 

**Submission to the Education Select Committee and Work and Pensions Committee**

**on behalf of Early Education (the British Association for Early Childhood Education) and TACTYC (the Association for Professional Development in Early Years)**

**Joint Inquiry on Foundation years and the UK Government’s life chances strategy**

1. Early Education is a national charity advocating for high quality early education, and supporting early years practitioners in developing their practice. We have members from across the early years sector. TACTYC is a membership-based organisation which provides a voice for all those engaged with the professional development of practitioners, informs, and encourages informed discussion and debate and the development of evidence-based practice.

2. We welcome the joint inquiry and its recognition of the importance of high quality early childhood education for children’s life chances.

**The relationship between early years education and the life chances strategy**

3. Government has indicated its intention to move away from measuring poverty in economic terms and instead to monitor educational attainment at 16, numbers of children living in workless households and a range of other indicators, yet to be announced.

4. In relation to the early years, we know that high quality early childhood education can have a positive impact on children’s later life chances (Bertram & Pascal, 2015), although it alone is not sufficient to counter the negative impact of poverty and disadvantage. We also know that children in disadvantaged areas are likely to have less access to high quality early childhood education (Mathers & Smees, 2014). There is therefore a need for indicators to be available to track whether measures intended to tackle the impact of disadvantage, such as the Early Years Pupil Premium, are having an impact.

5. The sole measure currently available is nationally collected data from the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) (at age 5), both in the form of the “Good Level of Development” and scores in each Area of Learning. This is widely used at national and local authority level, by both health and education officials, to monitor trends in relation to learning and development at age 5, including to compare the progress of the most disadvantaged children with their peers. After July 2016, the profile will become non-statutory and this national dataset will no longer be available.

6. We are concerned that there will be no effective replacement for it. It is not yet known what data may be available, or to whom, in relation to baseline assessment in Reception (at age 4), but as this is a non-statutory assessment it will not be available for all children; the pilot in 2015-16 has involved a choice of three commercial providers, and the degree of comparability between these has yet to be established. It is also considerably narrower in scope than the EYFSP, and is designed to deliver a single combined score rather than separate scores for each area of learning, as currently delivered by the EYFSP. It therefore looks unlikely that it could provide anywhere near as rich and flexible a dataset. We believe the EYFSP should remain statutory unless and until an alternative dataset is validated and available.

7. There is speculation that government may consider some form of “school readiness check” as an alternative to baseline assessment.  Whether the government opts for this, or an alternative form of baseline assessment, or retains the EYFSP, we would argue that it must take account of the evidence that shows children’s long term outcomes to be more accurately predicted by measures of cognitive and emotional self-regulation (Whitebread, 2014), oral language development (Whitebread et al, 2015) and play and playfulness (Hughes et al, 2015) than by narrow measures of literacy.  We would encourage the inquiry to consider the evidence base for the choice of life chances indicators for the early years accordingly.

**References**

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