who are gifted and talented in particular areas. To determine which level is most appropriate for a child, as with Key Stage 1 assessment, practitioners should use their professional judgement to decide which level best describes each child's learning and development using a best-fit approach. As set out previously, these 17 early learning goals are based on the current set of 69 goals, with goals removed which are not easily observed, are not sufficiently distinct, and are not unique to age five as a particular stage of development. As such, this reduction does not represent a narrowing of the curriculum.

- 3.51 The final three items in the proposed framework are a short description of how each child demonstrates the three important characteristics of learning – the purpose of including this information is to give Year 1 teachers some background information and context for each child's level of development. These recommendations are intended to set the minimum levels of reporting – I am aware that often reception and Year 1 teachers will want to share more information than is captured through this report. By keeping this statutory report to a minimum size, this should allow teachers the freedom and flexibility to pass on the information which most suits their individual circumstances. Parents, carers, children and wraparound providers should continue to be involved throughout assessment, and parents and carers should be provided with a written summary reporting their child's progress against the new early learning goals.
- 3.52 Any judgements made about children's level of development clearly need to be reliable in order to guide their continued progress as learners most effectively. However, I am aware there is a tension linked to the way that children's abilities are assessed for the purposes of formal reporting. This tension does not originate from the EYFS itself, but from guidance on assessment which suggests that 80% of the information used for the assessment at the end of reception class should be based on activities initiated by the child, with only 20% coming from activities directed by adults. This is referred to by many as the 80:20 rule.
- 3.53 There is clear confusion about what this 'rule' actually means in practice. One example I was given was that if a teacher asks a child to read a book, and the child then independently chooses and correctly reads a book, there are differing interpretations over whether this is adult-directed or child-initiated activity? Others

have interpreted this guidance as indicating that in their day-to-day provision – i.e. not just for the purposes of assessment – 80% of activities should be child-initiated. Practitioners have argued to me that they should not be constrained in the type of evidence they use to judge children’s abilities, feeling this undermines their professionalism. I have strong sympathy with this argument, although I recognise that assessment needs to be based on what children are capable of doing independently, rather than on what they do only when prompted. I do not think that the 80:20 rule is helpful in practice, and **I therefore recommend that guidance simply sets out that assessment should be based primarily on the observation of daily activities that illustrate children’s embedded learning.**

Supporting the move to Key Stage 1

3.54 The first time that many children will experience the school environment is in reception class. I am clear that reception class should remain part of the EYFS – children in reception class are still very young, some only just 4-years-old, and there should continue to be a strong focus on supporting their development in the prime as well as the specific areas through play-based approaches. However, I think that children’s experiences in reception class should help prepare them for the move to Year 1, both in terms of the level of development most children should have reached, and in the knowledge that most children would be expected to have. Skilled teachers and practitioners should be attuned to each child’s level of development, to their pace of learning, and to their abilities and interests – and should determine the most effective approach to interacting with children to guide their development. Therefore, **I recommend that the EYFS requirement relating to delivery through play is clarified, including emphasising that this does not preclude more adult direction or teaching, and by setting out what playful adult-directed learning looks like.**

3.55 Annex 5 contains a new set of early learning goals which includes a description of what ‘exceeding’ the goal looks like. Where possible, this level of ‘exceeding’ has been designed so that it aligns with the current Year 1 curriculum without undermining the principles of the EYFS. I am aware that the National Curriculum is currently under review, and I encourage the Government to ensure that this join up is sustained when the new National Curriculum is launched. The transition between the EYFS and Year 1 should be seamless. I have visited schools where this has been achieved, and the positive results are obvious in children’s outcomes. There should not be a significant change in children’s experiences between reception class and Year 1 – both sets of teachers should work together to ensure that children’s experiences in reception class prepare the ground for their move to Year 1, and their

time in Year 1 builds on the successful principles and approach encapsulated in the EYFS. In other words, schools need to be ready for children and children need to be ready for school. If this does not happen transition is harder for children than it needs to be.

4. Keeping children safe

“When the lives and the rights of children are at stake, there must be no silent witnesses.”

– Carol Bellamy

- 4.1 Children learn and develop best when they are safe, happy and healthy. For all those working with young children, safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility and must be their first and foremost consideration. Regardless of their level or experience within the workforce, everyone working with young children must know how and when to raise any concerns. They must be aware of the warning signs and alert to acting on any concerns. This is one area of the EYFS which cannot be compromised and where the evidence shows wide support for the current welfare requirements. There is a shared view amongst practitioners that regulation is needed and essential to support good practice.
- 4.2 However, I believe that there is room to learn from the experiences of early years settings and to improve certain parts of the current welfare requirements, without losing essential content. Feedback suggests that the current welfare requirements are in some cases repetitive and poorly expressed. This makes it harder for practitioners to separate legal requirements from guidance, and to ascertain what needs to be done in certain situations. I strongly believe that absolute clarity is needed so that everyone working with young children knows what they are required to do in order to improve children’s safety. One way that this can be done is by improving the structure and language used to express the current welfare requirements. To this end, **I recommend that the welfare section of the EYFS is renamed the ‘safeguarding and welfare requirements’ and that the welfare requirements are redrafted to improve their clarity.**

Identifying inappropriate behaviours

- 4.3 The EYFS is explicit about the need for all staff working in early years settings to be able to recognise the signs in a child’s behaviour that might indicate abuse or neglect and therefore warrant further enquiry. The evidence shows that most practitioners are confident in spotting these signs and know how to refer cases to their local child protection services. Successful referrals are dependent on practitioners having the

necessary knowledge and expertise to make clear and appropriate judgements and ensure that they are passed to the most appropriate local agencies, as highlighted by Professor Eileen Munro's review of child protection.

- 4.4 In considering the EYFS welfare requirements, I have paid particularly close attention to the recommendations arising from the Plymouth Serious Case Review into Little Ted's nursery. This raised a very clear need for practitioners and managers to be supported to recognise abuse and neglect occurring within settings, as well as abuse and neglect occurring outside settings.
- 4.5 However, my findings indicate that although child protection training covers recognising and reporting abuse or neglect, it does not generally highlight adult behaviours that staff should watch out for. This would include, for example, adults talking inappropriately about details of their sex lives, particularly in front of children, or being alone with children in a group setting for unusually long periods of time without good reason, or showing an unusual interest in one specific child. This gap in the requirements and child protection training must be addressed as a matter of urgency. **I recommend that the safeguarding and welfare requirements are made more explicit about warning signs in the behaviour of adults working in a setting. I also recommend that the EYFS sets out clearly the high level content of the child protection training that lead safeguarding practitioners are required to attend. This should align with the *Working together to safeguard children* guidance, and include content on safeguarding within early years settings.**
- 4.6 That said, I recognise that this must be balanced against the need to ensure that those working in settings do not become afraid to interact confidently with the children in their care. It is only right, for example, that young children should be hugged and comforted when this is needed – indeed withholding this type of comfort could be damaging to a child. This is why this type of training and knowledge is essential to help practitioners understand what is, and is not, appropriate.

Safeguarding in settings

- 4.7 The creation of a culture of safeguarding is something which is impossible to define through legal requirements. Some legal requirements – such as the need for those adults coming into contact with children to have vetting and CRB checks – add to the safety of settings. However, I believe that too many requirements can create a false sense of security, and can dilute the sense of responsibility which should

ultimately sit with the providers, leaders and managers of early years settings. It is their responsibility to ensure that each setting meets the requirements of the EYFS, reflecting their individual circumstances and offering appropriate provision, properly managed and supervised, for children in their care.

- 4.8 As a result of the Plymouth Serious Case Review some have called for mobile phones to be banned in early years settings. Inappropriate usage of mobile phones includes instances where phone calls or texts take practitioners' attention away from supervising young children, or where camera phones are used to take images of children or support abusive practice. However, banning mobile phones would create difficulties, for example where children are taken on outings, or where a setting is based in a hall without phone facilities. It is, and should remain, the responsibility of owners, leaders and managers of early years settings to ensure that their setting is a safe place for children that meets the requirements of the EYFS. I would expect safeguarding policies to set out clearly how mobile phones should or should not be used in settings, reflecting the individual circumstances of individual settings, and ensuring that their usage is properly monitored. **Therefore, I do not recommend banning mobile phones in early years settings.**

Good nutrition

- 4.9 There are similar calls from some for more stringent nutritional requirements for food served in early years settings. The report, *Laying the Table*, by the Advisory Panel for Food and Nutrition in Early Years has recommended retaining without change the current requirements in the EYFS for the provision of healthy, balanced and nutritious food and drink, and I agree with this recommendation. It also highlights that some practitioners would like examples of how they can meet young children's energy and nutrient requirements, while rightly acknowledging that such guidelines should be voluntary to encourage professional judgement. Again, it is important to balance calls for more stringent requirements against the need to leave decisions up to professionals who are best placed to work out what is right for the children in their care. **I recommend that the Government act on the report of the Advisory Panel for Food and Nutrition in Early Years and consider providing further advice and good practice for practitioners.**

Appropriate ratios

- 4.10 Within the welfare requirements, the ratio requirements were the ones that generated most discussion among group providers. The general feeling among early years practitioners is that the higher the number of staff to children, the better. Where there are fewer staff to children, practitioners have said that this impacts on

their ability to observe and assess individual children, and ultimately on their ability to support fully their development.

4.11 In particular, there were strong feelings about the ratios for reception classes, where many in the sector consider that the 1 to 30 ratio is too few staff to children, too big a jump from the 1 to 13 ratio for nursery classes, and limits the opportunities for children to enjoy outdoor learning. Informal feedback is that the 1 to 30 ratio tends not to be used in practice because teachers are assisted by a number of teaching assistants. I can understand the concerns and difficulties caused by set ratios but there is no clear picture at present of what is happening already in schools. Without the evidence, it is difficult to come to any conclusions on whether the 1 to 30 ratio should change. That said, there is evidence to show the advantages of smaller class sizes.¹⁵ In addition, the move to a 15 hour entitlement and a single point of entry will obviously put more pressure on reception classes, with younger children entering who may not have had much previous experience of early years care. This heightens the need to ensure that the 1 to 30 ratio is appropriate and **I recommend that the Government research as a matter of importance the ratios currently used in reception classes. This should include the use of support staff and identifying and sustaining current good practice if needed.**

4.12 I am also aware that the current EYFS sets out different ratios for independent schools compared to maintained schools, particularly in reception classes. In particular, children in reception classes in maintained schools should be in classes or no more than 30 pupils, led by a school teacher, whereas for independent schools the EYFS says this is 1 to 13. My understanding is that this discrepancy has been corrected through legislation but that the EYFS document itself has not been updated to reflect this. Therefore, **I recommend that the Government should take the opportunity when redrafting the EYFS to reflect the parity between the ratio requirements for independent and maintained schools which has been in place since 2009.**

4.13 Finally, the question has been raised about the maintenance of ratios during short breaks and lunch periods. This seemingly simple issue is fraught with difficulties. The length of short breaks and lunch periods are not defined, and many would argue that the learning and development of young children is continuous, and therefore needs to be supported at all times. Balanced against this is the reality that there will always be occasions when members of staff have to leave children for short periods of time – for example to take a child to the toilet. I believe it would have a detrimental impact on the flexibility of settings to introduce stringent controls over the levels of staff at all times. **I recommend it is made clear in the EYFS that,**

when ratios are met and maintained across the whole provision within an early years setting, it is left to the professional expertise of staff, and the leaders and managers of settings, to work with parents and carers to agree exactly how staff are deployed within the setting throughout the day. However, it should also be made clear that the majority of practitioners' time should be spent working directly with the children.

Reasonable risk assessments

- 4.14 When talking about paperwork, risk assessments were repeatedly cited as a cause of additional burdens on practitioners, with stark differences in approaches across local authorities and between providers. For childminders, written risk assessments can be particularly burdensome and take time away from working with children. I firmly believe that there should be common sense in dealing with risk assessments, enabling practitioners to show that they have considered potential risks, without spending hours filling in forms.
- 4.15 For this to happen requires a simple, transparent process. **I recommend that clear guidance is included in the EYFS about the amount of paperwork that should be kept in relation to risk assessments. I also recommend that practitioners should not have to undertake written risk assessments in relation to outings, but instead be able to demonstrate, if asked – for example, by parents or during inspection – the way they are managing outings to minimize any risk.**

5. A professional, well-supported workforce

“Be the change that you want to see in the world.” – Mohandas Gandhi

- 5.1 The evidence is clear on how a well-qualified and appropriately skilled early years workforce makes a real difference to the quality of provision and outcomes for young children. This has been reinforced through discussions that I have had, with many people strongly emphasising the need to prioritise the continuing professional development (CPD) of the early years workforce.
- 5.2 Progress has undoubtedly been made. There are increasing numbers of people working with young children who have level 3 or graduate qualifications and the evidence shows that this should result in improved outcomes for children. However, I have identified tension points in the existing system in the qualifications, training and support available to those working with young children and their relationships and partnerships with other professionals. These pose some of the biggest challenges to improving the experiences of children. The recommendations contained in this report will make a difference only if the early years workforce continues to develop and to deliver high quality provision for all young children.
- 5.3 This goal will be hard to achieve without the appropriate infrastructure needed to create experienced, well-trained and confident practitioners. I have looked carefully at ways to strengthen support for practitioners and the following recommendations are aimed at encouraging skilful, reflective practice and reducing some of the perceived burdens around paperwork.

Getting the best possible workforce

- 5.4 The need to create a strong, resilient and experienced workforce has been a compelling message to this review. It is my belief that without continued investment in the early years workforce, the Government will continue to struggle to raise attainment, and in particular to narrow the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers. We must retain the aspiration and commitment to improve the quality of the early years workforce. I believe a minimum level 3 qualification for all practitioners, along with an ambition for the sector to become fully graduate-led, is

one way to help achieve this. We cannot lose sight of the importance of qualifications in the early years. Therefore, **I recommend that the Government retain a focus on the need to upskill the workforce, to commit to promoting a minimum level 3 qualification and to maintain the ambitions for a graduate-led sector.**

- 5.5 The EYFS has brought new opportunities and increasing professionalism to the early years workforce. This impetus must be sustained and the value of working in the early years needs to be more widely understood and promoted. As part of this it is crucial to address, sooner rather than later, the concern that young people with fewer academic qualifications, particularly girls, are the ones who tend to be steered towards careers in the sector. This creates a young female workforce, often without many qualifications who often end up working with the very youngest children. It also reinforces views of the early years as being easier or of lower status than school teaching or other careers working with children. Such views, including that of gender bias, must be challenged and ways found to promote the early years as a rewarding career and attract a wider range of applicants. **I recommend the Government discusses with the Careers Profession Alliance how to ensure that careers professionals are well informed about careers in the early years.**
- 5.6 However, there is more to building the best possible workforce than attracting the best people; it is also about supporting them to build the right skills and knowledge base. I have received comments and criticisms that the current training courses are not universally of the quality needed to prepare people to work in the early years or to support professional development. The quality and integrity of qualifications must be guaranteed, and clarity is needed on what should be covered by training providers. Training must be grounded in the latest evidence on child development and how children learn. **I recommend that the Government review the content of early years training courses to test the strength and quality of these qualifications.**

Developing leadership

- 5.7 The evidence is clear that more needs to be done to support continuing professional development and to build a professional early years workforce. Early years leaders should value, promote and actively encourage their staff to develop their skills to the highest possible level. This requires effective leadership both within and across organisations. I have heard encouraging comments about the positive impact of the National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership (NPQICL) which has brought together multi-agency approaches in children's centres, instilling

greater leadership across the early years system. This practice should be continued with a particular focus on supporting middle leaders and developing coherent local strategies for leadership development. Likewise, I also support the New Leaders in Early Years programme, the ambition of which encapsulates my desire to see the best people working in the early years.

- 5.8 There is a wealth of knowledge and expertise across the early years sector that can, and should, be shared more widely to provide opportunities for professional development. Examples of effective shared learning can already be seen in local early years professional status networks and childminder networks. Similarly, I believe that the model of Teaching Schools, as set out in the recent Education White Paper, is one that will work well in the early years, and would help to provide in-service career development and enable early years settings to learn from each other. **I recommend that the Government consider how the best-performing settings could help to support introduction of the known model of Teaching Schools to the early years.** For example, this could include outstanding children's centres, outstanding private settings, maintained nursery schools, quality assured childminding networks and other leading groups of practitioners and providers.

Supporting professional development

- 5.9 Strong and effective leadership across the early years sector should be accompanied by opportunities for further training and professional development, enabling practitioners to develop confidence and more specialist skills. This should be readily available to all practitioners, particularly single practitioners such as childminders who I have heard can struggle to access the same opportunities as larger, group providers and practitioners working in schools. Currently, a lot of childminders, particularly those who are good or outstanding, are supported by a strong local infrastructure – for example via childminder networks or peer-to-peer support. I have heard these methods of support are successful in providing a way for childminders to share experiences and access training and resources, and ultimately to drive up standards.
- 5.10 However, I believe that in this time of change, childminders are uniquely vulnerable in their single practitioner status, and could be disproportionately impacted by the removal of local support. Without this support, I believe that childminders will struggle to access advice on how to improve their practice – particularly as many do not have ready access to the internet and all the resources it holds. Childminders are often hand-chosen by parents, work alone to care for small numbers of children, and often look after younger children. They also tend to have lower levels of

qualifications than other types of provider. The type of early years care that childminders provide is unique, and the evidence shows that one-to-one care helps children to build the bonds and close relationships they need to feel safe and secure. I urge local authorities to pay particular attention to the needs of childminders and ensure that the support they need and value continues to be provided.

Consideration needs to be given to how networks and peer support can be maintained through, for example, ensuring that childminders have access to resources through children's centres and similar.

5.11 There is also an issue in promoting professional development about signposting clearly what is on offer. For example, people entering and working in the early years want to know where a job will take them. They want clear information on employment and qualification options so that they can plot their own career path. At the moment such pathways are not immediately apparent. Qualifications are available but not always linked and it can be difficult for practitioners to identify the necessary steps to fulfill their career ambitions.

5.12 This is compounded by concerns about the relationship between the early years professional qualification (EYPS) and qualified teacher status (QTS) and the lack of a simple career progression route. I believe that what is needed is clear career progression routes in the early years through a progression structure for qualifications, leading to a choice of higher level qualifications such as EYPS and QTS. This is an idea that I have discussed with respondees including the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services and I know the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) has already started work in this area which should be continued to help to attract high quality candidates into the sector. The progression structure should link together common qualifications and content and show possible routes practitioners can take to gain experience, develop skills and lead successful, satisfying careers. Different entry points to the early years will need to be identified, providing flexibility and easy access to the qualifications on offer. **I recommend that the Government build on existing work to draw together a progression structure for qualifications, linking these to leadership qualifications and identifying clear career pathways for practitioners.**

5.13 Qualifications should give practitioners the appropriate knowledge and experience relevant to their circumstances. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) were originally intended as conversion qualifications for people who had often worked in their field for long periods of time but had little or no formal training or qualifications to evidence their ability. However, I have heard that the current

qualifications could be improved to prepare people more effectively to work in the early years. With the introduction of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), NVQs are being phased out and now is an appropriate time to ensure that new qualifications meet the needs of the sector. This includes those returning to careers in the early years, or those with practical experience that they want recognised through qualifications. **I recommend that work continues to develop qualifications to meet the needs of all learners, including young people undertaking full-time college courses and those who have worked in the early years for a long time who wish to evidence their expertise and progress in line with the structure of qualifications discussed above.**

- 5.14 Alongside this, initial training and qualifications for new practitioners need to be of a high quality. They need to provide practitioners with an up to date knowledge of child development, recognising the skills needed by those who have ambitions towards being an expert practitioner, rather than the leader of a setting. I would like to see a professional entry qualification that instills the right knowledge and approaches to working with young children. This should offer practitioners recognition and status for their work and provide a contemporary equivalent to the NNEB qualification – which is no longer available, but which many have told me they still see as defining standards and status for expert practitioners, because of its emphasis on practical application based on theoretical understanding and reflective practice. To this end, **I recommend that the Government ensures that new entry qualifications are of a high standard and, once introduced, reviews whether they succeed in conferring the equivalent status of the NNEB qualification.**

Improving practice

- 5.15 I view the term supervision as encompassing a number of key professional practices. Supervision is primarily a tool to support the management of practice, and therefore a key part of staff support systems and a leader or manager's role. Where successful, it should provide practitioners with a route through which to raise any professional queries, to discuss career progression, to clarify roles, responsibilities and work tasks, to support performance management and to build their confidence in supporting children's development.
- 5.16 However, these are not the sole purposes of supervision. It should also be an opportunity for practitioners to raise any concerns that they might have about children in their care, and to receive support to help them deal with difficult or

challenging situations at work. Finally, it describes the practice of overseeing those staff who are directly caring for children.

- 5.17 I am conscious of these differences and also of the fact that supervision and support for those who work in, for example, a nursery school will naturally be very different to that for a sole childminder. However, within all early years settings, supervision should be intrinsic to effective leadership and management practice, which means leaders and managers need to have the necessary skills and training. The EYFS does mention supervision but I do not think that it is clear what this encompasses and therefore I believe it needs to be clearer what supervision means in the context of the EYFS for both group providers and for childminders. Supervision should be expressed in such a way that encourages reflective practice and moves away from the perception that it is merely a tick-box approach to check what practitioners are, or are not, doing. Therefore, **I recommend that the EYFS is clear what supervision means in practice, including some good practice examples, and that settings should agree their own procedures for supervision. Childminders should also have access to the challenge and professional support that supervision can provide. I recommend that the Government should consider how peer networks, such as childminder networks, and national organisations can provide this kind of support.**

Clarifying the myths

- 5.18 Ofsted has played a key role in implementation of the EYFS and in the overall improvement in quality across the early years sector. It is encouraging to see the value placed on inspection judgements through the use of Ofsted reports by parents and carers to help choose their provision. However, through the review I have heard mixed views from practitioners on their experiences of inspection, with people reporting a range of different experiences. Some practitioners have had very positive inspection experiences. Others assert that they have been asked by Ofsted to gather disproportionate amounts of information to show how they meet the EYFS requirements.
- 5.19 I am aware that it is impossible to find out what is at the root of these differences without following up each situation individually. There is neither the time nor the resource to do this. However, I believe that early years regulators must continue to play a central role in driving up the quality of early years provision. In order to succeed, I am convinced that Ofsted needs to tackle the perceived inconsistencies around inspection and instill greater trust and knowledge of requirements amongst practitioners. It is clear that until everyone has a shared understanding of what is

needed for inspection, these differences of opinion will continue. To make sure that everyone has the same understanding of requirements, **I recommend that Ofsted and local authorities work together to produce clear, consistent information for early years providers and communicate this effectively to all practitioners.** This should show how Ofsted will inspect the requirements for what different settings have to do to deliver the EYFS.

5.20 I also believe that Ofsted's role in improving quality across the early years sector should not only be acknowledged but also built upon, for example by providing a clear definition of what satisfactory, good and outstanding practice is, with examples of what this looks like in different settings. In raising quality, Ofsted also needs to consider the skills of early years inspectors. As early years inspections are now outsourced, **I recommend that Ofsted reviews the training, capacity and capability of the current early years inspectorate and existing guidance to inspectors,** with a view to setting clear minimum requirements for all early years inspectors in terms of experience, skills and qualifications.

5.21 Practitioners' perceptions of inconsistencies in requirements, has also been raised in reference to local authorities' role in moderation processes. In some cases the perceived burdens are in relation to the collection of EYFS Profile data but I am also aware of instances where it relates to local quality improvement processes. Again, there is a perception that providers are being asked by local authorities to gather information that is not required by the EYFS, in order to justify the judgements that practitioners are making. **I recommend that, as with Ofsted, local authorities avoid creating burdens for practitioners arising from requests to collect unnecessary data and information, and to keep paperwork that is not required by the EYFS. Instead, they should find other ways of testing the strength of practitioners' ability to support children's development.**

Closing comments

5.22 It has been a tremendous responsibility and a privilege to lead this review. There are few things that are more important than making sure all children are given the very best start in life. We all have ideas of what this means, informed by our own experiences and observations. Some of what I have learned has challenged what I thought I knew and the perceptions that I held.

5.23 The EYFS was designed to capture and share the wealth of evidence about how children develop and learn. It takes this evidence and guides practitioners in

applying it to enrich the lives of children. I have found that for many the EYFS is an immensely valuable enhancement, complementing and informing their personal and professional understandings and views.

- 5.24 I have been delighted and energised by the universal enthusiasm and absolute commitment to achieving the best possible outcomes for children that I have encountered. I recognise some people will not support the continued existence of a mandatory framework, and others may object to certain proposals, but overall, I believe the recommendations I have made will help to improve the experiences children have, and ultimately help to achieve these outcomes.
- 5.25 My recommendations are intended to build and develop a framework that the evidence shows to be successful. For all of us who are committed to improving the life chances of young children this is undoubtedly a particularly difficult period. I know that some people will fear that the changes I am proposing will create further pressures. My recommendations are designed to retain all that has been learnt within a slimmer and more resilient framework, able to withstand the undoubted challenges that lie ahead. For my recommendations to work, everyone working with young children across the system needs to understand that they are a part of that system. My review promotes an integrated, professional approach that is designed to benefit all children, particularly the most vulnerable.
- 5.26 Finally, I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this review. This is an area that attracts very strong views and debate, no surprise given the importance of the earliest years in children's lives. The support, challenge and quality of representations made to me throughout have been invaluable. I believe that my recommendations offer a coherent and considered way forward, building on the evidence and progress made so far. I look forward to the response from the Government.

End notes

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Annex 1: Glossary

Adult-guided learning: interacting with individuals or groups of children in ways which support their new learning, through a range of approaches within any context, including play and planned activities.

Adult-led activity: activity which adults plan and lead for individuals and groups of children, responding to children's needs and interacting to support progress through playful focused activity. Activities may include those in every day experiences, open-ended tasks, and direct teaching.

Areas of learning and development: the broad categories for the EYFS learning and development requirements, representing the overall dimensions of children's early years experiences.

Assessment: professional judgement about children's progress and next steps, using observation and note-taking when necessary.

Attachment: the particular impulse for babies and young children to seek close relationships with their parents and other primary caregivers. See key person.

Call for evidence: a process by which people are invited to contribute views and information to a given timescale, as part of the early stages of a policy review.

Child-initiated learning: activity which children initiate and lead, selecting resources and sometimes involving others, and in which adults might join to help a child learn.

Childminder: a provider who uses their own domestic premises to support children, and receives payment from parents.

Criminal Records Bureau (CRB): helps organisations identify people who are unsuitable for certain types of work, especially work involving contact with children and other vulnerable members of society. The CRB achieves its aims through the Disclosure Service which offers access to records held by police, the Department of Health and the Department for Education.

Early learning goals: a series of goals that outline the things most children should be able to do by the end of the academic year in which they reach 5 years of age.

Early years: the period of time from birth to the end of the academic year in which a child reaches 5 years of age.

Early years provider: a person, setting, company, organisation, committee or group offering care and development services in the early years. This includes anyone on the Early Years Register and schools (maintained and independent) which take children in the early years.

Early years setting: any out-of-home provider of education and care for children aged from birth to five, including childminders, local authority nurseries, private nurseries, children's centres, playgroups, pre-schools, and schools in the independent, private and maintained sector.

Exemption – provider: providers of early years education and care may apply for exemptions from the EYFS learning and development requirements if either:

- they are temporarily unable to deliver the full learning and development requirements; or
- a majority of parents agree that an exemption should be sought because the established principles of learning and development that govern the provider's practice cannot be reconciled with the EYFS learning and development requirements.

Exemption – individual child: parents can apply for an exemption to the setting their child attends if they consider that the learning and development requirements of the EYFS framework (or some element of them) are in conflict with their religious or philosophical beliefs.

Independent schools: a school which obtains most of its finances from fees paid by parents and income from investments. Some of the larger independent schools are known as public schools.

Independent School Standards: Regulations made under the Education Act 2002 set out a range of standards that all independent schools in England must satisfy as a condition of registration.

Key person: the named member of staff with whom a child and their parents and carers has most contact, building a close relationship on a day-to-day basis, observing the child's needs and interests, planning suitable activities and communicating with parents and carers.

Key Stage 1: Key Stage 1 covers Years 1 and 2 in primary school when children are aged between 5- and 7-years-old.

Level 3 qualification: equivalent to A-Level, Advanced GNVQ, Level 3 NVQ.

Level 6 qualification: equivalent to an Honours degree, for example Early Years Professional status.

Longitudinal: an approach to research which tracks a specific group of participants over time, usually over several years, to evaluate the effects of activities and interventions.

Maintained settings: settings receiving direct grant funding from the government as their main source of funding.

Montessori settings: settings which follow a child-centered method of teaching, originated by Italian educator Maria Montessori. It is mostly associated with pre-school and elementary school. Children are encouraged to choose their own activities and self-direct their own discovery and interaction.

Ofsted: The independent regulator and inspection force for early years settings.

Parents and carers: mothers, fathers, legal guardians, and the primary carers of looked-after children. Also, other significant adults in children's lives and other relatives who care for them.

Play-based: an approach to child development and childcare which emphasises playful planned activities as the main focus of children's experience and the main vehicle for their learning.

Practitioner: any adult who works in an early years setting, directly providing care and support to children.

Private and voluntary providers: providers not directly maintained by government funding, including providers operating as private businesses, self-employed, or charities.

Safeguarding: practice and policy designed to protect children from harm.

Special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO): practitioner nominated to ensure liaison with parents and other professionals in respect of children with special educational needs, and to advise and support other practitioners in the setting.

SEN Code of Practice: source of practical advice to local authorities, maintained schools and early years settings, for identifying, assessing and supporting children with special educational needs.

Staffing ratios: the number of adults present in relation to the number of children. The EYFS welfare requirements set minimum ratios of adults to children, which are dependent on the age of the children and the qualifications of the adults present.

Statement of special educational needs: document which describes a child's special needs and the support that would be appropriate for them. The local authority has a duty to arrange the support specified in the legally binding part of the statement (Part 3). The statement may describe non-educational, as well as educational, needs, and the provision required.

Statutory requirement: a legal requirement set out in legislation.

Steiner settings: settings which follow the Steiner Waldorf approach to early childhood, founded on the work of Rudolph Steiner, an Austrian educationalist and philosopher.

Sure Start Children's Centres: government-funded children's centres which offer a range of services to children and parents in local areas.

Teaching: interacting with individuals or groups of children in ways which support their new learning, through a range of approaches within any context including play and planned activities. Teaching approaches may include discussing children's ideas, providing language to name or describe, modelling, demonstrating, explaining, suggesting, questioning and encouraging as well as direct teaching of knowledge and skills.

Young child: a child aged between birth and the end of the August following their fifth birthday – as defined by The Childcare Act 2006.

Annex 2: Summary of recommendations

An inclusive, accessible and flexible EYFS

I recommend any revised welfare requirements are checked against the Independent School Standards to ensure there is no conflict between the two.

I recommend that there should continue to be a framework that applies to all providers working with children in the early years.

I recommend that Government consider whether the learning and development exemptions process could be widened to allow professional organisations representing groups of independent schools to seek exemptions on behalf of the schools they represent who do not wish to deliver the EYFS learning and development requirements. This would apply in circumstances where the professional organisations can show both support from parents whose children attend the schools seeking the exemption, and demonstrate how the professional organisations would continue to ensure delivery of high quality early years provision.

I recommend that the Government extend the exemptions from these early learning goals to all settings within the Steiner-Waldorf Foundation.

I recommend simplifying the procedure for exemption applications for providers meeting the existing stringent criteria – by replacing the requirement to consult local authorities with a requirement to inform them.

I recommend that guidance for wraparound and holiday provision is embedded in the EYFS and that Ofsted continues to ensure that it is embedded throughout the inspection process.

I recommend that the Skillsactive playwork level 2 award is included as a relevant early years qualification for holiday providers.

Recognising that there will be less support in the future to help early years providers improve, the EYFS must be redrafted in such a way that the framework is easy to access, understand and navigate, incorporating what is known about how young children learn

and develop and highlighting the importance of protecting their welfare. I recommend that any revised EYFS and guidance for inspectors are both subject to a plain English review, and should seek to be awarded the plain English crystal mark.

I recommend the development of a high-quality and interactive online version of the revised EYFS, with clear navigation to help people find what they are looking for.

I recommend that when a child starts in an early years setting, their parents should be provided with a brief, simple, explanation of what the EYFS is and what they can expect.

I recommend that the Government increases the emphasis within the EYFS on the role of parents and carers as partners in their children's learning, and in addition ensures that all practitioners continue to have access to the necessary resources needed to support the incorporation of effective parental engagement into their practice.

Equipped for life, ready for school

I recommend that personal, social and emotional development, communication and language and physical development are identified as prime areas of learning in the EYFS.

I recommend that the EYFS should include a requirement for practitioners, including childminders, to provide on request to parents and carers, at some point between the ages of 24 – 36 months, a short written early years summary of their child's development in the prime areas.

I recommend that an insert is added to the early childhood health record, known as the Red Book, to encourage parents and carers, or their nominee, to enter information arising from this early years summary and from children's interaction with other professionals, for example speech and language therapists.

I recommend strongly that the Government works with experts and services to test the feasibility of a single integrated review at age 2 to 2½.

I recommend that the Government investigate urgently how the development of children's English language skills can be effectively supported and assessed.

Alongside the three prime areas of personal, social and emotional development, communication and language and physical development, I propose four specific areas in which the prime skills are applied: literacy, mathematics, expressive arts and design, and understanding the world.

I recommend that playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking critically are highlighted in the EYFS as three characteristics of effective teaching and learning.

Practitioners have told me how helpful they find the non-statutory guidance on ongoing, formative assessment, *Development Matters*, in tracking children's learning and development from birth through to reception. I therefore recommend that this is retained but is reviewed and slimmed-down, and is aligned with my proposed new areas of learning.

[I] recommend no changes to the EYFS requirements on formative assessment...[but] that the EYFS explicitly states that paperwork should be kept to the absolute minimum required to promote children's successful learning and development.

I recommend that the Government adopt the reduced set of early learning goals to provide a framework which defines the expected level of children's development by the end of reception year.

I recommend that for each early learning goal a simple scale is established. This should define what emerging, expecting and exceeding means for each early learning goal. I also recommend that the level of exceeding the early learning goals is set to be consistent with expectations in the current National Curriculum, and evolves in a way that is consistent with expectations to be set out in the new National Curriculum Programmes of Study for Key Stage 1 in the relevant subjects.

I recommend that, as part of the review of the *Development Matters* guidance, the Government develops an additional column setting out clearly the key milestones of development for children aged under 24 months.

I recommend that the EYFS is made more explicit about the different approaches to assessment that practitioners may wish to consider for those children with special educational needs.

I have concluded that the assessment at the end of the EYFS, the EYFS Profile, should be significantly slimmed down and made much more manageable, based on my 17 proposed new early learning goals, and have clearer links into the National Curriculum.

I recommend that guidance sets out that assessment should be based primarily on the observation of daily activities that illustrate children's embedded learning.

I recommend that the EYFS requirement relating to delivery through play is clarified, including emphasising that this does not preclude more adult direction or teaching, and by setting out what playful adult-directed learning looks like.

Keeping children safe

I recommend that the welfare section of the EYFS is renamed the ‘safeguarding and welfare requirements’ and that the welfare requirements are redrafted to improve their clarity.

I recommend that the safeguarding and welfare requirements are made more explicit about warning signs in the behaviour of adults working in a setting. I also recommend that the EYFS sets out clearly the high level content of the child protection training that lead safeguarding practitioners are required to attend. This should align with the *Working together to safeguard children* guidance, and include content on safeguarding within early years settings.

I do not recommend banning mobile phones in early years settings.

I recommend that the Government act on the report of the Advisory Panel for Food and Nutrition in Early Years and consider providing further advice and good practice for practitioners.

I recommend that the Government research as a matter of importance the ratios currently used in reception classes. This should include the use of support staff and identifying and sustaining current good practice if needed.

I recommend that the Government should take the opportunity when redrafting the EYFS to reflect the parity between the ratio requirements for independent and maintained schools which has been in place since 2009.

I recommend it is made clear in the EYFS that, when ratios are met and maintained across the whole provision within an early years setting, it is left to the professional expertise of staff, and the leaders and managers of settings, to work with parents and carers to agree exactly how staff are deployed within the setting throughout the day. However, it should also be made clear that the majority of practitioners’ time should be spent working directly with the children.

I recommend that clear guidance is included in the EYFS about the amount of paperwork that should be kept in relation to risk assessments. I also recommend that practitioners should not have to undertake written risk assessments in relation to outings, but instead be able to demonstrate, if asked – for example, by parents or during inspection – the way they are managing outings to minimise any risk.

A professional, well-supported workforce

I recommend that the Government retain a focus on the need to upskill the workforce, to commit to promoting a minimum level 3 qualification and to maintain the ambitions for a graduate led sector.

I recommend the Government discusses with the Careers Profession Alliance how to ensure that careers professionals are well informed about careers in the early years.

I recommend that the Government review the content of early years training courses to test the strength and quality of these qualifications.

I recommend that the Government consider how the best-performing settings could help to support introduction of the known model of Teaching Schools to the early years.

I recommend that the Government build on existing work to draw together a progression structure for qualifications, linking these to leadership qualifications and identifying clear career pathways for practitioners.

I recommend that work continues to develop qualifications to meet the needs of all learners, including young people undertaking full-time college courses and those who have worked in the early years for a long time who wish to evidence their expertise and progress along the structure of qualifications discussed above.

I recommend that the Government ensures that new entry qualifications are of a high standard and, once introduced, reviews whether they succeed in conferring the equivalent status of the NNEB qualification.

I recommend that the EYFS is clear what supervision means in practice, including some good practice examples, and that settings should agree their own procedures for supervision. Childminders should also have access to the challenge and professional support that supervision can provide. I recommend that the Government should consider how peer networks, such as childminder networks, and national organisations can provide this kind of support.

I recommend that Ofsted and local authorities work together to produce clear, consistent information for early years providers and communicate this effectively to all practitioners.

I recommend that Ofsted reviews the training, capacity and capability of the current early years inspectorate and existing guidance to inspectors.

I recommend that, as with Ofsted, local authorities avoid creating burdens for practitioners arising from requests to collect unnecessary data and information, and to keep paperwork that is not required by the EYFS. Instead, they should find other ways of testing the strength of practitioners' ability to support children's development.

Annex 3: Organisations consulted as part of the review

1) In addition to responses from individuals, formal responses to the review's call for evidence were received from the following organisations:

4Children

A+ Education Ltd

ABC Childcare (Ipswich) Ltd

ABC Early Learning Ltd

Action for Children

Action for Prisoners' Families

Advisory Committee on Mathematics Education (ACME)

Advisory Council for the Education of Romany & other Travellers (ACERT)

After Adoption

Aspect

Association for Achievement & Improvement through Assessment

Association for Science Education (ASE)

Association of Child Psychotherapists

Association of Education Psychologists, The

Association of Teachers and Lecturers

Barnardos

Black Voices Network

Board of Deputies of British Jews

Bridge Schools Inspectorate

Bringing up Baby

British Dietetic Association

British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA)

British Heart Foundation

Bright Horizons Family Solutions

Busy Bees Nursery Group

Centre for the Study of Children, Families and Learning Communities

Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors
Child Accident Prevention Trust
Childbase Nurseries Ltd
Childcare Corporation, The
Childcare Strategy Team
Childminding Network
Children's Mathematics Network
Children's Society, The
Common Threads
Communication Trust, The
National Childminding Association
Daycare Trust
Dyslexia-SpLD Trust, The
Early Bird Childcare Limited
Early Childhood Forum
Early Education
Early Excellence
Early Years Childcare
Early Years Curriculum Group
Engineering UK
Family Learning
Fatherhood Institute
Goldsmiths, University of London
I CAN
Incorporated Society of Musicians
Independent Association of Prep Schools (IAPS)
Independent Schools Council (ISC)
Information Commissioner's Office
Inspire Consultancy Ltd
Institute of Education
Interconnections
Koosa Kids Ltd
Family Action
Learning Trust, The
London Diocesan Board for Schools
London Early Years Foundation

Mencap
Middlesex University
Montessori Centre International
Montessori Schools Association
Museum, Libraries and Archives Council
National Association for Primary Education (NAPE)
National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)
National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT)
National Association of Special Educational Needs
National Campaign for Real Nursery Education (NCrNE)
National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics
National Childminding Association
National Day Nurseries Association
National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)
National Foundation for Educational Research
National Literacy Trust
National Quality Improvement Network
National Society for Education in Art and Design
National Strategies
National Union of Teachers (NUT)
Ofqual
Ofsted
OMEP (UK)
Open EYE Campaign Steering Group
Out of School Alliance
Play England
Play Pit Day Nurseries
Play Team Association
Playgroup Network
Playwork Inclusion Project
Pre-School Learning Alliance
Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
Royal National Institute of Blind People
Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
Save the Children
Sense

School Food Trust
SkillsActive
Steiner Waldorf School Fellowship
Together for Children
Training Advancement and Co-operation in Teaching Young Children
TreeHouse – the national charity for autism education
Tribal, Early Years Inspections
Trio Childcare Connections Ltd
Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET)
Unique Child Project
Universities Council for the Education of Teachers
UNISON
YoungMinds
Youth Sport Trust

2) *List of organisations or people who spoke to Dame Clare Tickell or the review team during the preparation of this report, including workshops and visits to schools and early years settings:*

Advisory Panel for Food and Nutrition in Early Years
Association of Orthodox Jewish Schools and Organisations
Black Voices Network Workshop
Board of Deputies of British Jews
Brenda Spencer, Early Years Advisor
British Association For Early Childhood Education (Early Education)
Busy Bees Nurseries in York, Colton Mill and Brough
Carol Walker Trust
Carolyn Blackburn, Early Years Advisor
Childminder Workshop
Chingford Hall Pre-School, Waltham Forest
Chrissy Meleady, Early Years Equality
Christian Schools Trust
Christine Hey, University of Derby
Church of England Board of Education
Council for Disabled Children
CWDC

David Whitebread, University of Cambridge
Day Care Trust
Dr Maria Evangelou
Early Childhood Forum meeting
Early Years Academics/Professionals Stakeholder Workshop
Family Action
Family and Parenting Institute
4-Children
Guildford Grove Primary School
Health Stakeholder Workshop
I CAN
Independent Association of Prep Schools
Independent/Faith Sector and Inspectorate Stakeholder Workshop
Independent Schools Council
Independent Schools Inspectorate
Institute of Education
Lauriston Primary School
Lesley Staggs, Early Childhood Consultant
Local authorities
Local Government Association
Lucy Bartley, Young Parent Support Worker
Montessori Centre International
Montessori Schools Association
National Association of Head Teachers
National Childminding Association (NCMA)
National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services
NMCA regional forum
National Children's Bureau (NCB)
National Day Nursery Association (NDNA)
National Day Nurseries Association workshops
National Quality Improvement Network (NQIN)
National Strategies
National Strategies events with local authorities
NCB-LAEYN meeting
Network of Early Education and Care, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Ofsted
Ofqual
Open Eye Campaign
Parents workshops
Pen Green Centre
Percy Hedley School
Peterswood Infant and Nursery School, Essex
Play England
Playwork London
Practitioners Workshop
Pre-School Learning Alliance
Primary Heads Reference Group
Professor David Hall
Professor Elizabeth Wood
Professor Iram Siraj-Blatchford
Professor Pamela Sammons
QCDA
Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
Rural Communities
Schools Food Trust
Schools Inspection Service
SEN/vulnerable children stakeholder workshop
Sessional and limited contact providers workshop
SkillsActive
South East LA Early Years Leads meeting
Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship
Sure Start Conference
TDA
The Communication Trust
The Sunshine Day Nursery, Seascope Sure Start Children's Centre, Peterlee
Thomas Coram Centre workshop with health and early years practitioners
Together for Children
Townhill Infant School, Southampton
Trimdon Grange Infant and Nursery School
Weston Shore Infant School, Southampton
What about the children?

3) *Dame Clare Tickell and the review team are also grateful for the help and support of the following, including members of the review's reference group:*

Expert panel members

Chris Pascal – Director of Centre for Research in Early Childhood, Birmingham

Bernadette Duffy – Head of Thomas Coram Early Childhood Centre

Kathy Sylva – Professor of Educational Psychology, Oxford University

Sue Owen – Director of Practice Improvement, National Children's Bureau

Dorian Bradley – Independent Advisor, EYFS exemptions

Rob Nicholson – Head of Early Years, Wandsworth Council Children's Services Department

Nicola Amies – Director of Early Years, Bright Horizons Family Solutions

Heather Rockhold – Retired Head Teacher, Lauriston Primary and Nursery school

Jean Gross – The Communication Champion

Others

Sue Ellis – National Director, Early Years, National Strategies

Helen Moylett – Senior Director, Early Years, National Strategies

Nancy Stewart – Senior Advisor, Early Years, National Strategies

Ann Langston – Senior Regional Advisor, Early Years, National Strategies

Andrew Pollard – Professor of Education at the Department of Quantitative Social Science, Institute of Education and Director of ESCalate at the Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol

Cathy Nutbrown – Professor of Education, Sheffield University

Annex 4: Framework to support summary of development at 24 to 36 months

Aspect	24-36 months	36-48 months	Early learning goals
Personal, Social and Emotional Development			
Self-confidence and self-awareness	Children separate from their main carer with support and encouragement from a familiar adult. They begin to recognise danger and know who to turn to for help. They seek to do things for themselves, knowing that an adult is close by, ready to support if needed.	Children can select and use activities and resources with help. They talk about their own needs and feelings in simple ways. They are confident to talk to other children when playing together and will talk freely about their home and community.	Children are confident to try out new activities and can say why they prefer some. They talk about their ideas, choose the resources they need to plan and carry out activities they have decided to do and can say when they do or don't need help.
Managing feelings and behaviour	Children are aware that some actions can hurt or harm others. They seek comfort from familiar adults in the setting, when needed. They respond to the feelings and wishes of others, and their own needs and feelings.	Children are aware that some actions can hurt others' feelings. They begin to accept the needs of others, taking turns and sharing resources with support. They can adapt their behaviour to different events, social situations and changes in routine, and their own needs and feelings.	Children can talk about how they and others show feelings and manage their feelings. They can talk about their own and others' behaviour and its consequences. They can work as part of a group or class and understand and follow the rules. They can adjust their behaviour to different situations and to changes in routine.

Aspect	24-36 months	36-48 months	Early learning goals
Making relationships	Children seek out others to share experiences. They play alongside others and can be caring towards each other.	Children can play in a group. They demonstrate friendly behaviour, initiate conversations and form good relationships with peers and familiar adults.	Children can play co-operatively, taking turns when playing. They can take account of one another’s ideas about how to organise their activity. They can show sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others and form positive relationships with adults and other children.
Physical Development			
Moving and handling	Children gain increasing control of their whole bodies and are becoming aware of how to negotiate the space and objects around them.	Children maintain balance when they concentrate. They negotiate space successfully when playing racing and chasing games, adjusting speed or changing direction to avoid obstacles. They handle tools effectively for the purpose, including mark making.	Children show good control and coordination in large and small movements. They move confidently in a range of ways, safely negotiating space. They handle equipment and tools effectively, including pencils for writing.
Health and self-care	Children can communicate their physical needs for things such as food and drink and can let adults know when they are uncomfortable. They are beginning to be independent in self-care, e.g. pulling off their socks or shoes or getting a tissue when necessary but still often need adult support for putting socks and shoes back on or blowing their nose.	Children can recognise and express their own need for food, exercise, the toilet, rest and sleep. They can put on a jumper and coat with little assistance and can fasten big buttons. They usually have bladder and bowel control and can attend to most toileting needs most of the time themselves.	Children know the importance for good health of physical exercise and a healthy diet and can talk about ways to keep healthy and safe. They can manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs successfully, including dressing and going to the toilet independently.

Aspect	24-36 months	36-48 months	Early learning goals
Communication and Language			
Listening and Attention	Children listen with interest when adults read stories to them. They recognise and respond to many familiar sounds, e.g. turning to a knock on the door, looking at or going to the door. They can shift attention to a different task if their attention is fully obtained.	Children listen to others one-to-one or in small groups when the conversation interests them. They join in with repeated refrains and anticipate key events and phrases in rhymes and stories. They can focus attention by shifting between an activity and listening.	Children listen attentively in a range of situations. They listen to stories, accurately anticipating key events and respond to what they hear with relevant comments, questions or actions. They can give their attention to what is being said to them and respond appropriately, whilst still being involved in an activity.
Understanding	Children can identify action words by pointing to the right picture, e.g. <i>'Who's jumping?'</i> . They understand 'who', 'what', 'where' in simple questions and are developing understanding of basic concepts (e.g. big/little).	Children respond to instructions containing positional language, e.g. <i>over and under</i> . They can identify objects by their use. They attempt to answer 'why' and 'how' questions using words like 'because'.	Children can follow instructions involving several ideas or actions. They answer 'how' and 'why' questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events.
Speaking	Children learn new words very rapidly and are able to use them in communicating. They use action, sometimes with limited talk, that is largely concerned with the 'here and now'. They talk in basic sentences and use a variety of questions, e.g. <i>what, where, who?</i>	Children use talk, actions and objects to connect ideas and recall past experiences. They can retell a simple past event in correct order, and can talk about things that will happen. They question why things happen and can give explanations.	Children express themselves effectively showing awareness of listeners' needs. They use past, present and future forms accurately when talking about events that have happened or are to happen in the future. They develop their own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events.

Annex 5: Proposed early learning goals

Aspect	Emerging	Expected (ELGs)	Exceeding
Personal, social and emotional development			
Self-confidence and self-awareness	Children join in a range of activities that interest them. They are confident to talk to other children when playing together. They can talk about what they need and what they enjoy doing, and make choices about the activities they prefer. They select and use resources with support.	Children are confident to try out new activities and can say why they prefer some. They are confident to speak in a familiar group and will talk about their ideas, choose the resources they need to plan and carry out activities they have decided to do. They can say when they do or don't need help.	Children are confident to speak to a class group. They can talk about the things they enjoy, and are good at, and about the things they don't find easy. They are resourceful in finding support when they need help or information. They can talk about the plans they have made to carry out activities and what they might change if they were to repeat them.
Managing feelings and behaviour	Children are aware of their own feelings and know that some actions and words can hurt others' feelings. They can take turns and share, sometimes with support from others. They can usually adapt their behaviour to different events, social situations and changes in routine.	Children can talk about how they and others show feelings and know that not all behaviours are acceptable. They can talk about their own and others' behaviour and its consequences. They can work as part of a group or class and understand and follow the rules. They can adjust their behaviour to different situations and take changes in routine in their stride.	Children know some ways to manage their feelings and are beginning to use these to maintain control. They can listen to each other's suggestions and plan how to achieve an outcome without adult help. They know when and how to stand up for themselves appropriately. They can stop and think before acting and they can wait for things they want.

Aspect	Emerging	Expected (ELGs)	Exceeding
Making relationships	Children play as part of a group, and know how to make friends with others. They show some awareness of other children's needs.	Children can play co-operatively, taking turns when playing. They can take account of one another's ideas about how to organise their activity. They can show sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others and form positive relationships with adults and other children.	Children play group games with rules. They understand someone else's point of view can be different from theirs. They resolve minor disagreements through listening to each other to come up with a fair solution. They understand what bullying is and that this is unacceptable behaviour.
Physical Development			
Moving and handling	Children can maintain balance when they concentrate. They run skilfully and negotiate space successfully, adjusting speed or direction to avoid obstacles. They are beginning to hold a pencil or crayon with thumb and two fingers.	Children show good control and coordination in large and small movements. They move confidently in a range of ways, safely negotiating space. They handle equipment and tools effectively, including pencils for writing.	Children can hop confidently and skip in time to music. They hold paper in position and use their preferred hand for writing, using a correct pencil grip. They are beginning to be able to write on lines and control letter size.
Health and self-care	Children can tell adults when they are hungry or tired or when they want to rest or play. They can dress with some assistance and can usually manage personal needs such as washing their hands and toileting.	Children know the importance for good health of physical exercise and a healthy diet and can talk about ways to keep healthy and safe. They can manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs successfully, including dressing and going to the toilet independently.	Children know about, and can make, healthy choices in relation to healthy eating and exercise. They can dress and undress independently, successfully managing fastening buttons or laces.

Aspect	Emerging	Expected (ELGs)	Exceeding
Communication and language			
Listening and Attention	Children listen to others one-to-one or in small groups when the conversation interests them. When listening to familiar stories and rhymes children can join in at relevant points with repeated refrains and phrases and can anticipate key events. They can focus their attention by shifting between an activity and listening.	Children listen attentively in a range of situations. They listen to stories, accurately anticipating key events and respond to what they hear with relevant comments, questions or actions. They can give their attention to what is being said to them and respond appropriately, whilst still being involved in an activity.	Children listen to instructions and follow them accurately, asking for clarification if necessary. They listen attentively with sustained concentration to follow a story without pictures or props and can listen in a larger group, for example, at assembly.
Understanding	Children respond to instructions when, for example, they are asked to get or put away an item, and understand the meaning of words such as ‘on’, ‘under’. They can identify familiar objects by the way in which they are used.	Children can follow instructions involving several ideas or actions. They answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events.	After listening to stories children can express views about the events or characters in the story and answer questions about why things happened. They can carry out instructions which contain several parts in a sequence.
Speaking	Children can connect ideas using talk, actions or objects and can retell a simple past event in correct order. They question why things happen and give simple explanations.	Children express themselves effectively showing awareness of listeners’ needs. They use past, present and future forms accurately when talking about events that have happened or are to happen in the future. They develop their own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events.	Children show some awareness of the listener by making changes to language and non-verbal features. They recount experiences and imagine possibilities, often connecting ideas. They use a range of vocabulary in imaginative ways to add information, express ideas or to explain or justify actions or events.

Aspect	Emerging	Expected (ELGs)	Exceeding
Literacy			
Reading	Children know that print carries meaning. They show interest in books and can suggest how a story might end. They can segment the sounds in simple words and blend them together, and join in with rhyming and rhythmic activities.	Children read and understand simple sentences in stories and information books, using phonic knowledge to decode regular words and read them aloud accurately. They demonstrate understanding when talking with others about what they have read, or what has been read to them.	Children can read phonically regular words of more than one syllable as well as many irregular but high frequency words. They use phonic, semantic and syntactic knowledge to understand unfamiliar vocabulary. They can describe the main events in the simple stories they have read.
Writing	Children give meaning to marks they make as they draw, write and paint. They can segment words orally, and use some clearly identifiable letters to communicate meaning, representing some sounds correctly and in sequence.	Children write their own labels, captions, messages and simple stories which can be read by themselves and others. They use their phonic knowledge to spell words in ways which match their spoken sounds, and make use of high frequency spellings.	Children can spell phonically regular words of more than one syllable as well as many irregular but high frequency words. They use key features of narrative in their own writing.
Mathematics			
Numbers	Children match and compare the numbers of objects in two groups of up to 5 objects, recognising when the sets contain the same number of objects. They show curiosity about numbers by offering comments or asking questions. They find one more or one less from a group of up to 5 objects.	Children use numbers up to 10 in order to do simple addition and subtraction to solve practical problems. They can find a total by counting on, and can calculate how many are left from a larger number by counting back.	Children estimate a number of objects and check quantities by counting up to 10. They solve practical problems that involve combining groups of 2, 5 or 10, or sharing into equal groups.

Aspect	Emerging	Expected (ELGs)	Exceeding
Shape, space, and measures	Children identify and describe shapes in simple models, pictures and patterns. They can compare properties of objects which are ‘big’ or ‘small’, or their position in relation to one another such as whether one is ‘behind’ or ‘next to’ another.	Children use everyday language to describe and compare size, weight, capacity, time, position and distance. They know and talk about patterns and the properties of flat and solid shapes.	Children estimate, measure, weigh and compare and order objects and talk about properties, position and time.
Understanding the World			
People and Communities	Children can recognise some special times or events in their lives and the lives of others. They know some of the things that make them unique, and can talk about some of the ways they are similar to, or different from their friends or family.	Children talk about past and present events in their own lives and in those of family members. They know that other children don’t always enjoy the same things and are sensitive to this. They know about similarities and differences between themselves and others and amongst families, communities and traditions.	Children know the difference between past and present events in their own lives and some reasons why people’s lives were different in the past. They know that other children have different likes and dislikes and that they may be good at different things. They understand that different people have different beliefs, attitudes, customs and traditions and why it is important to treat them with respect.
The World	Children show an interest in aspects of their familiar world such as the place where they live or the environment. They are curious and interested about why things happen and how things work. They can talk about some of the things they have observed such as plants, animals, natural and found objects.	Children know about similarities and differences in relation to places, objects, materials and living things. They can talk about the features of their own immediate environment and how environments might vary from one another. They can make observations of animals and plants and explain why some things occur, and talk about changes, including in simple experiments.	Children know that the environment and living things are influenced by human activity. They can describe some actions which people in their own community do that help to maintain the area they live in. They know the properties of some materials and can suggest some of the purposes they are used for. They are familiar with basic scientific concepts such as floating, sinking, experimentation.

Aspect	Emerging	Expected (ELGs)	Exceeding
Technology	Children show an interest in technological toys with knobs or pulleys, or real objects such as cameras or mobile phones. They show skill in making toys work by pressing parts or lifting flaps to achieve effects such as sound, movements or new images.	Children recognise that a range of technology is used in places such as homes and schools. They select and use technology for particular purposes.	Children find out about and use a range of everyday technology. They select appropriate applications that support an identified need – for example in deciding how best to make a record of a special event in their lives, such as a journey on a steam train.
Expressive Arts and Design			
Exploring and using media and materials	Children imitate and create movement in response to music, join in dancing games and sing a few familiar songs. They explore and differentiate between colours, begin to describe the texture of things, and create 3D structures.	Children sing songs, make music and dance and experiment with ways of changing them. They use and explore a variety of materials, experimenting with colour, design, texture, shape and form.	Children develop their own ideas through selecting and using materials and working on processes that interest them. Through their explorations they find out and make decisions about how media and materials can be combined and changed.
Being Imaginative	Children create simple representations of events, people and objects. They sing to themselves, explore sounds, and tap out simple repeated rhythms. They engage in imaginative play and role-play based on their experiences.	Children use what they have learned about media and materials in purposeful and original ways. They represent their own ideas, thoughts and feelings through art and design, music, dance, role play and stories.	Children talk about the ideas and processes which have led them to make music, designs, images or products. They can talk about features of their own and others' work, recognising the differences between them and the strengths of each.

Annex 6: Replacement EYFS Profile

Name.....

Age in Months.....

Area of learning	Aspect	Emerging	Expected	Exceeding
Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Self-confidence and self-awareness			
	Managing feelings and behaviour			
	Making relationships			
Physical Development	Moving and handling			
	Health and self-care			
Communication and Language	Listening and attention			
	Understanding			
	Speaking			
Literacy	Reading			
	Writing			
Mathematics	Numbers			
	Shape, space and measures			
Understanding the World	People and communities			
	The world			
	Technology			
Expressive Arts and Design	Exploring and using media and materials			
	Being imaginative			

Learning characteristics	How [name of child] learns
<p>By playing and exploring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● finding out and exploring ● using what they know in their play ● being willing to have a go 	
<p>Through active learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● being involved and concentrating ● keeping on trying ● enjoying achieving what they set out to do 	
<p>By creating and thinking critically</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● having their own ideas ● using what they already know to learn new things ● choosing ways to do things and finding new ways 	

Annex 7: Case studies

Case study 1: Tracking children's progress at Thomas Coram Children's Centre (London)

The centre is keen to ensure that all children, especially the most disadvantaged, make good progress during their time at the children's centre. To do this, they need to know where children are on entry at age 3 and to identify any areas where a child may need additional support or challenge.

Therefore, when parents apply for a place, centre staff ask them if other practitioners are involved with their child – e.g. health visitors, speech therapists, outreach workers etc., and ask for permission to contact them if the child is offered a place. Once the place has been offered, the centre contacts the professionals mentioned and if appropriate they will join staff on a home visit.

The first assessment is made by the parents/carers on the home visit. The *Home Visit Questionnaire* includes a range of questions linked to the EYFS areas of learning and focusing on the sort of experiences practitioners at the centre know promote learning and development in the home. It also includes feedback parents have had from professionals that may have been working with the child. This information is used to plan the child's induction into kindergarten.

During the first month of a child's attendance at the centre, their key person completes the *Entry Profile* which focuses on the aspects of personal, social and emotional development, language for communication and thinking, physical development, and creative development. The evidence for this comes from observation and discussion with the child (in their home language as far as possible), information from parents and feedback from other professionals. This is shared with the parent and, from this, priorities for learning are drawn up for each child for the next few months.

The data from all the children in a cohort is collated. The centre then analyses how well each child is doing looking at expectations for their age and how well they are doing in comparison with their peers and groups within the cohort. For example children from different ethnic minority groups and children identified as in need. Staff use this to

inform plans for individuals and groups of children as well as priorities for children centre development.

The SENCO and Deputy for Inclusion take the lead in arranging additional services for individual children and their families as identified through the analysis.

Since this approach has been introduced, children's attainment has increased and all children are making very good progress from their starting points. In addition, the quality of teaching has improved because of an increase in staff understanding of the needs of each individual child.

Case study 2: Nottinghamshire's Home Talk scheme

The Healthy Child Programme

Nottinghamshire have developed a model for implementing the 2 to 2½ year health and development reviews in the Healthy Child Programme. The children's centre commissioned speech and language therapy service has developed a parent-interview language screen and has trained health visiting teams in its use. Every family receives guidance on communication development by the health visiting team.

A series of colour-coded leaflets have been developed. If the language screen suggests, for example, that play might be an issue, then there is an appropriate leaflet for the health visiting team to talk through with the family. If the areas of receptive language or vocabulary are highlighted red, families are offered enhanced support from a Home Talk Worker (a speech and language therapy trained and mentored children's centre worker). They can provide a package of six home visits to focus on play and language and encourage the family to join in local groups, go to the local library and so on. Any child with an expressive vocabulary of fewer than ten words is referred to the clinical speech and language therapy service.

The impact of this early prevention and intervention system is being closely monitored, to establish how many children subsequently need no further help.

Impact of Home Talk Worker visits to two-year-olds

A small-scale evaluation of work with 14 families identified by the Healthy Child Programme 2 to 2½ year health and development review showed that, for 60% of children, the home support package prevented language delay, and the remaining 40% of children were referred early for speech and language therapy. There has been a significant shift in earlier referrals to clinical speech and language therapy services, even though overall referral rates have remained consistent: i.e. children are being referred closer to

2-years-old rather than later. At the start, no families were accessing support from children's centres, but by the end 57% were accessing support. A larger scale service evaluation is now underway.

Case study 3: Derbyshire screening of speech, language and communication skills

A pilot to screen the speech, language and communication skills of 50 two-year-olds was set up in Derbyshire. A speech and language therapy assistant (SLTA) used a tool that had been developed in the speech and language therapy department to support the universal requirement of health staff to screen children at 2 years of age (Healthy Child Programme, DOH, 2009). The children identified as having speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) or at risk of having SLCN would then be offered visits from the Early Language Lead Practitioners (ELLPS) in the children's centres. These are staff in early years settings who have undergone extensive training and support with an ECAT consultant and Education Improvement Officers from the Derbyshire County Council Education Improvement Service in managing children with SLCN.

The children who took part in the pilot were selected through a number of different routes. The speech and language therapist attended two professional health visitor meetings to explain the pilot and to invite health visiting staff to put forward children for the screen. To ensure that the authority had the full number of participants, the speech and language therapist and the SLTA visited various stay and play groups in the target areas to invite families to take part. The children's centre staff also invited families to take part.

The screen consists of two parts. In the Communication Development part of the screen there are 10 descriptions of behaviours, covering the areas of social interaction, play, understanding of language and expression. The Speech Screen consists of a record sheet and 16 stimulus pictures of items and actions that will be familiar to most 2 year old children. There is a Sound Development Checklist on the form to provide norms of children's speech development.

The screen was carried out on 50 children by the SLTA. Of that sample, 19 children (38%) were identified by the screen as having difficulties in one or more of the following areas: social interaction, play, attention and listening, understanding of language and talking. Of those 19 children, two were then referred to the speech and language therapy service and three were already in the process of being referred.

The outcome of this work was that children with SLCN or at risk of SLCN were being identified earlier and would be having intervention at an earlier stage. The screen was able to identify those children who had a more disordered pattern of development and those children were referred straight to the speech and language therapy service.

The screen also gave a starting point for discussing the child and family's needs with the ELLPs during coaching sessions.

Case study 4: Oldham – Parents and Children Together (PACT) transition project

After analysing ward and local data at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, it was identified that the results for communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development were well below both national and local data.

The children's centre teacher set up and led a meeting for health, special needs, and other partners to come together into a focus group. This model has now been rolled out across the authority as a model of good practice. Through this work we identified that some children were starting school at significantly lower levels than their peers whose needs had been identified and interventions put into place. Some of the issues were around the children's wellbeing, ability to communicate and issues such as toileting. These have a massive impact on children's outcomes.

As a result, all the groups run by the children's centre have a clear focus on communication language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development. Parents are given information about how their child is learning and developing and how they can best support them. Staff model good practice and encourage parents to interact and engage with their child. Families who may need more support or intervention are also identified in these groups and then referred to PACT.

Staff use observations linked to EYFS *Development Matters* and share and talk these through with the parents and children. They discuss the learning and plan for the children's next steps. These are collated in a learning journey which the children then can take with them into school.

To find and support the families who haven't been registered by the children's centre, we worked in partnership with schools and developed a transition project. The schools identify families who may need support and who are not currently accessing any provision. Letters are sent via the school to invite families to join a project 'Getting Ready for School'. The first couple of sessions are run in the school. Families are then signposted to the larger group where activities are run to support the children in

preparation for school. Parents are informed about the importance of talking to their child and following the child's lead in their physical play whilst developing the parents' understanding of brain development.

The impact on children's wellbeing has been dramatic. The learning and development has also made dramatic progress as staff and parents are aware of the next steps for the children and plan appropriately, which again is evidenced in the observations and trackers.

The evidence of children entering school already shows the impact that we have had and this will be shown in the profile data as the children come to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Annex 8: Detailed rationale behind proposals for revised areas of learning

Background

The proposed re-articulation of the areas of learning and educational programmes assumes that the themes, principles and commitments of the EYFS remain as the basis for the framework and therefore do not require further consideration. The following annexes focus solely on the fourth theme, learning and development, and take account of:

- recent research (primarily the findings from a government commissioned literature review: *Early Years Learning and Development* (Evangelou et al, 2009));
- lessons learned from implementing the EYFS, the Every Child a Talker (ECAT) programme and the Communication, Language and Literacy Development (CLLD) programme;
- experience of disseminating and supporting the implementation of National Strategies guidance and resources, notably Social and Emotional Aspects of Development (SEAD) and *Learning, Playing and Interacting*;
- children's achievement and outcomes at the end of the EYFS as measured by the EYFS Profile;
- responses to the call for evidence for the EYFS Review; and
- how children can be best equipped to begin the National Curriculum in Year 1 (i.e. school readiness).

Development and learning

Children's learning and development in the early years has been described as arising from the interplay between the 'inter-connected and dynamic facets of the unique child with surrounding relationships and experiences' (Evangelou, 2009: p23). Although there is a sequence of development which all children follow, the way genetic patterns are expressed is influenced by experiences which trigger and shape both neural connections and learned behaviours. Children's development therefore is seen to occur not in a predictable linear

progression, but in a web of multiple strands with rates of progress varying between children, and subject to influences by factors both within and outside of the child.

Children's learning and development from birth to five occurs as the result of a complex interaction between the child and her/his experiences within relationships, and in the environment. This process is described in the literature as occurring "within the 'interactionist tradition' that conceives of development as located within nested social contexts" (Bronfenbrenner in Evangelou et al 2009). The Bronfenbrenner model is reflected in the themes of the EYFS which positions the unique child at the centre of the framework enabled by positive relationships and enabling environments which support the child's learning and development. All these themes emerge from Bronfenbrenner's three ecological domains: the family, the settings attended and the community in which the child lives.

Elaborating on the Bronfenbrenner model, Myers (1992) (in Evangelou et al 2009) identifies how value systems and beliefs mediate these ecological domains. The central argument here is of the powerful influence of these factors brought together in the social context and impacting on the child's learning. This model is both the backdrop and the underpinning to the re-articulation of the EYFS areas of learning and development.

The model for the areas of learning which is proposed is intended to clarify the complex interactions within children's development and learning:

- Babies and children are active participants rather than passive recipients of adult interaction and the world around them. The ways in which children are agents in their own development are highlighted in the characteristics of effective learning;
- Fundamental aspects of development and learning are present as inborn developmental sequences, which are triggered and supported by environmental experiences including relationships with others. These include developing abilities which enable children to be successful in their learning in all areas, and are represented as the prime areas of learning and development; and
- Other areas of learning are more specific to certain domains of knowledge and skill which are necessary for children's successful engagement in their particular society, and are identified as specific areas of learning and development.

Success in the early years – becoming an effective learner for life

There is a significant body of developmental psychology research which has established the central place of self-regulation in the early years, along with emotional and social aspects of development, as principle determinants of later academic success. Self-regulation is a concept that involves attitudes and dispositions for learning (the motivation, or ‘will’), and an ability to be aware of one’s own thinking (cognitive strategies, or ‘skill’). It also includes managing feelings and behaviour. The development of cognitive and motivational self-regulation – ‘skill’ and ‘will’ – vary among individuals. As in other areas of development, these are highly sensitive to experience and therefore can be enhanced by effective practice in early years settings (Dignath, Buettner and Langfeldt, 2008). It is critical, therefore, to bring into sharp focus the elements of self-regulation which underpin learning across all areas, developing from birth and supporting lifelong learning (Bronson, 2000).

In the following annexes, elements of self-regulation are identified within the prime areas, particularly in personal, social and emotional development (for example, controlling one’s own behaviours, managing emotions, negotiating and planning with others) and communication and language (for example, using talk to support thinking, giving reasons and explanations). Other aspects of self-regulation are included within the characteristics of effective learning, which focus on how rather than what children learn.

Overview of the characteristics of effective learning – how children learn

In addition to the prime and specific areas of learning, this report proposes that a number of characteristics are highlighted, describing factors arising within the child which play a central role in learning, and in becoming an effective learner. These learning characteristics run through and underpin all seven areas of learning and development. As enduring characteristics, pertaining to lifelong learning, they need to be continuously observed and fostered but cannot be described in a developmental sequence.

The strands of the characteristics of effective learning are related to key themes in early childhood development, and are grouped within the EYFS commitments. The proposed characteristics of learning are:

- **Playing and Exploring**
 - Finding out and exploring
 - Using what they know in their play
 - Being willing to have a go

- **Active learning**

- Being involved and concentrating
- Keeping on trying
- Enjoying achieving what they set out to do

- **Creating and Thinking Critically**

- Having their own ideas
- Using what they already know to learn new things
- Choosing ways to do things and finding new ways

The learning characteristics represent processes rather than outcomes. This has implications for assessment. How a child exhibits these characteristics could be observed within formative assessment, in order to better understand the child and support their development as learners; it is not considered appropriate to specify particular ages or stages for the development of learning characteristics, which apply alike to children and adults, nor to assess the extent to which these have been achieved in a summative form. Early learning goals, therefore, have not been developed for the characteristics of learning in the proposed model.

The characteristics underline the 'will', or motivational factors, which enable the learner to employ the effortful control necessary for effective learning (Evangelou, 2009: p5). The will arises naturally within the child, according to theories of intrinsic motivation which describe a natural, inherent drive to seek out challenges and new possibilities. In neuroscience this is related to animal behaviour as 'a spontaneous tendency (of the being) to explore and learn about its environment' in anticipation of rewards. Examples of these anticipatory and satisfaction-seeking behaviours which arouse this system in human beings are 'intense interest', 'engaged curiosity' and 'eager anticipation' (Panksepp, 2005).

Self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985) describes universal, innate human needs for competence and control, as well as for being related to others (Chirkov, Ryan, Kim and Kaplan, 2003). Dweck's work points to the greater success of individuals whose motivation arises from a desire for mastery (Dweck and Leggett, 1988). This is supported by the theories of Bandura (1977) whose notion of self-efficacy describes those who view challenging problems as tasks to be mastered, develop deeper interest in the activities in which they participate, form a stronger sense of commitment to their interests and activities, and recover quickly from setbacks and disappointments. According to Bandura, beliefs and attitudes supporting self-efficacy form in early childhood, while the growth of

self-efficacy continues to evolve throughout life as people acquire new skills, experiences, and understanding (Bandura, 1992).

Children are seen as inherently proactive in developing their potential and acquiring self-regulation; development of positive motivation, however, can be helped or hindered by the social environment (Deci and Vansteenkiste, 2004), which underlines the importance of recognising and fostering these characteristics. The motivational factors are brought to bear in all areas of learning; for example, ‘A crucial aspect of early literacy development is personal autonomy – the clear establishment of a sense of control over one’s learning experiences. According to Whitehead (2004), progress in writing is bound with autonomy and children need to be involved from the start in forming opinions and having views about their own writing successes and difficulties’ (Evangelou, 2009: p35).

Detailed rationale for the characteristics of learning

Playing and exploring – engagement

“Play is the prime context for development.” (Evangelou, 2009: p4) Alongside development in all areas of learning which is enhanced in play, this strand particularly highlights the agency of the child in actively constructing knowledge and understanding through playful qualities of engaging with their environment and with others.

- *Finding out and exploring* is concerned with children’s open-ended, hands-on experiences which result from innate curiosity and provide the raw sensory material from which children build concepts, test ideas, and find out;
- *Using what they know in their play* describes the importance of play as a context for children to bring together their current understandings, flexibly combining, refining and exploring their ideas in imaginative ways. Representing experiences through imaginative play supports development of narrative thought, the ability to see from other perspectives, and symbolic thinking (Evangelou, 2009: p78); and
- *Being willing to have a go* refers to the role of play in children finding an interest, initiating activities, seeking challenge, having a ‘can do’ orientation, being willing to take a risk in new experiences, and developing the view of failures as learning opportunities.

Active learning – motivation

This strand highlights key characteristics which arise from intrinsic motivation to achieve mastery – to experience competence, understanding, and autonomy.

- *Being involved and concentrating* describes the intensity of attention that arises from children concentrating on following a line of interest in their activities. This supports the deep level learning (Ferre Laevers) which should be a goal of early education: 'In enhancing children's thinking, it is more important to aim at depth and not breadth. Deep understanding is more important than superficial coverage.' (Evangelou, 2009: p8);
- *Keeping on trying* refers to the importance of persistence even in the face of challenge or difficulties, an element of purposeful control which supports resilience; and
- *Enjoying achieving what they set out to do* refers to the reward of meeting one's own goals, building on the intrinsic motivation which supports long-term success, rather than relying on the approval of others.

Creating and thinking critically – thinking

Babies and children are thinkers who make sense of their experiences through perceiving patterns and developing concepts. As they engage in activities they actively think about the meaning of what they encounter, and over time begin to develop more awareness of their own thinking (metacognition). Awareness of oneself as a thinker and learner is a key aspect of success in learning (Whitebread and Pasternak, 2010).

- *Having their own ideas* covers the critical area of creativity – of generating new ideas and approaches in all areas of endeavour. Being inventive allows children to find new problems as they seek challenge, and to explore ways of solving these;
- *Using what they already know to learn new things* begins in infancy as babies organise their sensory information to assess patterns and make predictions, with brains generating rules based on small datasets (Evangelou, 2009: p5). Thinking becomes more conscious as concepts are developed and linked together, finding meaning in sequence, in cause and effect, and in intentions of others through both narrative and scientific modes of thought; and

- *Choosing ways to do things and finding new ways* involves approaching goal-directed activity in organised ways, making choices and decisions about how to approach tasks, planning and monitoring what to do, and being able to change strategies. Siegler and colleagues (2005) describe toddlers and young children learning in ‘overlapping waves’ as they choose from older or newer strategies to suit the demands of the task. Recent research identifies that children giving explanations about how they solve a problem learn more than when simply given positive feedback and explaining errors leads to greater learning than explaining why something is correct – suggesting that understanding the processes of how problems are solved is more important than the right answer (Evangelou, 2009: pp51, 79).

Annex 9: Detailed rationale for the prime and specific areas of learning

Reararticulating the areas of learning and development to highlight the centrality of personal, social and emotional development, communication and language and physical development is supported by a review of recent research (Angelou et al 2009), and is intended to better describe the nature of children's fundamental development in interconnected domains. Essentially, children are primed to encounter their environment through relating to and communicating with others, and engaging physically in their experiences.

It is widely agreed by researchers and practitioners that personal, social, and emotional development, physical development, and communication and language are closely linked to one another and are central to all other areas of learning and development. These three interdependent areas represent the earliest stages of development, which begin before birth and continue to occur within the early years when the developing brain has a maximum predisposition for learning.

The distinction between development and learning has engendered many debates. However, Siegel (1999) points out that 'a large number of studies have now clarified this issue and that development should be regarded as the outcome of the impact of experience on inborn genetic potential' (David et al 2003). Therefore these prime areas have been selected to reflect the beginnings of child development since they are critical for influencing later success in life (and learning) and largely transcend cultural differences, emerging as an outcome of early experience.

The identification of these areas as fundamentally important is supported by respondents to the EYFS Review call for evidence. Many respondents supported a focus on personal, social and emotional development (89% of practitioners, 81% of parents) and communication skills (85% of practitioners, 68% of parents) as the bedrock on which everything else is built. Physical development was cited by 40% of respondents as the third most important assessment area after personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy. Many thought physical development was

underemphasised particularly for children from birth to 22 months, and was important because of the health aspect. Respondents mentioned that children needed a great deal of support in physical development to develop skills, including motor control for writing and being able to dress themselves as they develop independence.

Focusing on these prime areas has the potential to bring together health and early years practitioners around a shared model of a child's development and would lead to joint ownership of children's outcomes.

The following paragraphs set out the detailed rationale for the prime and specific areas of learning – the rationale underpinning the aspects of learning is set out in Annex 10.

Personal, social and emotional development

Personal, social and emotional development are three building blocks of future success in life:

- *Personal development* (being me) – how we come to understand who we are and what we can do
- *Social development* (being social) – how we come to understand ourselves in relation to others, how we make friends, understand the rules of society and behave towards others
- *Emotional development* (having feelings) – how we come to understand our own and others' feelings and develop our ability to 'stand in someone else's shoes' and see things from their point of view, referred to as empathy

Starting the process of successful personal, social and emotional development is essential for young children in all aspects of their lives. It helps them to relate well to other children and adults; to make friends and get on with others; to feel secure and valued; to explore and learn confidently; and ultimately to feel good about themselves. Early personal, social and emotional development has a central impact on later wellbeing, learning, achievement and economic circumstances.

There is a biological basis to a child's engagement with others; infants are highly attuned to making contact with those around them, and the nature of the interactions has profound effects on the developing brain (Meltzoff, 2004, Gopnick et al, 1999). Inborn characteristics include temperament, which is affected by the quality of interactions in the process of social development. Babies are vulnerable and totally dependent on others for survival. When they learn that they can depend on and trust one person (usually, but not always, their mother) who is consistently responsive and sensitive to their physical and emotional needs they have what is called a secure attachment.

The quality and security of attachments experienced by a young child can impact on her/his wellbeing either positively or negatively, and a secure attachment can enhance early conscience development, emotional understanding, pro-social understanding and self-regulation. This supports resilience and provides a strong defence against vulnerability. Conversely, children classified as having disorganised/disorientated attachments have been found to have 'substantial problems at school, show extreme levels of aggression and (be) more likely to express substantial fear and dysphoria/ miserable-ness' (Svanberg, P.O, PPT presentation, 2010). In this area, the nature of a child's relationship with a key person in early years settings is crucial: 'children's development is influenced by rich relational experiences that take place both at home and at settings', with research identifying key facets of warmth, contingency, use of talk, recognition of the uniqueness and agency of the child, and mutually responsive relationships (Evangelou, 2009: p76).

Communication and language

As with personal, social and emotional development, babies demonstrate from birth abilities and interest in communicating and depend on interactions with others in order to become confident and effective language users. 'Babies are born as curious learners with finely-tuned brains to attend to sounds around them, and process them as part of their developing understanding of the world.' (Angelou, 2009: p26). From the earliest sensitivities to language, 'All over the world, children begin to acquire language in similar ways as they construct representations of the sounds they hear' (Hoff, 2005). Within the first three years of life, children have laid the groundwork to becoming proficient in language which is the core of their communication with others, and also begins to guide and support their thinking (Angelou, 2009: p25).

Physical development

Children develop physical abilities in a predictable order; these emerging abilities are dependent on experience to become manifest and refined. This is a prime area of learning and development because children engage with the world, supporting all their learning, through movement and physical sensations. In early stages of development all information received is through touch, movement and the senses. As young children begin to develop concepts they define these in terms of movement and space, using schema to repeat and test ideas.

Through physical play children discover and practise skills of co-ordination, control, manipulation and movement, a process which may be restricted in childrearing practices using equipment to support and restrain babies and young children. Children need to be supported in developing an understanding of the importance of physical activity and making healthy choices in relation to food. Sedentary lifestyles at home and in early years

settings can also interfere with optimal physical development, and lead to child health issues along with safety concerns through limiting children's experience of understanding and managing risk through lively physical play.

The relationship between the prime areas

The prime areas of learning and development are integrally connected to each other:

- Personal, social and emotional development supports physical development as a child who feels secure and safe is confident to expand the boundaries of exploration and is motivated to reach, move and test physical capacities; it supports communication and language within relationships which establish turn-taking, joint activity, a desire to communicate and understanding of shared meanings of words;
- Communication and language supports personal, social and emotional development because a child who can communicate feelings, needs and ideas develops a strong sense of self, and is increasingly able to relate to others in rewarding and appropriate ways; it supports physical development through description of actions which increase conscious control and through talk about health and the factors which influence this; and
- Physical development supports personal, social and emotional development as increasing physical control provides experiences of the self as an active agent in the environment, promoting growth in confidence and awareness of control; it supports communication and language because a child who can effectively use large movements, gestures and the fine movements involved in speech is able to convey messages to others.

Extending the prime – the specific areas

Outlining areas of learning and development in a structured framework supports practitioners and parents in understanding the breadth and range of development for each individual child. It is nonetheless important to recall the holistic nature of children's development which occurs across domains 'as complementary and interconnected rather than in isolation' (Evangelou, 2009: p14). The prime areas of learning and development have been described as those which arise universally from the interaction of innate developmental patterns with experiences. These prime areas are fundamental to children's experiences in the specific areas. Children engage in activities which support their learning in specific areas by using their physical, communicative and social abilities, so that in the early years the prime areas are inseparable from all experiences.

The EYFS themes of positive relationships and enabling environments unify the optimal support for children's development across all areas, as there is a 'striking overlap between

findings across domains, especially as they relate to the supportive processes for development, e.g. ‘contingent responding to children’s actions that is attuned to the individuality of the child’ (Evangelou, 2009: p4).

The specific areas provide a context for building on early development and learning beyond the prime areas. The specific areas are dependent on the prime areas and cannot be encountered in isolation from communication and language, personal, social and emotional development, and physical development, since the child is always experiencing the world through emotions, communication and physical and sensory involvement. Literacy, mathematics, understanding the world, and expressive arts and design are areas of learning that support young children’s interest in the world around them and occur most commonly in adult-framed contexts. These specific areas of learning are influenced by the times we live in and societal beliefs about what is important for children to learn.

There are three key differences between the prime and the specific areas of learning which are set out in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Key differences between the prime and the specific areas.

Prime	Specific
Are time-sensitive. If not securely in place by the age of 5, they will be more difficult to acquire and their absence may hold the child back in other areas of learning.	Are less time-sensitive. Specific areas of learning reflect cultural knowledge and accumulated understanding. It is possible to acquire these bodies of knowledge at various stages through life.
Are characterised by their universality. They occur in all socio-cultural contexts.	Are skills and knowledge which are specific to priorities within socio-cultural contexts.
Are not dependent on the specific areas of learning, although the specific areas of learning provide the context for their development.	Are dependent on learning in the prime areas – the specific learning cannot easily take place without the prime.

It is important to note, however, that the prime and specific areas are not conceptualised as ‘first one, then the other’. The relationship between the prime and specific areas of learning is not chronological but symbiotic; the prime areas are necessary but not sufficient. Development does not occur in one domain at a time, but holistically; for example, when babies and children are learning to manipulate objects they are at the same time acquiring basic mathematical concepts such as ‘one’ or ‘more’. They are learning to talk at the same time as they are becoming literate through listening to stories, making marks and engaging with books. Therefore, although development at the very earliest stages may lie predominantly within the prime areas, foundations are being laid within the specific areas of learning. Experiences in specific areas contribute to the prime areas from infancy onwards, just as the prime areas underpin the specific areas.

Hall's (2005) distinction between experience expectant and experience dependent learning is useful in explaining the positioning of personal, social and emotional development, communication and language and physical development as prime areas, and expressive arts and design, mathematics, literacy and understanding the world as specific areas.

Experience expectant learning (prime)

Development in the prime areas emerges through the interaction of genetic potential and experience, as the brain develops connections from the very earliest interactions which children have with their carers and their environment. The prime areas lie within a category which neuroscientists have described as 'experience expectant' learning.

'Experience expectant' learning has been conditioned by our evolutionary development and is where the brain expects certain kinds of input (e.g. Visual, tactile or auditory stimulus) to which it will adapt itself. It is a response to our environment which allows the brain to fine-tune itself, and it may be subject to 'sensitive periods' when the brain is particularly ready to respond to these stimuli, which are ever-present in the environment. (Hall, 2005)

Experience dependent learning (specific)

'Experience Dependent' learning does not have these constraints. It is the type of learning which will only occur if the need arises for it, and tends to be of the sort which features in culturally transmitted knowledge systems. The development of speech is 'experience expectant' in that we all have an evolutionary imperative to learn to communicate by speech, and tend to do so at a particular stage of childhood; but learning to read is culturally determined, 'experience dependent', learning, which will not happen by itself, demands training, and results from cultural and social necessity.' (Hall, 2005)

The specific areas of learning, then, are those which can be thought of as 'experience dependent' and are those where the social and cultural context of children's development is particularly influential. This theoretical conception is further supported in discussion of the work of Vygotsky, 'whose 'socio-constructivist' account of learning describes the influence of the social context on learning' (Evangelou et al p. 12). According to this account children's learning and development is spurred beyond prime areas, which are genetically triggered, through the support of adults to encounter and use cultural 'tools for thinking' which include systems of symbolically representing concepts such as written language, numbers and maps. Whereas the prime areas are universal to all societies, other cognitive tools are determined by their usefulness in a particular society which changes as it develops over time.

Communication, language and literacy: the case for two areas instead of one

The model separates out literacy (reading and writing) from communication and language. Whilst speaking, listening, reading and writing are four interdependent strands (Rose Review, 2006) the development of communication and language skills happens during an optimum window of brain development and is experience expectant (and therefore forms part of the prime), whereas the acquisition of literacy skills is experience dependent since it can occur at any point in childhood or in adulthood. Becoming literate is culturally constrained and relies on learning a body of knowledge including the alphabetic code (i.e. the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics) in the same way that the learning of mathematics largely relies on securing knowledge and understanding of symbolic representation for number. However the structure of the new model does not imply that literacy in its broadest sense should be left to later stages of the EYFS. Babies and very young children enjoy sharing books and mark-making begins at a very young age; these skills need to be fostered from infancy in a climate of talk about reading and writing as a child becomes increasingly aware of the importance of words and letters.

Annex 10: Aspects underpinning the areas of learning

Personal, social and emotional development

The three proposed new aspects of personal, social and emotional development draw on research together with the lessons learned from implementing the National Strategies programme Social and Emotional Aspects of Development (SEAD):

- **Self-confidence and self-awareness** (formerly self-confidence and self-esteem);
- **Managing feelings and behaviour** (formerly behaviour and self-control); and
- **Making relationships and understanding others** (formerly making relationships).

Recent research identifies the centrality of personal, social and emotional capabilities for children's later learning and development. SEAD describes these prime capabilities as self-awareness, managing feelings, empathy, motivation and social skills. The proposed new aspects of personal, social and emotional development link these SEAD areas of learning and development to those already familiar to practitioners in the EYFS. SEAD's 'motivation' (the ability to work towards internal goals, persist with learning and bounce back after difficulties) is also defined within self-regulation and is embedded in the characteristics of learning.

Self-confidence and self-awareness

Within the early years children acquire an understanding of themselves as agents, which supports developing confidence and motivation to engage pro-actively in the world. Since children learn through encountering people, objects and phenomenon, confidence to engage in experiences is a crucial aspect of learning in all areas. This new self-confidence and self-awareness aspect blends the SEAD self-awareness capability with the concept of 'agency' (the belief that what you do can make a difference). It replaces the idea of global self-esteem, which is not as clearly supported by research as confidence and 'agency'.

Making relationships and understanding others

Relating to others is a central aspect of human experience, and in the early years children learn to interact successfully with others, to understand the perspective of others, and to

develop empathy. Socio-constructivist theories of learning describe children being supported to perform beyond their current level of development by more experienced others – adults and peers – so that learning is a social experience. Children who can engage successfully with others have access to a central resource for learning. This new aspect of making relationships and understanding others maps directly to SEAD's empathy and social skills.

Managing feelings and behaviour

Babies and young children are initially supported by others to regulate their feelings, gradually coming to understand basic emotions, develop impulse control and to learn to manage their feelings and display them appropriately. Educational theory and neuroscience suggest that emotional arousal is a primary state which interferes with cognitive engagement, so effective learning depends on the ability to regulate feelings. This new managing feelings and behaviour aspect maps directly to the SEAD 'managing feelings', and is about emotional self-regulation.

Physical development

The proposed two new aspects are:

- **Moving and handling** (formerly movement and space); and
- **Health and self-care** (formerly health and bodily awareness).

Moving and handling

Physical patterns of development and rates of growth are similar for babies and young children, when conditions are optimised. Experience gained during physical activity promotes brain development as well as strengthening muscles and the cardiovascular system. Moving and manipulating also contributes to learning. With each new physical ability – controlling eyes, limbs, neck, being able to sit up unaided, becoming mobile – the baby sees the world in a different way, and is able to test and refine ideas from previous perceptions. Being able to explore through movement enables a baby to make a mental image or map of their surroundings, so they feel secure and know where to find their familiar carer. Large muscle control develops before fine motor skill, and young children use large muscle activity to embody ideas.

This sequence can be employed to enable children to use large muscle activity to explore, for instance, tracing shapes in the air which develop familiarity with writing movements which will later become manageable in finer movements for handwriting. Being able to manipulate materials is crucial to developing understanding; for instance, young children develop greater mathematical awareness of the properties of shape and of number

through handling objects than through simply observing representations or through formal instruction (Aubrey, 2003; Streri, 2005).

Moving and handling describes the importance of gross and fine motor skills in children's physical development. It includes handwriting, since the tripod grip and necessary wrist control are dependent on physical development and are not part of the knowledge of phoneme/grapheme correspondence necessary for making meaning in writing English. Many children (especially boys) are able to compose spellings to build words and construct sentences but are not able to marshal all the physical skills and hand-eye co-ordination necessary to write, so their handwriting skills do not accurately represent their compositional writing skills. The case for developing the necessary physical skills required for handwriting is elaborated in the Ofsted report, *Reading by Six: 'Teaching handwriting, however, is about helping children to develop and refine the physical movements they need to create letters and sequences of letters. Handwriting comprises a set of kinaesthetic rather than visual skills and, although there is a close relationship with teaching phonics, it requires separate teaching'*. Ofsted (2010, paragraph 67: p30).

Health and self-care

Children begin to understand more about health and their own bodies through engaging in physical play, having a balanced diet and learning about healthy eating. When children have healthy experiences in a setting where there are opportunities for energetic play, for quiet contemplation and for bodily relaxation, they develop understanding of how physical activities, food and drink, sleep, safety and hygiene are vital to life. As physical skills develop, children can engage in activities that build their ability to act independently in their environments – managing eating, toileting, and dressing. Physical play in hazard-free environments which still satisfy children's natural desires for challenge allows them to take risks without compromising their safety (Evangelou, 2009: p 73) and supports children developing awareness of keeping themselves safe.

Health and self-care supports young children to be healthy and stay safe. Self-care is more appropriate here than in personal, social and emotional development, where it was duplicated in the existing structure. Developing a healthy lifestyle is important for young children in the 21st century, with increased risks to their wellbeing associated with obesity, junk food, and sedentary lifestyles. Learning to keep safe is an important element in the face of limitations imposed by a risk-averse society.

Communication and language

The proposed three new aspects are:

- **Listening and Attention** (formerly language for communication);

- **Understanding** (formerly language for thinking); and
- **Speaking** (formerly language for thinking).

The new aspects in both communication and language and personal, social and emotional development take account of recent research which recognises the importance of conversation and narrative in children's learning and development. The three new aspects of communication and language focus on the strands of language development which are critical for later success and are drawn from experience of implementing the National Strategies Every Child a Talker (ECAT) programme. Focusing on listening and attention and separating receptive language (understanding) from expressive language (speaking) has been very effective in helping practitioners in ECAT settings to understand better how language develops, how best to support it and how to identify children at risk of language delay.

Listening and attention

Being able to focus attention is a developmental ability underlying the acquisition of language. Experience with Every Child a Talker (ECAT) indicates that this has not been widely understood in the early years sector as a foundation of developing language, and that children's language development can be enhanced by adults supporting children to focus their attention effectively. Clearly, being able to attend is a necessary skill supporting learning across all areas, and is recognised as an aspect of cognitive self-regulation (Whitebread and Pasternak, 2010). Listening and attention also underlies the development of phonetic and phonemic awareness which support reading and writing development.

Understanding

Developing comprehension is supported within contingent interactions, where adults scaffold the development of receptive vocabulary through gesture and known references to help children interpret spoken language. This again has been found in ECAT to be an area that has been little understood by practitioners, who often assume that a child who is following gesture alone or following observed routines has understood the spoken word. It is necessary to build a large receptive vocabulary and to understand the meaning of complex statements, questions, and linked sentences, in order to support reading comprehension and learning across all areas (Hirsch 1996, 2003).

Speaking

As children learn to talk, they are empowered to participate fully with others – to express their needs and feelings, their views and ideas. 'Conversation is a prime context for development of children's language, thinking, but also their emotions', confirming,

elaborating and extending understanding (Evangelou, 2009: p4). The role of talk in shaping thought has been addressed by developmental psychologists, and is expressed in terms of cognitive self-regulation – extending from ‘private speech’ which supports children to control their thinking and solve problems, to articulate reasoning, and talk about their thinking and learning. Children need to acquire the ability to express their feelings and thoughts in spoken language as a precursor to using written language for similar purposes to support learning in all areas.

Literacy

The two proposed aspects of literacy are:

- **Reading** (including the former Linking Sounds and Letters); and
- **Writing** (including the former Linking Sounds and Letters).

These new aspects represent a distillation of the existing four aspects with linking sounds and letters being subsumed into reading and writing, while handwriting has been incorporated into physical development.

Linking sounds and letters is concerned with knowledge of the alphabetic code. Since the inception of the communication, language and literacy programme, children’s attainment in this scale has increased by 12 percentage points, but this is not reflected in similar improved attainment in reading and writing. Experience has shown that one of the stumbling blocks for children and practitioners is the application of phonic knowledge and skills to reading and writing. Many children grasp the grapheme-phoneme correspondences in isolation but are not able to, or lack opportunity to, apply their skills in meaningful ways. Thus the new aspects incorporate the acquisition of phonic knowledge and skills with its application to reading and writing.

Mathematics

The two new proposed aspects are:

- **Numbers** (formerly two aspects – numbers as labels and for counting, and calculating); and
- **Shape, space and measures.**

Numbers conflates two existing scales in order to reflect the same experience and processes as that for linking sounds and letters, reading and writing. Evidence from EYFS Profile results in recent years illustrates that many children are able to recognise numbers and numerals but the same picture of attainment is not reflected in the application of this

knowledge to solving problems with numbers. The new aspect would therefore promote the acquisition of number knowledge along with the skill of calculating.

The aspects of mathematics contain some of the key mathematical skills that children will use throughout the rest of their lives, including telling the time. A significant factor in children's understanding of mathematics is the ability to talk about and apply their knowledge in ways that make common sense to them.

Understanding the World

The three proposed aspects are:

- **People and communities** (formerly time and communities);
- **The world** (formerly place); and
- **Technology.**

Understanding the world has been developed from the existing area, knowledge and understanding of the world. It has an increased emphasis on the concentric approach to learning and is a recognition that children learn first about themselves and the people and things that are important to them. It then focuses on the inter-relationship of people and communities and of living and non-living things, together with the influence of time and place on the environment and tradition. The focus on children using a computer in ICT has been broadened. This is to reflect the fact that through continuing developments in technology young children are often conversant with a broader range of applications and technological devices than formerly.

Previously, learning about cultures and beliefs appeared in both personal, social and emotional development, as well as knowledge and understanding of the world. The proposed aspects remove this duplication. Bringing together these strands of the complex area of cultures and beliefs will ensure that children's learning is grounded in their own experiences, and that their growing understanding of cultures and beliefs is informed by the reality of their own and other people's lives and of the different communities they encounter as they engage with the world.

The existing aspect, exploration and investigation, has been subsumed into the characteristics of learning because these areas largely focus on ways of learning rather than skills and knowledge. Designing and making has been transferred into expressive arts and design because there is a stronger 'fit' with that area since much of young children's early expression focuses on making and doing as part of exploring materials and developing a creative response to their experiences.

Expressive arts and design

The two proposed aspects are:

- **Exploring and using media and materials** (formerly being creative – responding to experiences, expressing and communicating ideas); and
- **Being imaginative** (formerly creating music and dance, and developing imagination and imaginative play).

Expressive arts and design builds from the existing area of learning, creative development. Reducing the number of aspects does not reduce the breadth of this wide-ranging area; rather it focuses attention more clearly on children’s experiences of exploring and learning about creative and artistic expression in parallel with their desire to express and represent their experiences in diverse ways.

Creating music and dance has been subsumed into being imaginative. This is to ensure that these forms of expression are not seen as separate or an add-on to other art forms but are a central part of children’s aesthetic experiences – both in terms of their exposure to hearing and creating music and to seeing and creating dance and movement.

Developing imagination and imaginative play has also been subsumed into this new aspect to ensure that imaginative and symbolic play are recognised as important elements which reflect the insights, ideas and experiences of children and support children’s ability to see things from another person’s point of view.

