

Chair's Report to the Annual General Meeting 2012-13

The purpose of the Chair's report is to give an overview of TACTYC's activities during the past year and so to account for how membership money has been spent. It should be noted that, as in previous years, elected and co-opted members of the Executive receive no fee for the work they do for TACTYC. The three main journal editors and reviews editor receive a small honorarium from the royalties from the sale of the Early Years journal and work many hours to maintain the high standard of our journal.

1) The Executive Committee – meetings and membership

The Executive met on four occasions this year: three times in Birmingham (January 2013; March 2013; September 2013) and once with Taylor and Francis staff in Abingdon (June 2013). The Chair also met with the Early Years editors in London in February 2013.

The Executive currently consists of:

President: Wendy Scott (Ex Officio 2010-16)

Elected members

Chair: Dr Jane Payler (Elected 2011-2014)

Treasurer/Membership Secretary: Dr Jackie Eyles (Elected 2012-15)

Website editor: Professor Janet Moyles (Elected 2012-15)

Secretary: Dr Pat Beckley (Elected 2012-15)

Newsletter editor (from 2009): Maulfry Worthington (Elected 2010-13)

Communications and consultations co-ordinator: Nancy Stewart (Elected 2012-15)

Dr Anita Soni (Elected 2011-14)

Dr Jane Murray (Elected 2011-14)

Rory McDowall Clark (Elected 2012-15)

Co-opted members for 2012-13

Dr Margaret Simms

Rosa Collins

Dr Rosie Flewitt

Dr Sacha Powell

Journal Editors (Ex-officio)

Dr Liz Brooker

Assistant Professor Rod Parker-Rees

Dr. Pamela Oberhuemer

Dr Jan Georgeson (Assistant Editor; Reviews Editor)

Executive Committee Changes

Elected members: This year there are 5 candidates standing for election to one available place; the results will be announced at the AGM held at the TACTYC Conference on the 2nd November 2013.

Co-opted members: Every year elected members of the Executive Committee invite around six TACTYC colleagues to become co-opted members of the Committee in order to provide support with specific areas of need or interest. In turn, co-opted members are given the opportunity to experience life as an Executive Committee member for a year so that they can decide whether or not to stand for election when a seat becomes available. We are extremely grateful to Rosie Flewitt, Rosa Collins, Sacha Powell and Margaret Simms for their support and hard work as co-opted members in 2012-13. Co-options for 2013-14 will be decided by the Executive Committee following the result of the elections.

2) Key activities 2012-2013

Review of TACTYC's approach and practices with regard to equality

This year, TACTYC has decided to review its approach to equality. We want to be sure that our organization is open and accessible to all relevant groups of people. This is the responsibility of us all; Rory McDowall Clark is helping us to think this through and has been seeking guidance on our behalf. As you will be aware, we are asking our members to complete ethnic monitoring forms to help us to see where we are and help us to think about how we might improve. Watch out for further news and let us know what we can do better and what you think works well.

Our activities largely reflect work towards our aims: Advocacy/Lobbying; Informing; and Supporting Effective Learning.

Advocacy/Lobbying

As for 2011-12, there have been political changes afoot across early years during 2012-13 that have required concerted efforts on the part of TACTYC to keep a focus on the best interests of young children in policy changes. This has been a very busy year; as you will see from our website, for example, that there have been 18 responses/letters from the Executive this year in relation to unfolding events. The following give a flavour of the work we have been carrying out:

After our successful House of Commons event on school readiness last year, the issue was subsequently picked up by Baroness Joan Walmsley, who initiated a debate in the House of Lords on the importance of the early years, drawing on TACTYC's research carried out by David Whitebread and Sue Bingham and discussions with Wendy Scott, Jane Payler and Nancy Stewart on 7th February. Information was also submitted by TACTYC to the Education Select Committee's investigation into school readiness, led by Wendy Scott, and our work informed the Early Day Motion called by Annette Brooke MP in the House of Commons on School Starting Age for Summer-Born Pupils. Wendy was part of a delegation from the Primary Umbrella Group who met with Elizabeth Truss in relation to the Primary Curriculum Review in February. The Minister acknowledged the concern she raised about the difficulties the youngest children in a year group have in reaching expected standards that are set too high for them. Wendy also spoke on early literacy at the Children's Media Conference in Sheffield on 5th July. She acts as an adviser to the early years education group within the Save Childhood Movement, and was a signatory to the letter published in The Telegraph on 12th September calling for a fundamental reassessment of national policies on early education, which are robbing infants of opportunities to learn through play

by putting too much emphasis on formal learning in areas such as the three Rs at a young age. Along with colleagues from SCM, she has presented a petition to Downing Street pointing out the dangers in current policy developments.

In common with most involved in the early years sector, we were concerned and continue to be concerned about many aspects of the proposals in *More Great Childcare*. Our statement highlighting these was sent to MPs, press contacts and other early years organisations. Following news that the **Deputy Prime Minister** Nick Clegg had halted proposed changes to staff:child ratios for babies and toddlers in early years settings, we wrote to show our support for the decision and to highlight several other issues with *More Great Childcare*. Jane Payler and Wendy Scott were subsequently invited to meet with the Deputy Prime Minister's Policy Advisor, Kate Berry, in September, 2013, where they raised several points including lack of QTS for Early Years Teachers and plans for Baseline Assessment in reception classes. Similar points were discussed at a meeting between officials at the **Department for Education** and Jane Payler and Nancy Stewart in October, 2013, arranged by Nancy.

A letter was sent to Sir Michael Wilshaw in the summer challenging his assertion that current early assessment is too broad and children should instead be tested on academic skills on entry to reception classes. The letter and a press release urged Sir Michael to consider the impact on young children of pressure to perform in a narrow academic manner and pointed out that England's school entry age is earlier than most of the rest of the world, where children later outperform English children.

TACTYC had a voice on the **External Reference Group for the Early Years Teacher Standards**; Jane Payler was invited to join the group, which met during the spring to help formulate and comment on the new Standards. The new Early Years Teacher Standards were released in July 2013 and came into force in September. We still had concerns, however, with regard to the extent to which the views of the sector expressed in consultation responses had been addressed, making play and individual approaches to care and education for the youngest children invisible. This led to a letter from TACTYC to Elizabeth Truss MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Education and Childcare), and a statement to the press.

Links with other bodies and organisations

TACTYC continues to be represented at the **Primary Umbrella Group** meetings (represented by Jackie Eyles) and on the **Early Childhood Forum** (ECF) (represented by Jane Payler).

TACTYC also met with the **Sector Endorsed Foundation Degrees in Early Years Network** to discuss possible collaborations, following a meeting last year with the **Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network**. TACTYC has since worked with them both to jointly lobby **TeachFirst** with regard to its entry requirements for the TeachFirst early years programme. We have now been invited to work with TeachFirst as they reconsider their entry requirements.

TACTYC has been invited to meet with the **National Childbirth Trust** to assist with their plans for training.

Wendy Scott again represented TACTYC as a keynote speaker at the **National Sure Start Conferences** in Manchester in March 2013 and in London in the summer, and also at an event hosted by Inside Government in October.

Pearsons sought TACTYC's feedback on the development of their new level 3 **Early Years Educator** qualifications. Our thanks go to Rory McDowall Clark who has been working with them to provide guidance.

Members will be aware of the collaborative project between TACTYC and **BERA early childhood special interest group**, which aims to provide policy briefing documents to the political parties and to produce an updated review of early years research in the UK since 2003. The project was launched at the University of Winchester on 30th April 2013 with an overview of policy and research in the four nations of the UK. The second event took place at the University of Sheffield on 3rd July and time was mainly spent in initial drafting of policy advice. Work has continued in 'theme' groups since and is now almost ready for wider consultation of our members. Once the policy documents are launched in January, attention will turn to the research review. Look out for further news and do make contact with your views.

Communications

As you will have noticed, we now have a **TACTYC email address** and a distribution list of many of our members. It has allowed us to send out updates of our activities following committee meetings and to alert members to consultations. Please contact our membership secretary, Jackie Eyles, if you would like to join the email list. Nancy Stewart has compiled a press contacts list and a politicians list, helping us to raise the profile of our lobbying work, and also co-ordinates the consultation responses. We are grateful to Nancy for this work.

Consultations

This year we have responded to the following policy changes/ consultations (please see our website for further information):

- Extending Free Early Education to More Two-year-olds (November 2012)
- Early Education and Childcare Staff Deployment (25 March)
- Reform of the National Curriculum in England (16 April)
- Criteria for Early Years Educator qualifications (Level 3) (22 April)
- Consultation on Teachers Standards (Early Years) (30 April)
- Consultation on proposed changes to the role of the local authority in early education and childcare (6 May)
- Regulation of childcare (30 Sept)
- Primary Assessment (11 Oct)

Members should note that responses to consultations are counted as **only one response**, so although we represent over 500 members, this is not reflected in the DfE analysis. In future, we encourage our members to submit their own versions of our responses in their own names. Much effort, expertise and thought goes into writing TACTYC's consultation responses and it would be good to see them getting the attention they deserve.

Informing

Journal - This aspect of our work has continued through our excellent journal 'Early Years' - thanks to all the editorial team and to our colleagues at Taylor and Francis. This year, we are delighted to report that the special issue *Professional Issues in Work with Babies and Toddlers*, featured as volume 32, issue 02 of Early Years, has been specially selected to be republished in book format as part of Routledge's SPIB (special issues as books) programme. This is very good news and our congratulations go to the editors and authors.

Conference – We have an excellent array of keynote speakers and papers for our conference this year to whom we are very grateful. Organising such an event takes commitment, time and effort and we are very grateful to all involved, especially the conference sub-group led by Jane Murray.

Two-year-olds research project – We are delighted to be commissioning research on staff preparation for work with two year olds, after a meeting Jane Payler and Wendy Scott had with the Sutton Trust, who are involved in this issue as an aspect of their commitment to narrowing the gap in achievement.

We are very pleased with the response to our invitation to bid for funding for this study, *Two-Year-Olds in England: examining staff preparation and development for work with two year olds*. We will keep you informed as the project progresses.

Supporting effective learning

TACTYC has continued to encourage practitioner research and reflection through our newsletter and website.

Website – Our website is very well used, with the Reflections articles and Occasional Papers being popular ways for people to stay well-informed. We have published six new Reflections articles during 2013, plus some Responses to the Reflections. Our thanks go to Janet Moyles who maintains the website and has been working hard this year to steer its complete overhaul. More on that later!

Occasional Papers – TACTYC's excellent Occasional Paper 3, *Early literacy: a broader vision* by Rosie Flewitt is now available to download freely from our website. We are hoping to bring you Occasional Paper 4 during next year, so do keep an eye on the website.

Newsletter – Thanks go to Maulfry Worthington and Margaret Simms for editing the newsletters and keeping them interesting and informative this year. We will be moving to digital versions of the newsletter to make better use of our resources, but if individual members would still prefer to have a hard copy sent to them, they can request it in writing and we will happily provide. Details are in the Autumn Newsletter. Do let Jackie Eyles know if your email address changes so that you don't miss out. You can, of course, continue to access the Newsletter online using the username and password sent to you.

3) Finances

TACTYC finances are, as ever, in very good order thanks to the careful accounting of Jackie Eyles as Treasurer/Membership Secretary. With Jackie's eagle eye on the purse, we have sufficient capacity to fund our working with two-year-olds research project and to commission the Occasional Papers.

Thank you

Finally, my sincere thanks go to the very hard working Executive Committee for all that they do behind the scenes in addition to their usual busy lives to make TACTYC such a vibrant organisation, and to our members for your continued support. My thanks also to our industrious President, Wendy Scott, for agreeing to an unprecedented third term of office and for all that she does to help us to be effective.

The opinions of our members on TACTYC's activities matter to us; do keep in touch and let us know your thoughts.

Jane Payler
23rd October 2013