



Association for the Professional Development
of Early Years Educators

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Press release

Legislating for Less Great Childcare

(Date)

The government's **More Great Childcare** plan to allow up to four children aged under two years to be looked after by one adult in nurseries and childminders' homes risks holding back the youngest children's development, according to TACTYC, the association for the professional development of early years educators.

'Children up to age two will pay the price of creating more day care places through unacceptably low levels of contact with staff,' said Dr Jane Payler, Chair of TACTYC.

In response to planned legislation introducing cuts in the ratios of adults to children, Dr Payler commented, 'Research and experience show the crucial need for close and responsive individual attention to support children's wellbeing and learning in the earliest years.'

'If young babies have to vie with three other under-twos for their needs to be met, this will inevitably mean that many of their attempts at communication will be missed. Yet evidence tells us that it is the responsiveness of the carer, noticing and responding to each baby's subtle signs of communication, which supports language development.'

(see annotated references below)

Wendy Scott, TACTYC President, said, 'TACTYC shares the widespread concern at the way Ministers ignore established research evidence, even from studies they have commissioned themselves. We are calling for a better informed approach and evidence-based strategic planning for high quality early education and care. There is no more effective investment for individual children, their families and for the future of our society.'

ENDS

Contact:

Chair:

Dr Jane Payler
Faculty of Education,
Health and Social Care,
University of Winchester
West Hill Winchester
Hants SO22 4NR
Jane.payler@winchester.ac.uk

President:

Wendy Scott
Peter House
Braithwaite
Keswick
Cumbria
CA12 5SY
mwendyscott@btopenworld.com

Communications:

Nancy Stewart
Woodnote
Quarry House Lane,
Market Drayton,
Shropshire
TF9 1NF
nancystewart.stewart@gmail.com

Notes for editors:

Ratios

The government report **More Great Childcare** proposed changing adult-to-child ratios for babies under two years from 1:3 to 1:4 and for children aged two to three years from 1:4 to 1: 6. These changes are counter to research evidence on quality and ratios^{i ii iii iv}. Changing the ratios so that young babies vie with three others for their needs to be met by one practitioner will inevitably mean that many of their attempts at communication through eye contact, babbling and pointing will be missed. Yet evidence tells us that it is the responsiveness of the carer, noticing and responding to these small signs of communication, which supports language development^{v vi}. Babies will find their care needs to be less well met^{vii viii}, leaving less time for peaceful cuddles during feeding or for relaxed, patient coaxing during weaning. Responding quickly to need plays a large part in supporting babies' development of empathy and self-control^{ix x xi}.

Qualifications

Early Years Professional Status is to be replaced by Early Years Teacher but without Qualified Teacher Status, although entry requirements will be the same as for QTS. As there are no plans to ensure that Early Years Teachers will receive the same salaries as teachers with QTS, it is hard to see how the unrealistic workload of more young children to each adult will attract people to such a career or ensure a raising of status. Practitioners in day care baby rooms are already in demanding roles and poorly supported^{xii}. The changes are counter to evidence and recommendations in the government commissioned Nutbrown Review^{xiii}, 2012.

References:

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^{xii} Gooch, K and Powell, S (2012) *The Baby Room: Research Summary 1*. December 2012. Esmee Fairbairn.

^{xiii} Nutbrown, C. (2012) *Foundations for quality: the independent review of early education and childcare qualifications: final report*.