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Sir Ian Kennedy to lead review of NHS children's services

The Chief Executive of the NHS, David Nicholson, has commissioned Sir Ian Kennedy to explore the cultural obstacles that can stand in the way of sustained improvement in the provision of care for children and to consider what can be done to develop the NHS' contribution to safeguarding children.

Sir Ian will look at how to build on recent progress and ensure lasting improvements in quality and outcomes for children. He will look at various areas including:

- The care of children outside specifically paediatric settings
- Health visiting and community services
- Arrangements to safeguard children
- How the NHS responds to the needs of families as well as individuals

Sir Ian said:

"I am delighted that David Nicholson has asked me to undertake this important piece of work. The care and welfare of children are a large part of what the NHS does. There are many examples of good practice, but there is also room for improvement: the importance of children and young people's health and wellbeing cannot be overstated.

"I am keen to talk to NHS staff, those involved in health and healthcare, children and their families, and anyone else with an interest in this project. I want to hear about what's working well, where the problems are and any ideas that people have for making sustainable improvements, so that we can work together to make the NHS even more responsive to children, their needs and aspirations."

Councils cut early years liaison staff

The Pre-School Learning Alliance's member's survey uncovered the fact that many early years settings are losing valuable face-to-face support from their local authorities, *Children & Young People Now* reports. Almost a quarter of respondents to the survey made an unprompted reference to the disappearance of local pre-school development workers.

Local authorities historically funded the development workers who would go into settings to serve as a link for providers, local authorities, external funders and Ofsted. A spokesman for the alliance said: "One in four of our members have told us they have lost that day-to-day connection with their local authority and are missing out on information about local initiatives and funding opportunities."

(*Children & Young People Now*, 3 September 2009)

Nursery nurses have to cover health visitor jobs, says union

According to the Unite union, Nursery nurses are covering work usually done by health visitors because of a shortage of health visitors, *Nursery World* reports.

In Havering, Essex, nursery nurses are running group health visits for one-year-olds, and newborns are not being seen by health visitors until they are almost four months old.

Dave Munday, Unite professional officer, said that while group visits do provide a service, nursery nurses are being asked to do work for which they are untrained and unqualified. He also stated that health visitors are working under huge pressures and way over their contracted hours. He said: "I get calls from members in tears because they can't do the job that's required."

(Nursery World, 2 September 2009)

Ofsted dispels myths about paperwork - Childminders delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage have nothing to fear when an inspector calls, says *Roger Shippam* director, children, at Ofsted

A growing number of childminders as well as people using childminding services have expressed concern over increases in the number of written documents that they believe they are required to keep to deliver the EYFS.

Roger Shippam, director, children, at Ofsted, to dispel the myths and rumours said: "The most important thing inspectors want to see is that children are at the heart of all that happens. The EYFS itself identifies the policies and procedures that childminders need to have; it also states clearly that most of these do not need to be written."

Shippam reminds childminders that though regulations have changed with the introduction of the new framework, the requirement for paperwork overall has not. The few written documents childminders are required to have were required previously under the National Standards.

He then goes on to clarify the requirements by emphasising that most of them do not need written responses but can be simply discussed with the Ofsted inspector in person. Samples of children's work, photographs, shared diaries, and so on, will suffice when trying to show what children can do, for instance.

The self-evaluation form is the only document not specifically mentioned in the EYFS that Ofsted asks childminders to complete. It is not mandatory but it is an important tool in helping childminders to reflect on what they do and to make improvements where necessary.

(Nursery World, 20 August 2009)

Flexible routes to gaining skills

In its drive to develop the skills of the nation's childcare workforce, the Government is reforming its vocational qualifications system, *Nursery World* reports. The new Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) will replace the current National Qualifications Framework (NQF) by January 2011. Its aim is to make the vocational qualifications offered in England, Wales and Northern Ireland more relevant to the needs of employers and more flexible and accessible for learners.

The QCF allows students to build up credits at their own pace, and combine these in a way which will help them progress their careers. Students can 'mix and match' a wider range of generic and specialist credits in their given area. Each qualification and unit has a credit value (one credit represents ten hours of learning time) and there are three sizes of qualifications: Awards (one to 12 credits), Certificates (13 to 36 credits) and Diplomas (37 credits or more).

Sion Simon, higher education minister, said: "The new system will ensure that no learning is ever lost, as qualifications will be flexible enough to incorporate relevant modules of training gained at a pace that suits the learner."

(Nursery World, 20 August 2009)

Ten per cent drop in childminders

Nursery World reports on figures from Ofsted that reveal the number of childminders has dropped more than 10 per cent in the past two years. Quarterly statistics on the number of registered childcare providers and places up to the end of August show a drop in the number of childminders for the seventh time in a row. Children's minister Beverley Hughes sought to reassure childminders and dispel 'myths of an industry in crisis' in her speech to the NCMA conference in Southport on 8 November. She said, 'I know that in some areas childminders continue to experience unwanted vacancies, that make sustaining their businesses a challenge during these difficult economic times. We are doing what we can to help. But the long-term trend is one of continued demand for childminders.'

(Nursery World, 20 November 2008)

Demand for urgent early years reform

An article in *Children and Young People Now* reported on calls by the Chair of the National Children's Bureau for an extension of the EYFS to six-year-olds, a reform of teacher training for early years and all staff to be Level 3 or above by 2015.

Speaking at a conference in Birmingham, Dame Gillian Pugh was quoted in the article and said, "We never look at early years as a whole and we're rarely reminded that a lot of three-and four-year-olds are at school."

The article also noted how Pugh criticised some elements of the EYFS particularly around literacy, however she did not agree with the attack of the EYFS by the Open Eye group for being too regulated.

A common core of training for all practitioners, before specialising in areas such as teaching or family support was called for and Pugh highlighted the need for more time for professional development. Five days a year were needed, but emphasised that social partnership was needed to help agree funding.

(Children and Young People Now, 19 March 2008)

Retrain or lose job under skills plan

The forthcoming Integrated Qualifications Framework means that some early years workers may need to retrain when it comes into effect in autumn, according to a report in *Children and Young People Now*.

Thom Crabb, from the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) was quoted and said, "There will be a transition period if their qualifications aren't registered. They will have to think about taking particular units, such as the certificate in Early Years Foundation Stage practice."

According to the CWDC, a set list of approved qualifications in the framework will help cut down on the huge range that currently exists.

(Children and Young People Now, 19 March 2008)

Inset days for children's workers

Children and Young People Now reported on local authority plans to provide training days for all of the children's workforce. A London borough is hoping to provide training similar to teachers' inset days.

Julie Vaggers, head of a nursery and children's centre in the borough said, "We're working towards integrated training days. It would be good to get people looking at policy and strategy more closely and looking at what things are developing."

The chief executive of the National Children's Bureau, Paul Ennals, also backed the idea highlighting that bringing together staff from across the workforce would be good for professional development.

(Children and Young People Now, 19 March 2008)

Campaign for the future of health visiting

A survey revealing a postcode lottery service has prompted the Family and Parenting Institute (FPI) to launch a campaign for Health Visitors. The FPI surveyed Primary Care Trusts which also revealed that Health Visitor numbers overall are in decline. A YouGov poll demonstrated that 76 per cent of parents want trained health visitors with up-to-date knowledge to provide parenting support and advice. 83 per cent of parents would like that in the home. A petition has been placed on the Downing Street website in support of the campaign. For more information and to sign the petition visit www.familyandparenting.org/healthVisitors

High failure rate for sector apprentices

Nursery World has reported that early years advanced NVQ apprentices have the worst success rates in the work-based learning sector. In 2005-06 two thirds of candidates failed to achieve their full framework award of NVQ 3, key skills and technical certificate according to a survey by the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI).

The article quoted Margaret Swift, who led the ALI survey team, who said:

"Numeracy has been the biggest problem for most learners. People are getting the NVQ, but not the whole framework, and are working as NVQ-qualified. Good employers won't do that, but some will. These people have not got their key skills; they have not developed literacy and numeracy skills."

Emma Phillips, managing director of nursery chain Child Base was also quoted in the article as highlighting the problem of lack of skills in school leavers joining the early years workforce.

Lesley Staggs, an early years consultant and former national director of the Foundation Stage said a well trained workforce is one of the key issues in early years. She said: "I am constantly arguing that we need a huge investment in money in the early years and we cannot afford to be wasting it."

The survey, 'Early years: it's not all child's play' is available at www.ali.gov.uk. From 1st April, ALI merges with Ofsted and the report will be available from www.ofsted.gov.uk

(Nursery World, 15 March 2007)

Framework plans revealed

Plans for an integrated qualifications framework (IQF) for the children's workforce were fleshed out last week. The document, *Clear Progression: towards an Integrated Qualifications Framework*, by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) with the Children's Workforce Network (CWN), states that by next month there will be a plan to develop 'common transferable units based on the identification of common functions performed by members

of the children's workforce'. The unit-based framework will allow mobility across the workforce and have eight levels up to and including higher education and professional level qualifications. *Clear Progression: towards an Integrated Qualifications Framework* is available at www.cwdcouncil.org.uk

(By Simon Vevers, Nursery World, 9 November 2006)

CWDC takes on integrated working responsibility

On 1 October, the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) took over responsibility from the DfES for implementation of work collectively described as 'integrated working': namely information sharing, the Common Assessment Framework, the lead professional role, and multi-agency working.

Later in the year and in 2007, the CWDC website will be developed to support these areas, but in the mean time all guidance and resources will remain on the Every Child Matters website (www.ecm.gov.uk).

The CWDC is also planning a series of integrated working regional events in late autumn. Details will be posted on www.cwdcouncil.org.uk when finalised.

(Sure Start News, 26 October 2006)

DfES publishes response to EYFS consultation

The DfES has published its response to the public consultation on the content of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework (EYFS).

The consultation sought views on the draft EYFS framework, and ran from 5 May to 28 July 2006. From September 2008, the EYFS will be the phase of learning and development for children between birth and the end of the academic year in which they turn five. It will be implemented in all registered early years settings and maintained and independent schools. These settings will be required to meet the learning, development and welfare requirements in the supporting EYFS package, and to have regard to the guidance associated with those requirements as appropriate.

This will ensure that all young children have access to an integrated learning and care experience that evidence shows enables them to achieve the best outcomes, and gives parents the choice of a consistent quality offer whichever setting their child attends. For more information, visit www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations/conResults.cfm?consultationId=1393

(Sure Start News, 26 October 2006)

Nursery managers 'must have degree'

All nursery managers in Scotland will be required to study for a degree-level qualification by 2011, the Scottish Executive has revealed in its long-awaited response to the early years workforce review. The announcement was accompanied by an annual £5 million boost to help private and voluntary sector providers to recruit and train qualified staff.

In the review, education minister Peter Peacock set out his plans to introduce new qualifications for managers up to degree level, a career structure for all nursery workers and ongoing training and development. He said: "My long-term ambition is for all centres to be led by early years and childcare leaders who are qualified (including through a professional development route) at SCQF level 9 (ordinary degree or work-based equivalent)."

.Under the proposals, work will begin on developing the new integrated qualifications framework in September 2006 and the first managers will undertake the new professional leadership level by September 2008. By 2011, all lead practitioners and managers will be required to attain this level. The National Review of Early Years and Childcare Workforce is available for consultation until 22 December 2006 at www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/07/10140823/0.

(Nicole Weinstein, Nursery World, 17 August 2006)

Four pathways are signposted for EYP

The skills, knowledge and practical experience that early years workers will need to meet to achieve Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) have been outlined by the Children's Workforce Development Council.

The CWDC's 32-page prospectus includes examples of possible training routes for individuals who want to achieve EYPS, which is equivalent to qualified teacher status. Candidates will need to show that they meet a set of national standards at level 6, the final version of which will be published on 17 July.

The document sets out four pathways to achieving EYPS based on qualifications and experience. Early years workers need to have a degree or equivalent qualification before they start on one of these routes. There are 9,300 possible places for EYPS training across these four routes for training in 2006-2007.

The first phase of training for up to 600 candidates will start in September. They will follow the fastest route to EYPS, the 'validation' or assessment-only pathway, and can achieve EYPS by January 2007. A typical candidate might be a qualified teacher employed by the local authority to support early years settings, working in a children's centre.

Candidates who have 'broadly relevant' experience for EYPS but need more training or experience can follow a short or long Extended Professional Development (EPD) pathway. The short route would be relevant for someone

who is close to demonstrating the standards. They might have a degree in Early Childhood Studies with experience of working with nought to fives, or they might be a qualified primary school teacher, with or without experience of working with three to five-year-olds.

Those following the long EPD pathway might have an early years foundation degree and experience of working with under-fives, or a degree in an unrelated subject with substantial experience of working with nought-to-fives; or they could be someone with a vocational degree who has worked in another role, for example, an experienced health visitor.

The full-training pathway is 12 months for candidates with a graduate-level qualification but limited early years experience. The prospectus also gives more details of funding. The CWDC has been allotted £51.8 million from the Transformation Fund to cover the costs of developing the training and for financial support to EYPS.

CWDC chief executive Jane Haywood said: "This is an essential document for anyone interested in building a career in early years. EYP status is set to help the sector undergo a transformation, and we hope the prospectus will show how it is achievable by people from a range of backgrounds." The 'Early years professional prospectus' can be downloaded at www.cwdcouncil.org.uk

(Catherine Gaunt, Nursery World, 6 July 2006)

Get the message

Practitioners are faced with balancing the concerns raised over the EYFS with using it in the best interests of children. Simon Vevers reports.

A 'nappy curriculum', gross interference in the rights of parents to bring up their children, another example of the sinister workings of the nanny state. Perhaps predictably, the publication of *The Early Years Foundation Stage: Consultation on a single quality framework for services to children from birth to five* attracted a rash of lurid and misleading headlines. [.]

But, significantly, while some tabloid and broadsheet newspapers railed against the document as a blueprint for introducing children to formal education too early, they were clearly not averse to the government imposing more formal approaches on the teaching of reading through synthetic phonics.

So, practitioners face the twin tasks of combating alarm among parents about the government's plans and explaining those key elements which help the sector, and resisting pressure to introduce very young children to teaching methods that may alienate them from reading rather than accelerate their progress.

Bernadette Duffy, head of the Thomas Coram Early Childhood Centre in Camden, says that while she understands concerns over changes in early learning goals relating to language and literacy, 'there are lots of things in the consultation document that are really powerful'.

Unlike the national curriculum, the document is underpinned by a strong set of principles, and section three contains important material on how children learn, how they perceive their learning and what practitioners need to do, such as developing flexible routines.

Role of practitioners

[.] One of the key messages, she insists, is that the curriculum is not a syllabus, or a programme of study, but is 'all the things a child experiences in the setting'. It is not a case of 'racing children through the early learning goals', and the emphasis must be on sensitive adults 'tuned into the needs of children as individuals'.

Peter Elfer, senior lecturer in early childhood studies at Roehampton University, says that practitioners need support in thinking about an implicit 'tension' in their work, whether they have a quasi-parental role and concentrate on children's emotional wellbeing, or they should have 'a more learning-orientated view'.

Early years consultant Sally Barnes, a former head and early years inspector, says parents are being 'grossly manipulated', partly through the scare tactics of newspapers. But she also believes the government often 'steals the language of early years' to serve its own purposes in conveying messages which are not in the best interests of young children or those working with them. For example, she says, the Rose Review referred to teachers using their professional judgement and the need for a rich curriculum. Yet these admirable aims are qualified at every turn by its endorsement of synthetic phonics. [.]

She points out that children in most other countries do not start school until they are six and their brains and hearing are sufficiently developed to cope with more formal approaches - 'ultimately, they learn to read quicker and better,' she says. [.]

Varied experiences

Speaking in a personal capacity, Ms Miller [Thelma Miller head of the Clyde early childhood centre in south-east London] says that while the EYFS must be a supportive framework for enabling practitioners to plan activities and meet children's needs, it also has to take account of the varying circumstances and specific levels of development of children. At times in her centre, up to 85 per cent of the children may have English as an additional language.

She, too, is perturbed by any proposals that would undermine the current literacy strategy applied at her centre, which is to give children rich and varied experiences in communication up to the age of five. "We want them to understand the relationship between print and the spoken word and that communication takes many forms," says Ms Miller. "Our children have two story times a day and we have a very print-rich environment. The guidance before the Rose Review was very good because it talked about children experimenting with sounds and linking sounds and letters, but at the end of the Foundation Stage, not at three or four."

Boys, in particular, need to see some purpose to their reading, she says. "If we teach children by rote when they are not ready, it takes away the joy of

reading, language and communication. There is a danger of giving children what to them appear meaningless tasks of linking sounds with letters, which will bore them and could turn them off reading. Parents do look to practitioners for guidance on these issues."

(Extracted from an article by Simon Vevers in Nursery World, 29.06.06)

Crib Sheet: Early Years Foundation Stage

The government is consulting on the foundation stage, which is a single framework for care, learning and development.

Okay, just what comprises 'early years'? The preschool stage or, to be precise, from birth to the August following a child's fifth birthday. According to the government, that's the point at which a child should be ready for school.

And what is the Early Years Foundation Stage? A single framework for care, learning and development which brings together the existing curriculum guidance for the foundation stage, the national standards for under-eights daycare and childminding, and a modicum of Birth to Three Matters. All are linked to the 10-year strategy for childcare and provisions under the Childcare Bill which, when enacted, will come into force from September 2008.

Is this single framework a good thing? The general view is yes, but the definition of 'single' is interesting since the consultation consists of around 10 different documents on the web, each an integral part of the package.

What do they say? Well, every framework has to begin with a set of overarching principles. So the introduction refers to well-rehearsed but essential statements, like the importance of parents and families and, in early years settings, a key person. Babies and young children are seen as competent learners from birth, and learning through play is hugely important. Good assessment is vital. Services have to be inclusive. But there are some significant additions to these principles, like the need to join up planning and delivery. And the paper states that high-quality care will have the maximum impact on a child's development.

Are we talking outcomes for young children? The foundation stage is very Every Child Matters, as is recognised in a draft poster at the end of section 3 that places the areas of learning and development within the five outcomes. And those areas of learning and development cover a range of issues, from personal, social and emotional development through to physical and creative development.

So by the age of three, my child should be able to explain the plot twists in *Lost*? Or at least come up with the concept. It's about individualised learning in a safe setting, going at that child's speed but making sure that the early years worker provides support that helps them to learn, communicate what they are thinking and feeling, interact with others, and continue to discover and engage with what's going on around them. Or it would be, if the learning and development tables were less prescriptive.

How is this to be done? Sections 4 and 5 focus on how staff meet the welfare and workforce requirements for early years; and how they should meet the inspection requirements as well as work towards improving the quality of the service. For example, practitioners must have safeguarding policies and procedures in place, and operate a healthy early years service. 'Healthy' considerations range from the state of the premises to providing nutritious food.

You mentioned quality - what's that about? Quality improvement schemes are in place in most local authorities. While inspection will look at how well managed the setting is and whether it contributes to helping children achieve their best (within the outcomes framework), quality improvement suggests that even the most successful services can and should continue to improve.

(By Lisa Payne, policy unit, National Children's Bureau, published in Children Now, 21-27 June, 2006)

Team of pedagogues take the lead in Cheshire centres

A new type of highly qualified early years worker is taking the lead in Cheshire's children's centres. Cheshire County Council has created a team of 'pedagogues' to work in its phase one children's centres.

Lead pedagogue Cathy Hughes said the authority was inspired by Denmark's social pedagogues when looking at how to meet requirements for qualified teachers in centres. "We wanted it to be a holistic role and broader than delivering the maintained nursery teaching role," said Hughes.

The scheme started in September 2005 and there are now six pedagogues supporting daycare services in centres. There will be nine pedagogues by September this year. Most are qualified teachers with at least five years' experience of working in early years. And they have had extra training on Birth to Three Matters.

Their role includes leading on early years education, being a role model for staff, helping with planning, and linking in with other children's professionals. The pedagogues are also starting to take on a wider community role, supporting other childcare settings in children's centre areas.

Meanwhile the University of Chester is working with Sure Start Cheshire to give trainee teachers the chance to become early years specialists. Four trainees completed their final teaching placements in nurseries, working alongside pedagogues and qualified teachers. The trial is now being evaluated. Debbie Williams, the university's partnership manager, hoped it would be rolled out. "It's a brilliant opportunity for our trainees and it fits in with the national agenda for children's centres," she said. "It's a win-win situation."

(Jo Stephenson, Children Now, 14-20 June 2006)

Bring our two worlds into one

Early years consultant Ros Bayley comments on targets for toddlers in an article in the TES. The major stumbling block in terms of children's progress is the guidance on communication, language and literacy. When learning goals for this strand of the foundation curriculum were devised back in 1999, the literacy lobby was very strong - it had the personal backing of then education secretary David Blunkett. In desperation to reach agreement and ensure the long-promised guidance was released, early years experts were persuaded to accept some decidedly 'aspirational' goals.

History has proved them wrong. As a result of this decision - and despite the valiant efforts of many excellent foundation-stage practitioners - many children, forced to aim too high too soon, simply fail. And then they give up. As Homer Simpson so memorably put it: "Kids, you've tried your hardest and you failed miserably. The lesson is: don't try."

It's bad enough that professional, hard-working teachers now blame themselves when children fail to reach the 'aspirational' targets. But the far greater evil is that many children - especially boys - now fail in the literacy stakes before they've even begun. And please don't turn round and accuse Sue [Sue Palmer, co-author of *Foundation of Literacy*], me or my early years colleagues of having low expectations. All we ask is that the goals are developmentally appropriate.

In order to understand what such goals might be, you need to understand young children. Many KS2 people out there still don't know that the early learning goals being forced on their future pupils are wildly inappropriate. And, put bluntly, they don't know that they don't know. (Incidentally, literacy colleagues - before you take a gun to my head, I'm happy to admit that there are many things about literacy that I don't know I don't know, as Sue regularly reminds me).

At the moment, there is real confusion about what is right for the youngest children in our society, and unless professionals work together to achieve clarity, the forces of ignorance will move into the space. So practitioners across the foundation and primary sectors need to understand how children are best taught at different stages - and why.

(Extracted from an article in TES, 26 May 2006)

Early years paper load may shrink

The foundation stage - famous for its 117-box tick list - and its sister strategy for babies to three year olds, together with an array of guidance and goals for young children are to be reborn as a single framework.

It was five years ago that the guidance for teaching three to five-year-olds was published and three years since the principles for working with under-threes were introduced. Now ministers want to find out from early years teachers what works best in nurseries and how the frameworks can better dovetail with key stage 1.

The 117-box tick list will stay. Lesley Staggs, director of the foundation stage in the primary national strategy team, said existing guidance will not be ripped up, but did need to be simplified.

She said: "We want to make clearer the links between the two core documents: Birth to Three Matters and the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage. We do not think it is a good idea to start all over again, but what does make sense is to help people see more clearly how these two documents work together, particularly in early years settings which cater for children from birth to four or five, where there is an overlap."

Ministers want the two documents brought together under a new birth to five framework.

(By Helen Ward, TES, 5 August 2005)

Split from GPs 'puts children at risk'

Children at risk of being placed on the child protection register or of illness could be missed if health visitors are detached from general practices, warn GPs.

Primary care organisations are increasingly relocating health visitors, traditionally based at GP practices, to community-based units known as geographical teams. Some have also been moved to target areas of need under the Sure Start programme. But at the British Medical Association's national conference for local medical committees, which represent GPs across the country, GPs voted overwhelmingly that health visitors and district nurses 'should always be attached to practices'.

GPs unanimously supported motions to 'deplore the move towards the separation, both physically and managerially, of nursing and other teams from general practice'. Dr Keesi Naidoo, chairman of Sefton Medical Committee, one of the committees that raised the motion, said GPs feared child protection concerns or illness could be missed if health visitors were separated from primary care health teams.

(By Asha Goveas, Children Now, 22-28 June 2005)

Early years must be fully devolved

The Scottish Parliament needs to take control of early years and childcare funding, say campaigners contributing to a major inquiry into the country's early years provision. Children in Scotland chief executive Bronwen Cohen said: "Early years is a developing area for Scotland, but some of our policies and funding comes through Westminster."

She cited a 'scattergun' approach to funding that was getting in the way of providing an integrated, simple service structure. She also claimed that it was 'absolutely essential' that the Scottish Parliament committed to its own 10-

year childcare plan. "Scotland should have its own plan and develop its own clear vision. Scotland used to be a pioneer for education-led, child-centred services, and we would hope the Scottish Parliament is going to restore Scotland's position," she said.

Her comments follow evidence that was submitted to the Scottish Parliament education committee's early years inquiry by a range of groups. Nearly half of the submissions to the committee so far raise issues around the development of teachers and the childcare workforce, and the availability of choice, which included concerns over a lack of provision outside standard hours and in rural areas. The complexity and short term nature of funding is also cited as a concern, along with the need to better support and involve parents.

(By Fay Schopen, Children Now, 1-7 June 2005)