**TACTYC Report**

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**Key findings:**

* The recent TACTYC survey attracted a positive response rate from members, but a poor response from non-members.
* There is a narrow demographic to TACTYC’s current membership. The majority are 45 years and over and working in higher education.
* There is an under-representation within the membership of some UK regions, of some ethnicities and age groups.
* TACTYC’s activity is reflective of its predominant membership, but could perhaps be more representative of the sector through a greater diversity of its activity.
* Members identify TACTYC as a distinct voice within early years advocacy, which holds collaborative potential, either with other early years organisations, with professionals in practice, and potentially geographically.
* Members value membership for a sense of ‘belonging’, support and community.

**Points for consideration:**

* TACTYC could benefit from some publicity to promote awareness of its existence, and its activity.
* TACTYC may wish to consider whether to broaden the nature of its membership to reflect more widely those for whom early years professional development is relevant.
* TACTYC may wish to consider in what ways its current activities represent the needs of those that it wishes to attract
* TACTYC will need to consider what it is able to achieve with its available resources
* **TACTYC activity used most by members:** The ‘Early Years’ journal, occasional papers and TACTYC commissioned research papers were used by the vast majority of survey respondents. Newsletters and the website were used by most on an occasional basis. TACTYC’s representation on Government advisory panels and early years and primary organisations’ meetings were read most widely by survey respondents. Those that attend TACTYC conferences have very positive opinions of them
* **TACTYC activity used least by members**: book reviews and on-line links to recent research were accessed the least on the website. In ranking all activity, reflections papers received the lowest overall score, followed by TACTYC’s representation at other early years organisation’s meetings.

**Introduction**

TACTYC commissioned a small-scale study into the composition of its membership and members’ satisfaction with TACTYC’s activities. In addition, the study was tasked with exploring the issue of diversity among the membership and among the key activities that TACTYC pursues.

The study involved an electronic survey, which was sent to all members and was posted on TACTYC’s website so that non-members could also contribute. Respondents were asked if they were willing to provide contact details for follow-up telephone interviews. A small number took place after the analysis of the survey data and allowed more in-depth information to be gathered and for clarification.

TACTYC understands diversity in the following terms, according to its published statement:

TACTYC is an internationally recognised association with a worldwide membership; we have adopted equality, diversity and inclusion as core values and principles.

**TACTYC welcomes people from a wide range of early years backgrounds; early years researchers, education consultants and professionals working with children and families in day-care, education, health, play work and social service contexts as well as students from across these areas. We strive to be an inclusive organisation advocating for the early years sector across diverse communities.**

**TACTYC recognises** **that inherent inequalities exist within society and may be present within social structures and institutions, practices and assumptions. We know that such inequalities have lifelong consequences for young children’s development and tackling them supports the well-being of families and communities. TACTYC is committed to addressing inequalities through inclusion, respect for each individual and the valuing of diversity. TACTYC aims to be accessible to all through a process of identifying, understanding and breaking down the barriers to participation and belonging so that all groups and individuals are included.**

**Researcher perspective**

I am a recently graduated early years education MA student from CCU, and have been continuously employed in teaching and management roles within the early years sector over the past thirteen years. Prior to this project I had no previous familiarity with TACTYC as an organisation. This report reflects a journey through initial impressions, to an engagement in membership data, and insights from membership feedback, which have been contextualised in relation to other early years professional organisations.

**Initial Impressions from TACTYC’s website**

TACTYC’s aim was clearly presented as the promotion of the professional development of early years educators. The organisation’s roots are described as having emerged through teacher trainers who had identified a need to support their own professional development through connection. However, the organisation had broadened its welcome to reflect the changing nature of the sector, and a welcome extended to researchers, consultants, those in a wide variety of practices that now serve young children and families, and students.

The ‘Latest news’ section offered a window into its current activity, and demonstrated that this centres on research, and its influential relationship on policy formation and educational practice. There is a rigour and authority associated with research activity, which can promote it as an independent voice external to sector-related interests in its advocacy for children. TACTYC offers opportunities for involvement in this activity through its membership services which provide information updates, and through opportunities for involvement in research, reflection and campaign activity. It has a clear focus on the professional development of early years educators in relation to graduate level practitioners.

I wondered how accessible TACTYC’s activities were to the variety of professionals that were identified on its welcome page. Having experienced the challenges of working within a sector characterised by a heterogeneity of provision, and by increasingly impactful financial challenges, I wondered about its identified avenues for influence, and how effective these were within the sector.

**Membership lists: How diverse is TACTYC’s membership?**

Two data sets were explored in relation to this question: a recently lapsed membership list, and a current paid up members list. The regional representation of each group could then be compared with regional sector numbers provided by the Early Years Providers Survey (2016) to explore the extent to which the membership offered a reflection of the sector as whole.

**Regional representation within lapsed membership list (Total: 589 members)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| REGION | Total number of members | % of total members in England | Regional representation in Early Years Providers Survey (2016) |
| East | 61 | 11.55% | 11.75% |
| E Mid | 34 | 6.44% | 8.16% |
| London | 61 | 11.55% | 16.3 % |
| N East | 13 | 2.46% | 4.11% |
| N West | 44 | 8.33% | 13.4 % |
| S East | 142 | 26.89% | 17.25% |
| S West | 72 | 13.63% | 10.25% |
| W Mid | 42 | 7.95% | 9.56% |
| Yorks | 59 | 11.2% | 9.22% |

528 members in England. \*under-representative of region \*over-representative of region

Additional geographical representation offered by the remaining 61 members was as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Countries | Number of members | % of membership at time |
| Wales | 10 | 1.7% |
| Scotland | 39 | 6.62% |
| International (various countries) | 12 | 2.03% |

This data indicated that TACTYC had attracted membership from all regions, although there were some areas that were over-represented and some under-represented in comparison with the distribution of providers. The sharpest contrast in numbers can be seen in the most highly populated areas: The South-East region most heavily over-represented, and London most heavily under-represented in comparison to national statistics. The North-West also revealed a relatively low level of representation for its area. The gender representation within this membership group could be compared favourably with the wider early years workforce.

**Gender representation within lapsed membership list (Total: 589 members)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Female | 538 | 94.2% |
| Male | 33 | 5.7% |

TOTAL: 571(some information unavailable)

\*(Current male representation in early years education and care workforce at 2% (DfES, 2011)

**Regional representation within current TACTYC membership (Total: 286 members)**

This data could then be compared with that revealed on the current membership list, which had a smaller total number of 286 members.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Region** | **% of total for England** | **EY provider survey2016** | **% Difference** |
| East | 6.77% | 11.75% | -4.98% |
| E Mids. | 5.26% | 8.16% | -2.9% |
| London | 12.03% | 16.3 % | -4.27 |
| N East | 1.88% | 4.11% | -2.23% |
| N West | 8.28% | 13.4 % | -5.12% |
| S East | 30.45% | 17.25% | +13.2% |
| S West | 13.15% | 10.25% | +2.9% |
| W Mids. | 9.78% | 9.56% | +0.22% |
| Yorks | 12.4% | 9.22% | +3.18% |

(266 members in England)

Additional geographical representation of the remaining 20 members was as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Counties | Number of members | % of membership |
| Wales | 5 | 1.75% |
| Scot | 9 | 3.15% |
| N Ire | 1 | 0.35% |
| International | 5 | 1.75% |

Inevitably with lower numbers, some wider gaps had formed between membership numbers and provider numbers in some regions. The North-West, East and London indicated the greatest degree of under-representation, while the over-representation in the South-East region has increased. There has also been a marked reduction in the numbers of members in Wales, Scotland and other countries. Gender representation of this membership continues to offer a positive model in relation to the wider early years workforce.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number of members | % of membership |
| Female | 263 | 92% |
| Male | 21 | 8% |

\*2 not discerned. \*(Current male representation in early years education and care workforce at 2% (DfES, 2011).

**Questions arising through engagement with this data**

This data indicates that TACTYC’s geographical representation within its membership has been reduced recently, and gives rise to potential questions about recruitment activity, awareness of TACTYC within different regions, and **whether local membership presence or activity can exert a positive influence on this**. These questions can be considered in relation to the wider picture of early years organisations, which will be covered later in this report.

**Representation of professional roles within the current TACTYC membership**

The current membership list offers a richer source of data, and allows for insight into the professions of those attracted to TACTYC at present. These are presented in quantity order, and indicate the proportion of the total membership represented by each. There is an evident majority represented by those working in higher education, followed by those engaging in higher education, and lower representations of those working in other roles that support the professional development of the early years workforce. This is indicative of the existent structures to support the professional development of some early years educators, but perhaps does not represent the fullest range of such professionals. It suggests that TACTYC has greatest appeal for those engaged in higher educational activity, whether working or as a student.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Field of work** | **Quantity (Total: 286)** | **%** |
| Higher Education | 102 | 35.66% |
| Student | 30 | 10.49% |
| EY Manager/Deputy | 28 | 9.8% |
| Consultant | 22 | 7.69% |
| Advisor/local authority | 15 | 5.24% |
| Teacher/EYP | 15 | 5.25% |
| NVQ assessor/trainer | 11 | 3.85% |
| Further Education | 6 | 2.09% |
| Retired | 5 | 1.75% |
| Educational Trust/organisation | 3 | 1.05% |
| Company Director | 3 | 1.05% |
| Practitioner | 4 | 1.4% |
| Specialist (EY music, ICT nursery chain, Ed Psych, TES Ed) | 3 | 1.05% |
| Children’s Centre | 2 | 0.7% |
| HMI | 1 | 0.35% |
| Unknown/not discerned | 36 | 12.58% |

This suggests that TACTYC’s activity primarily fits the needs of those engaged in higher education-based training or research activity, or those that directly engage with this material within their professional activity. However, it may not meet wider needs within the sector for whom professional development is still relevant, and there is a clear distinction being made between activity to support professional development in one type of context. Does this potentially limit the influence of its impact to inform and support? How far does its activity reflect the diversity of the sector that it serves?

**Length of membership**

The length of continuous membership of those on TACTYC’s current list, indicates that there are a core group of forty-six members that have been involved with TACTYC for eighteen years or more. There is then a drop-off in the length of membership, which starts to pick up again over the past ten years. It indicates that for some, TACTYC offers something very valuable, which creates a strong sense of commitment to its work, and leads to long-term membership. However, the overall drop in numbers suggest that this has not evolved for all TACTYC members or potential members.

Those who stated the length of their membership in the survey, where this was longer than seven years (7 respondents), gave answers that centred primarily on TACTYC as a specialist early years organisation, with a provision of quality information, and as a source of professional support through contact with like-minded colleagues. These members included higher education professionals, a consultant, an advisor, and an educator, indicating primarily (although not exclusively) those directly involved in the delivery of professional development services.

**TACTYC Survey**

This survey was distributed through the membership e-mail list and website, and attracted 62 respondents in total. All but one respondent was a current TACTYC member, and there was an overall completion rate of the survey of 81%. The information is therefore not fully representative of the TACTYC membership and their views, but offers some interesting insights.

**Age, gender and ethnicity represented in survey responses**

The largest respondent group fell into the 55-65-year age bracket (42.37%), followed by 45-54-year olds (28.81%) and then 66 years and above group (16.95%). There were far smaller representations of younger age groups with 6.78% in the 25-34-year age group, 5.08% respondents in the 35-44-year group, and none in an 18-24-year bracket. This may represent the nature of survey respondents, the characteristics of those motivated to respond to a TACTYC view-seeking exercise, or could be reflective of the average membership age. Views, preference and responses in relation to age groups will be examined in the next section. 95% of respondents were female, and 3% male. At present TACTYC does not routinely collect this information, but it may be worth considering for the future. A registration form on subscription that requests age, nationality, qualifications, profession and other relevant information could provide valuable demographic insight.

The ethnicity of respondents was revealed as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Ethnicity | % of respondents | General census 2011 |
| White/White-British | 93.22% | 86% |
| Black/Black-British | 0% | 3.3% |
| Asian/Asian-British | 1.69% | 7.5% |
| Mixed race | 3.39% | 2.2% |
| Prefer not to say | 1.69% |  |

\*over-representative \*under-representative

Although survey responses cannot be considered as fully representative of the TACTYC membership, these statistics indicate some potential areas of under-representation worthy of further consideration in the promotion of diverse voices. Given that the largest proportion of TACTYC members work in higher education, relatively recent statistics report 3.8% as BME within higher education academic staff in education departments (HESA, 2013). **Widening membership to be more reflective of the sector as whole, may in fact therefore be supportive of TACTYC’s diversity statement.**

**Geographical representation of respondents**

Two respondents lived or worked outside of the UK. UK regional representation indicated the highest response rate in the South-East, followed closely by a disproportionately high response rate for the South-West region. The West Midlands and the Yorkshire and the Humber regions were the next highest regions represented in responses, and there was a disproportionately low response from the Greater London area. There was no representation of the following regions or countries: **North-East, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.** As these areas are particularly poorly represented within the membership at present, this would appear to support an indication that either there is **less awareness of TACTYC, or it is less attractive to people in these regions.**

**Working status, profession and qualification levels of survey respondents**

Questions exploring working status revealed that 69% of respondents were employed, 17% retired, 8% were students, and some a combination of these three options. The following represents the distribution of workplaces of the respondents:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Higher Education 63% | Educational Trust 3.5% |
| EYCE group setting 9% | Independent Business 3.5% |
| Independent training Provider 9% | Local Authority 3.5% |
| Primary school 5.5% | Further Education 2% |
| Consultancy Service 5.5% | Other 9% |

(55 total responses, some respondents worked in more than 1 location)

Higher Education represents the predominant workplace setting of respondents, with a lower representation of other professional roles. This reflects the nature of TACTYC’s membership group at present, and interview respondents indicated a strong link between their work in higher education and an attraction to TACTYC due to its government lobbying capacity.

**Most respondents** **(76%) did not work regularly with young children,** and in those that did, 14.5% worked with 2, 3 and 4-year-olds, 5.5% than with 4 and 5-year-olds and 4% with birth to 2-year-olds. Three of these were retired or semi-retired, and were engaged in a voluntary capacity with young children, four were engaged in early years practice and two in the course of their work to support the professional development of educators. Within this group, **there were 7 instances of active involvement with TACTYC’s government and lobbying activity amongst the group.**

The highest level of qualifications of the total survey respondents, indicated that the vast majority (61,4%) held a level 7 qualification, 28% held Level 8, 8.77% at Level 6 and 1.75% at Level 5.

**How diverse is TACTYC’s membership and to what extent does the membership represent the array of people/providers in Early Years in the UK? Are there key groups missing from the membership?**

Some overall patterns can be identified from these three sources of information in addressing this question. The largest proportion of its current membership work within higher education, and are engaged in either the professional qualification of early years educators, or in research into early childhood or related fields. An equal proportion are directly engaged in work which supports the professional development of early years educators, but within a wider array of professional contexts: some in practice with children and some within adult-training environments.

TACTYC’s International and UK regional diversity has recently diminished, and while it retains representation within all regions within England, its representativeness of the sector has fallen in some regions, whilst in the South East it has continued to rise. The gender representation of its membership offers a reasonable reflection of the sector, but the survey responses indicate that there could be some under-representation of ethnic diversity that is worth further exploration.

The survey responses similarly indicate that this is an organisation that attracts membership with an older demographic: it represents people at an advanced stage of career development which tends to correlate with an older age group, and has retained some core members over a long time. However, this means that **there is** **an under-representation of younger voices within the organisation, which does not reflect the diversity of the early years sector as a whole**. Similarly, the average qualification levels are high in relation to the overall sector, and although reflective of the nature of professional development structures, may indicate some **missed connections with the sector.** This can be linked with small representation of those in current practice with children, for whom high quality professional development is still relevant, and raises questions about **a missed potential for TACTYC to support graduates in working contexts.**

**What (or who) attracts people to join TACTYC and encourages them (or not) to renew their annual membership? What else could the organisation do to attract and retain new/current members?**

**Reasons for taking up membership**

SurveyMonkey identified these as the predominant reasons given for taking up membership.



The wording used within all the answers to this question were analysed and could be categorised thematically according to TACTYC’s identified objectives, which suggest that **for these existing members, TACTYC’s activities are relevant and valued.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| TACTYC’s objectives | Words used | Word usage rate |
| Activity to inform | Quality, research, publications, information, informed, knowledge, journal, professional, student, research developments. | 49 |
| Activity to support | Networking, community, discussion, conferences, like-minded, debates, discussion, support, colleagues, part of a group, contact, career development. | 55 |
| Advocacy and lobbying | Lobbying, consultation, advocacy, making a difference, policy, agenda, support for TACTYC’s work, involved. | 13 |
| Early Years Specialist | ECEC, specialist, beliefs, values. | 12 |

Forty-seven of these respondents stated that they still had the same reasons for being a member now, but five gave reasons for this changing over time. These reasons included sector changes that now dictate a shift towards more professional issues, changes in relationship to professional interest with retirement, and a commitment to TACTYC’s work that has grown through involvement. Of the respondents who claimed current membership, 76% intended to definitely renew, 20% were likely to renew, and 4% thought it unlikely or didn’t know. No reasons for non-renewal were given within the survey responses.

Membership to other early years organisations revealed **‘****Early Education’ to be the most popular choice, listed by fifteen respondents from a cross-section of professions which included higher education, consultancy, advisory roles, and directors of early years organisations**. Additional memberships also included BERA and ECSDN (3 responses) and NEYTCO and SEFDEY (2 responses). Other organisations mentioned including Early Years Arts, Children and Young People, OMEP, EECER, The PLA and two other international organisations.

**Membership awareness and engagement with TACTYC’s activities**

There were forty-nine respondents to the questions regarding the members’ awareness and use of TACTYC’s activity, and some overall patterns in relation to engagement with these activities could be discerned for the whole group.

**Activity to inform**

Within the survey, these activities were identified as annual TACTYC conferences, the ‘Early Years’ journal, research projects commissioned by TACTYC and occasional papers. Responses demonstrated the **highest overall awareness and usage rates for these activities**, with the **journal** used most **frequently**, and the **TACTYC commissioned research projects** and **occasional papers** accessed by similar numbers but on more of an **occasional basis.**

**Activity to support**

Within the survey, these were identified as the newsletter, website, reflections papers, book reviews and online links to recent research. Responses demonstrated a **greater awareness of the website** slightly over the newsletter, and that many of the support activities were used on an occasional basis. **Online links to recent research were used most frequently**, and **reflections papers** received **a high** **degree of occasional use.**

**Advocacy and Lobbying**

Awareness rates of TACTYC’s advocacy and lobbying activity were highest for its Government consultation and advisory panel activity (94%), and slightly lower awareness of recent campaign activity (86%). **TACTYC’s work in serving on advisory panels and providing responses to Government consultations were read about or referenced most frequently**, followed by recent campaign activity and representation within organisational meetings. There were **28 reports of involvement in at least 1 of these activities, from within the total 45 respondents to this set of questions**. There was some involvement by members in more than one aspect of this activity, but the survey indicated that was some distribution of this activity amongst its membership. This indicates that there is **TACTYC member involvement in this that goes beyond the core Executive committee group.**

**Analysis of engagement in TACTYC activities by age group**

Filtering responses by age group enabled some insights into links between the age and stage of professional development of the members, and indicated some patterns of engagement with TACTYC activity.

**66 years and above age group**

Respondents in the 66 years and above age group (Total: 10) described themselves as either semi-retired or retired, and their most recent professional positions represented a cross-section of higher education, consultancy, advisory and inspectorate roles. All had joined for professional development, support and **involvement reasons**, had retained this interest and **intended to continue membership**. Their engagement with TACTYC’s activity demonstrated **more frequent use of activity to inform than support,** and that **37% of the respondents to the question had been directly involved in some aspect of Its advocacy and lobbying work**. TACTYC’s top three ranked activities were the journal, conferences and representation at other early years organisation’s conferences. Four of the six question respondents had attended four or more of TACTYC’s conferences, and the word informative was used most frequently in summarising TACTYC’s work.

**55-65-year age group**

The 55-65-year age bracket represented **the highest proportion of survey respondents** (Total: 25), who described themselves as either employed, self-employed or semi-retired. Seventeen respondents (69%) were employed in higher education settings, five respondents (17%) in consultancy work and the remaining three respondents (14%) represented leading local authority and educational practice roles. Reasons for joining TACTYC included professional development and staying informed, but with more references made to **networking, and community support**. Two made direct reference to the opportunity it offered for **advocacy involvement**, and two referred to a shift in TACTYC’s focus over time onto more professional issues. The majority planned to renew, with one exception giving reasons pertaining to finance and current research accessibility via the internet. **70% of this group also had membership of another early years organisation.** This group reported frequent use of the journal, and an even split between occasional and frequent use of TACTYC research and occasional papers. The website was used occasionally, with links to research and reflections papers accessed most frequently, and 81% read the newsletter. The majority had read about or referenced its advocacy and lobbying activity, with eleven instances of direct involvement in this activity amongst the group, and the majority had attended more than one TACTYC conference. **Two suggestions were made for TACTYC to introduce more regional activity within this group.**

**45 – 54-year age group**

In the 45-54-year bracket (Total: 17), 65% (11 respondents) were employed in higher education, 18% (3 respondents) worked with children and families and 17% (3 respondents) in consultancy or business roles. 95% had current membership, and the majority were likely to renew. Six reported membership to an additional early years organisation. **All respondents engaged equally with the activity to inform and support on a regular basis**, with most frequent engagement reported with the website, journal and research papers. The majority had read about government consultation and representation at early years organisation meetings, the campaign work had been most frequently referenced and there had been seven instances of direct involvement in activity. The journal, conferences and research papers were ranked as TACTYC’s 3 most important activities, with the highest rate of regular journal reading in this group. 72% of respondents had attended two or more conferences, with the most frequent reasons for non-attendance being cost and location. Suggestions for TACTYC included regional activity to facilitate more practitioner involvement, networking for CPD providers and researchers, more collaboration with other early years organisations to increase impact and extension of support to parents. **The words used to describe TACTYC amongst this group embodied a sense of energy and passion about its informative, supportive and advocacy activity.**

**35 – 44 years, 25 – 34 years and 18 – 25 years age groups**

There were smaller quantities of responses from the lower age groups between 25 – 44 years (Total: 7), and these included five who worked in early years practice, one working in higher education and one in further education, with two additionally studying. All had current memberships and were likely to renew, reasons given being **professional and student support**, and **access to research**. TACTYC’s activity to inform was accessed slightly more frequently than activity to support, with the majority having read about or referenced the advocacy and lobbying activity, and one directly involved with the Better without Baseline campaign. The occasional research papers were ranked as most important, followed by the journal and website, and five had attended a conference. Summarising comments were offered by one who described TACTYC as informative and welcoming.

**Insights gained that cross age and profession:**

Those in retirement, may seek to retain membership for interest reasons, which suggests that a lower cost membership which provides access to information updates, potentially in a lower cost form such as online access, may support access on a financial basis for wider numbers.

Support through professional connection is a strong theme in membership feedback. However, for some this could be enhanced in a number of ways, including more regional activity that could broaden access for the sector as whole. Also, online contact networks for researchers or CPD providers, online forums, and resources as video clips of conference speakers or experts within the field.

TACTYC’s activity to support fits most directly those in higher education, or engaging in work that draws on early years research. It also strengthens the link between this activity and government policy, and primarily seeks to exert influence in this manner.

TACTYC attracts smaller membership numbers from those who may have an interest in the highest quality of professional development of early years educators, and are in practice with children. As a recently left early years manager, with a passion for child-centred practice, I feel that it represents a gap in the professional support available for what can in effect be a very isolated and unsupported role.

**Early Years organisations as context**

Other early years organisations will now be looked at as a wider context, to identify the types of support and information available, and its potential for impact on quality practices. Many have emerged in response to particular aspects of early years practice, with different associated aims and objectives. These organisations identify a **common aim in supporting quality early years care and education**, and the majority are involved in representing the sector in Government consultation and advocacyactivity**.** However, the **focus of this activity varies to reflect the sector interests represented by the organisation.** Some of these organisations **operate on a larger scale than TACTYC, with economic advantages which enable them to offer of a wide variety of services, but which may be useful in considering how they meet their memberships’ needs.** Some of the larger organisations that serve particular types of provision also offer separate branches to serve Scotland and Wales, and also offer regionally based activity through local branch networks.

**Early Education**

‘Early Education’ is a charity registered in England and Scotland with an identified aim to support **families and practitioners** **across all early childhood education settings**, and has a **present membership** **of 3,500**. It provides **support for the professional development of practitioners in the form of training**, resources and professional networking, and the organisation is involved in campaigning to promote quality educational practices. It offers membership on both a group or individual basis, which includes a concessionary rate for students, which can be further reduced through having online-only access to resources. Benefits of membership include Early Education’s termly research journal and reflections, a **regular e mail update service** of latest news and developments with analysis, **peer to peer support** provision through a local branch and **online network** and reduced rates for the organisation’s conferences and publications.

**OMEP**

OMEP has an international educational focus, with consultative status to the United Nations and UNESCO. It holds similar objectives to TACTYC and Early Education in terms of its aims to disseminate information, with a global remit to its work to promote research, family education, practitioner training and international networking. **OMEP membership is directed widely towards professionals in any related disciplines, and to practitioners, policy makers and parents on a global scale**. Membership is offered flexibly for small groups, larger institutions, individuals and at a reduced concessionary rate. Benefits are identified as including access to a network of worldwide contacts, updates and research papers, newsletters and a voice in OMEP nationally and internationally. Its journal of current issues and research is available to members online, or in a hard copy form for a charge.

**PACEY, NDNA and The PLA**

There are a number of charitable organisations that have emerged historically to support the needs of particular forms of early years provision. PACEY, originally established as The National Childminding Association, NDNA for Day Nurseries, and The PLA as The Preschool Learning Alliance. Whilst still retaining some influence from their founding roots, these organisations have broadened their focus in response to the evolving sector. They are essentially constituted as **direct support services to early years practice, but given the nature of the sector, aim to respond to a wide cross-section of influential voices and stake-holders within this**. The aim, in common with all of the early years organisations is to promote quality early years education and care practices, however **family needs are featured inclusively**, particularly by The PLA and PACEY. This perhaps **reflects their grassroots emergence from within the family and community contexts of this early childcare provision**. The PLA indeed describes itself as an alliance between parents, practitioners and the sector, which is embedded within its aims, objectives and practices.

These organisations offer support that is **practical, service-orientated and accessible**, and designed to help manage workload. Activity to inform and support is offered in the form of online training, information sheets, books, video clips, helplines, consultancy and training services and through both **large conferences and local area networks**. Membership is offered as packages to suit the needs of both groups and individuals, from start-up business support to affiliate memberships for interest. All of these organisations also advertise their involvement in government consultation and lobbying activity, with a focus contextualised by the industry concerns that they represent, and their relationship to the governing bodies. In terms of regional representation, PACEY is involved in Government commissioned work in England and Wales to support childcare providers and the promotion of the profession. NDNA has associated organisations in Scotland and Wales, and the PLA describes itself as the most representative early years organisation in England with 14,000 members.

**SEFDEY, ECSDN and NEYTCO**

Early Years organisations such as SEFDEY, ECSDN and NEYTCO have emerged within a growing professionalisation of the sector, and were cited as other organisation memberships of TACTYC survey respondents. They support the professional development of early years educators, represented in terms of higher levels of qualification, and the institutional practices and industries engaged in the provision of this. Memberships are offered variously on an institutional or individual basis, and are designed to provide professional support through information supply, community formation and networking and communication.

**Early Years Organisational practices to inform and support**

All of the early years organisations’ activities centre around the delivery of information, and professional support through connection. However, their methods of delivery are generally more varied, and may offer TACTYC something to consider in reviewing practices. Some of methods coincide with TACTYC membership suggestions in the survey.

* Regional branch activity to facilitate peer to peer support
* Online forums
* Network contact lists
* Video clips as online resources
* Variable membership terms for institutions, single or multiple site group settings, schools, individuals, concessionary, online access only with reduced associated costs, international membership.
* Charges varied according to hard copy or e copy access to a journal.
* Email briefings rather than longer newsletters.
* Membership reductions for publications, resources and events.
* Associate organisations specific to Scotland and Wales.
* Descriptive language includes referencing to care and development as well as education, in relation to early years practices.
* Parent inclusion

**Research findings regarding what TACTYC does well and how it might improve according to existing members**

TACTYC members expressed in their survey responses that they consider it to have a well-established reputation in relation to its research and advocacy practices.



TACTYC’s roots in higher educational practice support the building of a **close relationship between research activity and government policy**, lending its voice within consultation and advocacy work an added **integrity and authority**. It is an independent voice, situated as separate from any particular sector interests, and can therefore **prioritise children’s developmental needs as its primary objective**. The early years professionals who are attracted to TACTYC are passionate about good quality practice, and value TACTYC’s ability to articulate this well and support this with academic rigour.

The support that TACTYC offers for its membership is distinct in addressing the professional needs of those involved in early years educational training. It has a predominant membership of those closely involved with the production and dissemination of the information that supports and shapes this, and particularly addresses the professional needs of those who access and use this form of information within their working practices. This is quite a niche group, with specific needs, and accounts for its small membership numbers at present.

There are some benefits associated with TACTYC’s small scale which are expressed in survey comments about the organisation being welcoming and friendly. This can be seen within member profiles on the website, in which personal motivations and individuals’ career pathways are shared. This is reported to be one of its most frequently visited pages, and perhaps illustrates the power of a more personal touch. I feel that it is here that TACTYC’s distinctive voice could offer support to those transitioning from graduate level engagement with principles, into the challenges of the workplace, and is currently not well catered for by early years professional organisations.

The following suggestions were made by survey respondents for ways in which they thought that TACTYC could improve on what it offers:

* Organisational / group membership
* Videos by experts
* Regional branches with local seminars or events to involve students / practitioners / teachers etc for free or very low cost
* Collaboration with other organisations such as EECERA and BERA to increase the impact of influence.
* Week day conferences
* More focus on the youngest children and play based learning.
* Practice-based updates
* More member profiles
* Support for networking between members (e.g. members' forum to share information, vacancies etc.)
* Networking lists with contact details – particularly for researchers or CPD providers
* Reach out more to students and practitioners Reach out more to BME groups
* Make the journal more reflective of the organisation
* Support parents as well as professional educators

**Insights through member interviews**

These did come late in the process of this project, but offered extremely valuable insights into a variety of member perspectives on what TACTYC means for them, and for the sector. There were many positive comments, and some common themes addressed in discussions which will be summarised here:

**TACTYC’s work as a voice for the sector**

Members value TACTYC as offering a distinctive voice, with a highly valued role in being able to articulate and support its advocacy for children in relation to educational practices. This is identified as vital activity within the contemporary context, motivates support through membership, and that it has greatest impact on the sector through this avenue of influence. A member identified that it is valid to define what an organisation can achieve, that it should do this well, and no organisation should try to do everything. It was identified as potentially being a voice that can ‘cross boundaries’ in practice, and that this could be internationally.

**TACTYC’s activity to support diversity: Conferences**

TACTYC conferences received extremely positive reviews: people valued the content, and the opportunity for connection. This created a sense of support for the individual, opportunity for valuable communication, and that they were distinctive in inviting broad participation from across the sector to support working in ‘joined up’ ways. Their small-scale was identified as a benefit in this regard: that they were accessible, friendly, and non-threatening. It was this approach that could effectively support the dissemination of research-informed practice.

**TACTYC membership**

There was acknowledgement expressed that TACTYC is associated with higher education, but that there is scope for this perception to shift through publicity and higher visibility. Given policy impacts on the sector, broadening support to those in practice would be of great value to those aiming to work with strong principles in relation to early years practice. Conditions of practice are such that there is little support available within the sector.

**‘Small is beautiful’**

Members value the personal approach of TACTYC’s smaller-scale, rather than the anonymity of larger scale organisations. The support feels personal, and that their membership matters. TACTYC is described as an organisation for people who are passionate, that it is enriched by the strong voices that constitute its membership, and offers a support through like-minded community. One member stated that“strong voices can be expressed in different ways”, and as such, suggests that diversity of its activity in this regard is highly evident. It is a very distinctively an ‘early years focused’ organisation.

**Money is an issue**

The impact of financial pressures on the sector needs to be acknowledged. If it is highly impactful on the sector, it is impactful on professionals’ access to support activities such as those provided by TACTYC and consequently on potential engagement with TACTYC. How can TACTYC acknowledge and engage with this?

**Publicity is an issue**

TACTYC is not widely known about. Suggestions were made for avenues through which TACTYC could concentrate its resources at present: advertising at practitioner conferences, in practitioners’ publications, with local authorities and with early years providers such as nursery chains.

**Conclusion**

This study sought to explore the issue of diversity amongst TACTYC’s membership, and among the key activities that TACTYC pursues. In addressing this, it can be identified that TACTYC’s current membership represents a limited demographic in terms of profession, age, ethnicity and regional representation, and that this is largely a reflection of the nature of its membership activity. The fact that TACTYC’s membership is not very diverse, suggests that there may be missing voices from the sector, and that its potential to inform and support is not being as widely accessed by those for whom it might have value. Some of TACTYC’s non-member activities such as its Conferences are more facilitative of diverse voices, are identified as inclusive, mutually supportive and embody a ‘joined up’ approach to working with a wider community. Members have identified that TACTYC does offer a distinctive voice in this respect, and that perhaps the benefit identified by members in terms of support through connection, could be extended to create stronger networks within the sector.

**Appendix**

**Survey findings: Payment methods**

**Would you be happy to pay for membership through direct debit?** (55 responses)

Forty-five survey respondents (70%) said that they would be happy to pay for membership through a direct debit.

Ten respondents (15%) said that they would not.

Comment responses included:

Prefer standing order (3)

Prefer to reconsider each year/ prefer single payments (3)

Find direct debits problematic (2)

Not suitable as organisation pays for subscription (2)

**Payment methods by order of preference** (51 responses)

Direct debit

Debit or credit card payment online

Standing order

PayPal payment online

Cheque

**Survey findings: Journal access**

**Would you be happy to receive the journal in electronic format only?** (51 responses)

Yes (25)

No (26)

**If you read the journal, which format do you use most?** (48 responses)

Electronic 6.25% (3)

Printed copy 64.58% (31)

Both 33.33% (16)

**How often do you read articles?** (49 responses)

Regularly (every issue) 65.31% 32 responses

Occasionally 30.61% 15 responses

Never 4.08% 2 responses