

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

Consultation Response Form

The closing date for this consultation is: 23
December 2011

Your comments must reach us by that date.

THIS FORM IS NOT INTERACTIVE. If you wish to respond electronically please use the online response facility available on the Department for Education e-consultation website (<http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations>).

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.

Reason for confidentiality:

Name	c/o Dr Jane Payler
Organisation (if applicable)	TACTYC – Association for the Professional Development of Early Years Educators
Address:	c/o 33 Betteridge Drive, Rownhams, Southampton, SO16 8LE

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can telephone: 0370 000 2288 or e-mail: FYQ.Evidence@education.gsi.gov.uk

If you have a query relating to the consultation process you can contact the CYPFD Team by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the Department's ['Contact Us'](#) page.

PART 1: About you

Please indicate one category which best describes you as a respondent:

<input type="checkbox"/> Parent/carer	<input type="checkbox"/> Early education/childcare manager	<input type="checkbox"/> Early education/childcare practitioner
<input type="checkbox"/> Early education/childcare employer/owner	<input type="checkbox"/> Early education/childcare training provider	<input type="checkbox"/> Early education/childcare trainee
<input type="checkbox"/> Person considering a career in early years	<input type="checkbox"/> Careers adviser	<input type="checkbox"/> Other early education/childcare professional
<input type="checkbox"/> Union/professional representation	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)	

Please Specify:

TACTYC is the Association for the Professional Development of Early Years Educators. We have over 450 members, including academics, local authority officers and practitioners in both maintained and non-maintained sectors. Our aims are to promote the highest quality professional development for all UK early years educators in order to enhance the educational well-being of the youngest children.

Our activities include:

- **advocacy and lobbying** - providing a voice for all those engaged with the professional development of practitioners through responding to early years policy initiatives and contributing to the debate on the education and training of the UK early years workforce;
- **informing** – developing the knowledge-base of all those concerned with early years education and care by disseminating research findings through our international [Early Years Journal](#), annual conference, website and occasional publications;
- **supporting** – encouraging informed and constructive discussion and debate and supporting practitioner reflection, the use of evidence-based practice and practitioner-research through, for example, our [Newsletter](#) and Website (www.tactyc.org.uk).

Please indicate one category which best describes the setting in which you work or have contact:

<input type="checkbox"/> Children's centre	<input type="checkbox"/> School	<input type="checkbox"/> Maintained nursery school
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<input type="checkbox"/> Nursery class attached to a school	<input type="checkbox"/> Reception class	<input type="checkbox"/> Private nursery
<input type="checkbox"/> Day nursery attached to a children's centre	<input type="checkbox"/> Playgroup or pre-school	<input type="checkbox"/> Community nursery
<input type="checkbox"/> Special needs provision	<input type="checkbox"/> Childminder	<input type="checkbox"/> Nanny/Au pair
x Other (please specify)		

Please Specify:
 We are a professional early years association with over 450 members and a focus on practitioner development.

Please select the highest level early years, childcare or other relevant qualification you hold or are working towards and give details:

<input type="checkbox"/> No qualification	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 (e.g. GCSE, Level 2 NVQ)	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 (e.g. A-Level, Advanced GNVQ, Level 3 NVQ)
<input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 (e.g. Certificate of Higher Education)	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 5 (e.g. Foundation Degree)	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 6 (e.g. Honours Degree/EYPS)
<input type="checkbox"/> Level 7 (e.g. postgraduate qualification, Masters Degree)		

Please Specify:
 Our Executive Committee and members have a wide range of qualifications including PhDs.

PART 2: Your priorities

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

Comments:

1. Understanding of holistic development, play and a reflective approach
2. Respectful, skilled, interested, affectionate and playful relationships
3. Time to interact and respond sensitively to individuals and small groups of children

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

Comments:

1. Professionalism with high quality understanding, knowledge, experience and skill in working with parents, as equal partners, to meet children's needs.
2. To support and extend the child's individual holistic development and learning with care and affection, understanding the central importance of relationships.
3. Empathy and flexibility.

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

Comments:

Holistic child development from birth to age 7, including influences on development during pregnancy and birth.

Diverse lifestyles and opportunities (cultural, social, economic) and influences of these on child development.

Practical strategies for supporting development and learning appropriate to individual child's needs (how children learn through play; opportunities for supporting development through care and interaction)

Safeguarding

Ability to communicate and work with others

Ability to reflect on practice and develop their skills and knowledge

How to help children enjoy their childhood through play and playful learning experiences

It would be helpful to ensure Level 3 Diploma qualification has broad parity in terms of volume of study and academic demand with at least two 'A' or AS levels – otherwise progression to University undergraduate courses may be difficult.

Whilst a level of commonality with other fields and age phases for work across the children's workforces is helpful, the current diploma structure tends to emphasise transferable and common core skills at the expense of the specialist knowledge and skills required for work with very young children. This would benefit from rebalancing so that at least half the qualification is comprised of compulsory modules that are focused on birth-5 age range and options should allow for some further specialisation.

It is important to ensure placements or work-experience requirements are of sufficient duration and quality to enable students to develop and demonstrate effective practice, both under constant supervision and as an independent practitioner commensurate with the expectations of a level 3.

It is important to ensure there are substantial written element requirements that combine evidence of an appropriate level of knowledge and understanding and have relevance and currency to the workplace; in other words, observations, reports or reflective accounts of practice may be preferable to purely academic essays, but they must include a sufficient length and level of demand in written expression to prepare students for further progression.

PART 3: The five key themes

Status

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

Comments:

There is a lack of awareness of how important it is to stimulate babies' and young children's learning and development – generally, interacting with babies and young children is not seen to be vital to their present wellbeing and future place in society.

There is also a lack of awareness of how education and training in recent years has up-skilled the workforce and an underestimation of the depth of knowledge where this has taken place. There is still some perception that it is employment for poorly educated, basically trained low-paid women – little more than babysitting.

However, many parents, who have a closer relationship with their nurseries, children's centres and pre-schools, appreciate and trust staff. The following developments have helped to bring about some change in perception: children's centres, workforce development and the influence of EYFS.

Whilst the workforce is in a low-pay situation, poor perceptions will continue.

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

Comments:

It is vital to raise the public's awareness and understanding of the importance of babies and young children's developmental needs if they are to understand the requirement for highly trained professionals to work and play with them. For too long in England, early years has been seen to be peripheral to other stages of education. It needs to be firmly planted in the public psyche that what happens to children in the early years establishes the basis for all that follows in terms of dispositions to learning, behaviours and self-image.

CWDC missed an important opportunity to educate the general public, and parents in particular, about the investment and training that was taking place for staff in early years when the initial years of funding for EYPS were underway. Instead, the money was devolved to local level for training providers to market their courses. Consequently, each training provider was trying to market its courses without a national level shift in the image of the workforce. This needs to be rectified now; if we can help parents to understand the link between high quality staff and children's development and learning, they will help to drive the push to raise the qualifications and status of the workforce. Government leadership needs to be very visible.

It would help if the general public had a clearer idea of the level and content of

qualification and experience that many people in early years possess. See further details on our views of the early years team under question 25 below. Keeping the general public informed of how important education and training of the workforce is will help to improve the public's perception.

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

Comments:

Children's workforce is a good collective term, but there is no easy singular term.

The early years sector has a multi-disciplinary workforce and it is difficult to capture the breadth of experience, roles and training in one title. It seems sensible that first there should be clarity on career structures with linked required qualifications. Titles that adequately describe these can then follow. However, titles should adequately encompass the work with the full age range of children and should encompass care, development and learning. In the interim, we feel that early years practitioner and early years educator have the potential to be generic terms, while early years professional and early years teacher have come to describe specific roles.

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

<input type="checkbox"/> Very well	<input type="checkbox"/> Well	<input type="checkbox"/> Adequately
<input type="checkbox"/> / Not well	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all well	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure

There appears to be a huge variation depending on level of qualification, type of training and place of training.

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

Comments:

Some staff with NVQs appear to have little understanding of theoretical underpinnings, limited understanding of the full span of child development (age and range) or the importance of play to early development and limited experience outside one setting.

Early years professionals (EYPS) vary in their capabilities, skills and understandings from different training providers. There is a similar variation dependent upon the individual, training provider and setting in which the practitioner finds him/herself. Practitioners who are trained within a single workplace can find it difficult to consider alternative practices; staff benefit from having time in different placements.

Staff should be expected to bridge their learning from the theoretical level to the practical and this needs careful thought and preparation by the provider of the qualification.

Multiagency training is useful as practitioners from different part of the children's workforce hear each other's views and understandings, particularly if this involves parents. The Early Support model of training is interesting as a trainer co-trains with a parent and this really helps practitioners understand the family perspective. Mixed groups of practitioners work well – teachers, early years nursery nurses and childminders together – as this promotes greater equality and understanding of other people's roles. However desirable, it is not always easy to implement such practices.

***THE REMAINING QUESTIONS IN PART 3 ARE AIMED AT PRACTITIONERS.
IF YOU ARE A PARENT OR CARER, YOU DO NOT NEED TO ANSWER
THESE.***

9 How well do you rate the general standard of delivery of qualifications and training courses?

<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory
<input type="checkbox"/> Poor	<input type="checkbox"/> Very poor	/ Too varied to say
<input type="checkbox"/> No recent experience of course delivery	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	

Comments:

Incentives and targets need to be handled very carefully in education and training. It must be possible for educators and assessors to fail or refer back for further training students who they consider not to be (as yet) of the required standard, even if they are currently working in settings.

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

Comments:

Some staff with NVQs appear to have little understanding of theoretical underpinnings, limited understanding of the full span of child development (age and range), the theory and practices of play-based learning and limited experience outside one setting. There needs to be a blend of underpinning knowledge, skills, interpersonal capabilities and practical application across different sites and with different children across the full baby, toddler, young child and reception age range.

Coherence and inclusivity

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

/ Too many About right Not enough
 Not sure

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

Yes

No

Not sure

Comments:

There has not been the requirement to experience different types of settings with different children across the age range. This is limiting to individual's professional development.

There has been wide variation in the ways in which training for EYPS, for example, has been delivered. Additionally, the assessment methods must be valid and reliable. Not requiring new graduate entrants for EYPS (a licence to practice and to lead the practice of others) to have their hands-on practice observed and assessed was a great shortfall that some training providers addressed by building it into their training programmes themselves formatively – and others did not. It would be unthinkable for any other form of care and education (e.g. teaching, nursing) to have assessment that did not include observation of practice and it should be the same for EYPS.

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

Yes

No

/ Not sure

Comments:

Its history explains its current demographic profile. Change the funding, career structure, terms and conditions of service, education/training requirements and the demographic profile will change alongside them.

A reasonable pay structure needs to be introduced: we cannot hope to retain and encourage *any* graduates - male or female - to the EYs workforce with the current pay levels and conditions of service.

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

Yes

No

/ Not sure

Comments:

See above

The National Childcare Strategy did much to raise awareness of the need to improve inclusivity and diversity in the early education and childcare workforce. Although there was some improvement locally, it fell short nationally of making any major inroads into the problem. Good practice examples in Nottingham City and other areas were published by the DfES at the time: these should be further utilised. For example, the multiplicity of language and culture of children in early education and childcare settings and their families should be reflected in the trainers who provide workforce training.

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

Yes

No

/ Not sure

Comments:

Insufficient attention is paid to preparing early years staff to work inter-professionally. It is talked about and 'required', but inadequately addressed. One way to improve this would be to introduce a mandatory 'exchange' element into CPD.

The whole system is too complex and needs simplification: in itself, this move might well attract more people to work with young children. If you don't know whether you're a 'teacher', an 'educator', a 'professional', a 'nursery worker' or whatever, this can be very disconcerting for those considering a career in early education.

Career pathways and progression

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

Very well

Well

Adequately

Not well

/ Not at all well

Not sure

Comments:

The Common Core is a useful framework as a basic requirement for all working in the children's services workforce, but is **not** a full training for any one thing. There are limited opportunities for career progression beyond the early education and care workforce at present.

'Existing' frameworks do not exist for long enough. We must offer the workforce some stability and currency of their qualifications. Otherwise as soon as people achieve a qualification it is perceived to be devalued by another one that finds its place onto another framework (see also comment in 15 above).

Revisiting the Common Core is essential. This must be done by professionals from the range of professionals who work with young children in early education and care. A Common Core should provide the basis of foundational learning for all who want to work with young children so that on completion of the Common Core stage/modules they may then choose a specific career pathway. At a later stage practitioners could then fall back on their Common Core learning to support transition from, for example, working in a nursery to working with 'Looked After' children.

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

Yes, I think this is vital

Yes, this seems sensible

No

/ Not sure

Comments:

This would need to be very carefully thought-through and must **not** be at the expense of early years staff gaining a full grounding in **early years** child development, play and strategies for supporting healthy development and learning. For example, learning about the full birth-18 age range could crowd the curriculum such that depth on early years elements is lost. The Common Core is a useful basis for just that: a common *basic foundation* for further full training to a particular professional/vocational path.

We need to look at other 'professions' to see how they handle cross-disciplinary education and training and apply the same principles to early education.

18 Do you think clear career pathways and progression routes exist?

Yes

/ No

Not sure

Comments:

Although salaries and terms and conditions of service are outside the remit of the Review, they cannot be ignored as they form an important structure for career pathways and progression. On the whole, we feel that the whole issue of career pathways and progression has not been given the attention it deserves if we are to attract, recruit and retain the high quality personnel we need in early years education and care.

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

Yes

/ No

Not sure

Comments:

People outside the profession appear to have little understanding of career possibilities in early years and what a successful career entails. This is not surprising, given our comments in 18 above. Anecdotal evidence still abounds of schools directing their lowest achieving students towards early years and those with higher academic achievements towards other careers.

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

Yes

No

/ Not sure

Comments:

These have been available in the past 6 years or so, but local authorities report that funding such opportunities is reducing rapidly. This is worrying given that a new curriculum framework is due to be in place in Sept 2012.

We would also wish to comment on the content of the 'training' courses: we do not feel that it is sufficient to demonstrate to early years practitioners HOW something should be done but to establish WHY this particular strategy or practice is important to babies and children. The outcomes of a 'how' system are clear in recent TACTYC research exploring children's experiences in reception classes, which shows that, whilst practitioners feel intuitively that play is important for children, high quality play practices are rarely seen in reception classes because of a lack of underlying understanding of *why* children play and what they can achieve developmentally and academically through play.

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

Comments:

'Cover' payments to settings to backfill, finance to pay for course attendance and finding appropriate times for training if staff are working 50 weeks a year in settings that are open for long hours. Cross-disciplinary CPD can be particularly beneficial.

It is important, as we have suggested in 20 above, that early years practitioners receive a more in-depth education about their roles and the impact on children, rather than superficial training.

Standards

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

/ Yes

No

Not sure

Comments:

See answers to several questions above.

Systems should encourage critical reflection on the part of training providers, but should also include some element of external assessment against rigorous well-defined standards.

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

Comments:

Nurseries are inspected without warning. The same should be true for training providers. Years ago, BTEC discussed the use of what was called the Moderating Instrument. This involved applying an assessment of knowledge and practice randomly to students from training providers. This, or a similar model, might be reconsidered.

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

Comments:

It involved the recognition of the importance of care *and* education, including health aspects, for babies, toddlers and preschool children (i.e. the full age range included), different work experience placements including K&U and experience with children with additional needs, theoretical underpinnings, assessment of practice through observation and national externally-set examinations. There is much of value here to replicate.

This qualification gave status to those who received it because it was valued across the board in early education. Everyone knew what it was and what it stood for. This does not apply to the current diversity of piece-meal qualifications.

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

Comments:

Make it a **requirement** within a reasonable time span, rather than just a desirable aim. There had been good progress towards achieving this target. It should remain a target.

However, we would like to add that we consider it important that we have a graduate workforce as soon as possible, as for other sectors of the care and education workforce, and not just at management level. In a supervised team of staff, those without degrees should be level 3 practitioners. Out-of-ratio ancillary staff without level 3 have a valuable role to play, but should not be left alone with children. As part of the team, they can be good role models of inclusion.

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

Yes

No - too difficult

No - shouldn't be a priority

Not sure

Comments:

We know that this shift is making a positive difference to practice, but that this is mainly with children aged 3-5 years. It needs to be extended to ensure improved practice with babies and toddlers, too; the most vulnerable groups are often staffed by the lowest qualified (see for example research by Dr. Kathy Gooch and Dr. Sacha Powell, 'The Baby Room Project', Canterbury Christ Church University). This is unacceptable.

PART 4: Your further thoughts and suggestions

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

Comments:

There is a desperate need to rationalise the qualifications currently on offer and to ensure that graduates lead the curriculum and practice in all early years settings.

28 Please let us have your views on responding to this consultation (e.g. the number and type of questions, was it easy to find, understand, complete etc.).

Comments:

This consultation has provided the opportunity to respond to some important and well-formulated questions, unlike many government-inspired response formats, for which we are grateful.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply /

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

/Yes No

All DfE public consultations are required to conform to the following criteria within the Government Code of Practice on Consultation:

Criterion 1: Formal consultation should take place at a stage when there is scope to influence the policy outcome.

Criterion 2: Consultations should normally last for at least 12 weeks with consideration given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible.

Criterion 3: Consultation documents should be clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals.

Criterion 4: Consultation exercises should be designed to be accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the exercise is intended to reach.

Criterion 5: Keeping the burden of consultation to a minimum is essential if consultations are to be effective and if consultees' buy-in to the process is to be obtained.

Criterion 6: Consultation responses should be analysed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation.

Criterion 7: Officials running consultations should seek guidance in how to run an effective consultation exercise and share what they have learned from the experience.

If you have any comments on how DfE consultations are conducted, please contact Carole Edge, DfE Consultation Co-ordinator, tel: 01928 738060 / email: carole.edge@education.gsi.gov.uk

Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 23 December 2011.

Send by post to: CYPFD Team, Department for Education, Area 1C Castle View House, East Lane, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 2GJ.

Send by e-mail to: FYQ.Evidence@education.gsi.gov.uk