



Sarah Teather MP

Minister of State for Children and Families

Sanctuary Buildings Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0870 0012345 ministers@education.gsi.gov.uk

Dame Clare Tickell
Action for Children
85 Highbury Park
London
N5 1UD

5th July 2010

Dear dame,

Review of the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework

I am delighted that you have agreed to lead a review of the early years framework, and I will be announcing today that I have asked you to take on this role. Your knowledge of the needs of children and families, as well as your focus on tackling disadvantage, means that you are well placed to look at how the framework can be improved to best support young children.

Children develop incredibly quickly in their first years of life. They begin learning in infancy, long before formal schooling begins. Research shows that differences between children from different social backgrounds are evident as early as 22 months and that children from deprived backgrounds are overtaken by lower achieving children from advantaged backgrounds by age 5. It is widely known that the quality of care and support for early learning that young children receive can make a real difference to their later outcomes.

As you know, parents can face considerable challenges balancing their work and family commitments, particularly in this difficult economic climate. Childcare plays a crucial role in helping parents to meet these challenges – and as Government, it is our responsibility to help each and every child, and particularly disadvantaged children, to achieve their full potential.

I recognise that the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) has helped to promote a focus on early learning and development for children aged 0 – 5 across the sector, and done much to raise standards. However I know that for some it has greatly increased the things they have to do, and so has taken

time away from children. It is perceived by others as not flexible enough to support different approaches, and the complexity of the EYFS profile is also causing concern.

Children and their families should be at the heart of any new early years framework. I want such a framework to be clear about how professionals can best support children's early learning, particularly in preparation for formal schooling. It must ensure that the right foundations are in place to protect children's welfare, and support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. I want a framework which is flexible enough to allow for professional judgement and fosters a diverse and flexible childcare market.

I would like the review to be open and outward facing and take into account the best independent evidence about how children learn and develop. It is important that the review takes into account the wide range of views and issues in the following key areas: scope of regulation; learning and development requirements; assessment arrangements; and the welfare requirements.

I would like you to work with early years practitioners, other experts in the early years, parents, and carers to consider these areas. I would also like you to consider throughout how to reduce the burden of the EYFS on those who have to deliver it. Some examples of issues you might like to address are:

Scope of Regulation

- Should we move away from a single framework for all early years providers, or can one framework be flexible enough to incorporate different approaches?
- Should the requirement to comply with a statutory framework be linked in any way to receipt of public funding for the free entitlement for 3- and 4-year-olds?
- How could practitioners identify any additional needs of children, including SEN or disability, and support early intervention?

Learning and Development Requirements

- What does the evidence tell us about how children are best supported in their early learning? What are the implications of this evidence for the approach taken to support children of different ages?
- Based on evidence about what promotes all aspects of children's wellbeing, learning and development from age 0 - 5, how should they best be prepared to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by more formal learning in primary school?
- In the context of the above, should we continue to have early learning goals, and if so how should these be framed?

Assessment Arrangements

- How should young children's development be best assessed?
- What should the balance be between formal and ongoing assessment? How might assessment be used to identify and support the neediest families?
- What information do parents, carers and families need about their child's development?

Welfare Requirements

- What does good welfare look like? What should the minimum standards of welfare be across all settings to protect young children's welfare, both ensuring their safety and supporting their healthy development?

The Department will provide you with the necessary support to run this review. I would welcome interim advice on the progress of the review, which should be followed by a final report in spring 2011. We would then consult on any proposed changes which arise from your review, with a view to implementation from September 2012.

Best wishes



Sarah Teather MP
Minister of State for Children and Families