

Chair's Report to the Annual General Meeting 2019-20

TACTYC has been through a major organisational change since becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), and it has been my privilege as Chair over the preceding nine months to help steer the Board as we have aimed to establish systems to provide strategic clarity and sound procedures for planning and accountability. Dr Jan Georgeson, as previous Chair, provided invaluable guidance in the initial stages of the reorganisation in identifying teams with responsibility for focusing on each of TACTYC's priority areas of Advocacy and Lobbying, Supporting, and Informing, as well as the nuts and bolts work of managing the Treasury and Secretariat. Meanwhile, TACTYC has continued to engage proactively in numerous activities and project developments. This report is intended to give an overview of TACTYC's activities during the year June 2019 to June 2020, accounting for how membership money has been spent. TACTYC's work is carried out on a volunteer basis, with Trustees receiving no money for their work on behalf of TACTYC. The journal editors receive a small honorarium from the royalties from the sale of *Early Years*, in appreciation of the many hours they work to maintain the high standard of our journal. I will be standing down from the Board of Trustees following this AGM, and am pleased to hand over to Dr Karen Boardman as TACTYC's new Chair.

1) The Board of Trustees – meetings and membership

The Executive Committee/Board of Trustees met on five occasions in the past year: July 2019, September 2019, October 2019, January 2020, March 2020. These meetings included an Away Day, an extraordinary meeting, and three full Board meetings.

The Board of Trustees currently consists of:

Ex Officio members

Wendy Scott, President
Dr Rod Parker-Rees, Journal Editor

Elected members

Professor Helen Bilton (2016-2019), Secretary
Dr Elizabeth Curruthers (2018-2021)
Dr Sharon Curtis (2017-20), Vice Chair
Dr Jan Georgeson (2018-2021), Journal Editor
Dr. Rory McDowall Clark (2018-2021), Reflections, Book Reviews
Ass Prof Dr Jane Murray (2017-20)
Professor Jane Payler (2017-2020), Consultation Coordinator, Book Series Editor, Social Media
Viki Veale (2018-2021), Membership Director

Appointed members

Dr. Karen Boardman, Website Director
Nancy Stewart, Chair

Penny Borkett, secretarial team, conference team
Angela Scollan, Conference Director
Dr. Natalie Canning, Treasurer
Professor Janet Moyles, Acting Treasurer, Book Series Editor, Occasional Papers

Executive Committee/ Board of Trustee Changes

Change of role: In making the transition to a charity and in line with the TACTYC Constitution, the Trustees originally identified in TACTYC's charity application voted to appoint the existing co-opted members of the Executive Committee as additional Trustees. These appointments, which were all accepted, will end at the Annual General Meeting. The Board is seeking approval from the membership to alter the constitution so that appointments can be made for a period of up to three years, to provide continuity and allow the Board to provide an effective range of perspective, expertise and contribution.

Elected members: This year we had three places on the Board of Trustees available for election and three people standing, so there was no need for a vote. The newly elected Trustees who begin their three-year terms from the Annual General Meeting are: Prof Helen Bilton, Ass Prof Dr Jane Murray, Dr Nathan Archer.

Appointed members: We are extremely grateful to the appointed members, who have taken on major responsibilities to enable TACTYC to function effectively. Appointments for the period ahead will be decided by the Board of Trustees.

2) Key activities 2019-2010

Establishing ways of working: We have worked hard this year to improve our systems in line with our responsibilities as a charitable organisation. We have developed a strategic plan which identifies issues and actions under our key aims of Advocacy/Lobbying, Informing, and Supporting. We have produced a budget plan linked to these projected activities, and both Strategic Plan and budget are reviewed and monitored at each Board meeting. We have also developed and implemented new policies on Data Protection and GDPR, Equality and Diversity, Trustee Code of Conflict, Conflict of Interest Policy, Financial Procedures Manual, Reserves Policy and Trustee Expenses Policy. Further work is needed to develop a policy for Risk Management. All of these are intended to be reviewed annually. In order to allow Trustees – particularly the Treasurer and Membership Secretary – to focus on the strategic issues of TACTYC's work, we appointed a Membership Administrative Assistant to support with maintaining financial records and the membership database.

Other activities throughout the year reflect work towards our aims:

Advocacy/Lobbying

We have worked to keep research-informed policy and practice for early years to the fore in response to a number of government plans regarding early years including proposed changes to the Early Years Foundation Stage and introducing a baseline assessment test in the reception year, as well of Ofsted proposals regarding inspection of Initial Teacher Training. Copies of all consultation responses, press releases and letters can be found on our website.

Baseline Assessment: We remain concerned by the DfE decision to push ahead with the pilot of baseline assessment in reception classes; subsequently the government says plans to make the test a legal requirement from September 2020 are under review in the light of the coronavirus crisis, but there is a possibility that the requirement may simply be delayed until later in the academic year. TACTYC published a critique of the assessment content and procedures: 'Young Children as Guineas Pigs'. Nancy Stewart has been leading on TACTYC's collaborative efforts with other organisations through More Than a Score (MTAS) to encourage more informed debate about the implications of baseline assessment, and to lobby in opposition to baseline. The work has included numerous press and broadcast statements, briefing members of Parliament in Westminster, and meeting with the Shadow Schools minister. In addition, TACTYC uses its social media and website to continue to promote widespread opposition through postcard campaigns and petition. Such active engagement through TACTYC has helped to keep the baseline debate on the agenda and in the press.

Early Years Foundation Stage: TACTYC is part of the EYFS Coalition which was formed by 14 sector organisations to inform debate on the government's proposed changes to the Early Learning Goals and Educational Programmes of the EYFS. The coalition produced two major pieces of work – a literature review updating evidence on early learning (*Getting it Right in the Early Years Foundation Stage: a review of the evidence*, Pascal and Bertram) and a report from a survey of practitioners (*Mapping the landscape: practitioners' views on the Early Years Foundation Stage*, Bamsey, Georgeson, Healy and O'Caomh). TACTYC was represented by Nancy Stewart in the commissioning group for the literature review, and by Jan Georgeson in developing the practitioner survey and report. TACTYC submitted a detailed response to the DfE consultation on the proposed changes, which can be seen on the website. Currently, the EYFS Coalition has plans to meet with DfE representatives and Dr Julian Grenier to discuss proposed changes to Development Matters.

Campaign for a professional workforce: Sparked by concern at the falling qualification levels of the early childhood workforce, limited funding and opportunities for continuing professional development, TACTYC worked with the Early Childhood Studies Degree Network (ECSDN) to host a symposium at the University of Reading ('Professionals working with young children: or just anybody?', November 2019). The symposium was followed by a briefing paper and social media campaign. Subsequently, TACTYC has joined the Early Years Workforce Commission, a coalition of organisations set up to undertake a review of the workforce challenges facing the sector, and develop comprehensive and workable solutions.

OFSTED approach to inspection of Initial Teacher Education: TACTYC submitted a robust response to consultation on Ofsted's proposed guidelines for inspectors which included repeated reference to an inadequate judgement for any college which did not teach only systematic synthetic phonics in the teaching of early reading (see website). Subsequently, Wendy Scott has been in correspondence with Ofsted officials, reinforcing TACTYC's concerns and seeking to clarify the evidence and facts regarding requirements and pedagogy. The correspondence is ongoing. Wendy has also written to Ofsted on behalf of TACTYC urging explicit guidance for inspectors on working to help to prevent (often unconscious) racial bias and inequalities.

Sector engagement: Working with other organisations across the early years sector has become an important way to increase our voice, and TACTYC has been active in a number of collaborations this year:

- Early Childhood Forum (ECF), represented by Dr Jane Payler who sits on the ECF Steering Group
- Primary Umbrella Group meetings represented by Wendy Scott
- More Than a Score (MTAS), with Nancy Stewart as a member of the MTAS core group
- EYFS Coalition, represented by Jan Georgeson and Nancy Stewart
- Early Years Workforce Commission (EYWC), represented by Nancy Stewart, Penny Borkett, Sharon Curtis and Helen Bilton
- Early Childhood Studies Degree Network (ECSDN) joint sponsorship of a symposium on the workforce, represented by Helen Bilton and Nancy Stewart
- Response to DfE Covid early years guidance - drafting and supporting open letter and response, signed by more than 30 organisations and experts
- First 1001 Days Campaign, represented by Jane Payler

In addition to these meetings where TACTYC is formally represented, individual Trustees maintain many other links which help to inform our work and disseminate information about TACTYC's activities.

Consultations: This year we have responded to four consultations (please see our website for further information):

- Early Years Foundation Stage Reforms, DfE
- Initial Teacher Education Inspection Framework and Handbook
- Early Childhood Forum – survey to members
- Impact of Covid 19 on Education and Children's Services (open until 21st July)

We warmly welcome comments and additions from our membership before responses are submitted whenever time allows. Members should note that responses to consultations are counted as **only one response**, so although we represent a membership group, this is not reflected in the DfE analysis. 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: 2019-20 has been a year of exciting developments for 'Early Years'. We were delighted to welcome Carmen Dalli to our editorial team, further strengthening our international base. We grew from four to five issues per year and we were listed on the SSCI (Social Sciences Citation Index). We also agreed some changes to our publishing agreement with Taylor and Francis which have further enhanced the financial contribution which the journal makes to TACTYC. In 2019 we had 114 papers submitted, and 160,000 papers downloaded, more than in any previous year. Our special issue on 'Beyond Gender Binaries' (40,1 March 2020) was our biggest issue yet and we will be publishing another special issue on 'Early Childhood Education and Care in Latin America' in our December double issue (40, 4+5).

Conference: The 2019 Conference, on the theme of 'Happiness and Well-being in the Early Years', was held for the first time in June rather than our previous November norm. The one-day conference was held at Birmingham ICC. The three keynotes, research briefings and discussion forum provided a well-received opportunity for professional development and networking. Many thanks to conference organiser Dr Jane Murray and the conference committee.

Maintained Nursery Schools research project: This TACTYC-funded report, carried out by Dr Carla Solvason and Sam-Sutton Tsang of the University of Worcester and Dr Rebecca Webb of the University of Sussex, highlights the vital role that Maintained Nursery Schools play in areas of social deprivation. Survey feedback from 115 practitioners, in-depth interviews with 21 leaders and 6 setting visits provided a wealth of data demonstrating the impact that these schools have upon the disadvantaged children, their families and neighbouring early years settings in their local communities.

Next research project: In line with TACTYC's advocacy work for professional development and to provide evidence to inform policy development, we have now invited bids for the sum of up to £12,000 for a 'Systematic literature review of international research evidence on the impact of staff qualification levels in ECEC on the experiences of and outcomes for children and families'. We look forward to sharing with you news of the successful bid, and of the research as it progresses.

TACTYC book series

Having completed the original contract with Routledge for the TACTYC book series, Jane Payler and Janet Moyles met Routledge representatives to discuss extending the series. The publisher is very keen to extend the series and is pleased with its success to date. An agreement is being developed, with potential titles and topics for inclusion based initially on TACTYC's strategic priorities. We would be interested to hear members' suggestions for topics that will fit with the overall series approach of research evidence into practice: contact Janet Moyles and Jane Payler who have been leading the development of the series.

Occasional Papers: We aim to produce two Occasional Papers each year and this year we have published online and in paper format:

- No: 13: ***What role do maintained nursery schools play in Early Years sector improvements?*** Carla Solvason*, Rebecca Webb** and Samantha Sutton-Tsang* (*University of Worcester/**University of Sussex). This was a direct result of the research project we funded detailed above.
- No: 14: **The significance of children's play and empowerment: An observational tool.** Natalie Canning: Open University. This was produced from some of the findings from the book in our Routledge Book Series.

Many thanks to Janet Moyles for overseeing the production of the Occasional Papers.

Supporting

Website: Our website continues to provide a forum to publish news, documents, and support reflection and discussion within and far beyond our membership. Many thanks to Karen Boardman who maintains and updates the website regularly. Taylor & Francis provide us with excellent back-up, updating and training. We are indebted to Karen and T&F for the success and vibrancy of the website.

Blog and Covid-19 response: We have introduced a blog as a website feature intended to support professional discussion. Following the first few blogs published, in order to allow the voice of front-line practitioners to be heard in response to the Covid-19 crisis the Board decided to publish a series of blogs from those working with children, families, and communities. In addition, we are extending the effort to support the voice of practitioners through a survey that is intended to inform discussions of experiences and lessons learned. Thank you to Jan Georgeson for developing and managing the survey, and to Penny Borkett for coordinating the blog.

Reflections articles and Reflections award: The *Reflections* pages continue to be a popular part of the website, offering a space to share research and debate issues. So far this year there have been three papers published with more to follow. The Student Reflections Award has grown in recognition with the number of entries increasing substantially. The closing date for this year's award will be July 31st.

3) Finances and Membership

Finances: Under the careful guidance of our Acting Treasurer, Janet Moyles and Natalie Canning who is taking over as Treasurer, the Board of Trustees has made good use of available funds to support the wide- ranging initiatives reported above. We have developed closer budget planning linked to our strategic priorities, and employing an administrative assistant to manage ongoing record-keeping will allow the Treasurer to concentrate on monitoring budget and expenditure, which is reported and reviewed at each Board meeting. We are in the process of establishing online payments for membership and conferences, which should also streamline the administrative tasks. Membership fees are important to fund the activities of the Board of Trustees, while income from the journal makes a large contribution which enables TACTYC to undertake larger projects such as funding research.

Membership and fees – Our membership currently stands at around 150, with a high proportion paying concessionary fees. A strategy to encourage new membership is being considered. To encourage student engagement during the Covid-19 crisis, a temporary 6-month membership was offered for a fee of £5.

Thank you

As I step down as a TACTYC Trustee after 13 years on the Executive Committee and Board, I want to express my gratitude. I am privileged to have worked alongside those who generously give their time, efforts and expertise to press for the best for children, families, their communities and the professionals who serve them. TACTYC is not a large organisation, but because it speaks with authority and integrity it is capable of an impact that is disproportionate to its size. Thanks to the Trustees for all that they do behind the scenes, and to TACTYC members for your continued support.

Nancy Stewart, June 2020