



Kemi Badenoch MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families  
Department for Education  
Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street  
London SW1P 3BT

1<sup>st</sup> August 2019

Dear Mrs Badenoch,

I'm writing on behalf of our members – around 25,000 childminders, nursery workers, nannies and early years students. As the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY), our aim is for all children to experience high quality childcare and early learning. We support early years practitioners to provide first-rate provision through training, resources, advice and peer support, and we champion the vital role they play in helping prepare children for a bright future.

As you take up your post, childcare and early years providers in England are facing significant challenges. Whilst the overwhelming majority of providers (95 per cent) are now good or outstanding according to Ofsted, many are also under increasing pressure to survive. Rising costs alongside low funding levels for 'free' entitlement places for are beginning to take their toll.

Of great concern to PACEY is that the number of registered childminders in England has declined by over a third since 2012.<sup>i</sup> If things continue as they are, in just a few years, most families will not be able to choose this unique form of highly flexible and personalised home-based care with more favourable ratios (fewer children per staff) than group settings.

Childminders are a vital part of the childcare system, delivering a fifth of all formal childcare places for pre-school children in England.<sup>ii</sup> Like group settings, childminders are inspected by Ofsted and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum to all children under five. A majority (69%) now have a full Level 3 qualification or higher<sup>iii</sup> and 95% per cent are rated 'good' or 'outstanding'.<sup>iv</sup> A major DfE-funded study of the impact of funded early education in England has found that childminders have been found to have a positive impact on young children's cognitive development (especially verbal ability), and behavioural self-regulation.<sup>v</sup> A number of studies have found that childminders provide a crucial form of family support, particularly in disadvantaged communities.<sup>vi</sup>

However, to remain viable, childminders need more help with start-up and training costs, and a removal of the key barriers preventing them from delivering funded places. This means a higher hourly rate; an end to delayed payments and unnecessary unlawful red tape from local authorities; and a removal of the ban on childminders providing funded places to related children. These are all factors contributing to a decline in childminder morale and sustainability that government could resolve. We also know many childminders would like to deliver funded places but are not able to simply because no parent has asked them to. So childminding must also be actively championed by national and local government and the health service to parents.

Last month PACEY launched an *Inquiry into Childminding in the 21st Century*, to both understand what has changed and to explore what more could be done to make childminding a more attractive career to both join and remain in. We have also commissioned the University of Plymouth to carry out a study on the reasons for the decline. We look forward to sharing initial findings with you in the autumn.

Early years specialists across the globe agree that the key to providing high quality childcare and early education is well-trained and qualified professionals. After decades of gains, there is now very worrying evidence of an emerging downward trend in the qualification levels of all early years practitioners in England.<sup>vii</sup> PACEY has been calling on government to take action to stem the exodus of specialist early years graduates in particular.<sup>viii</sup>

Another key area of importance is the upcoming revision of the EYFS Statutory Framework and Early Learning Goals (ELGs). PACEY is working with a very broad coalition of organisations with similar concerns about the changes currently being piloted. We are keen to work with you to ensure that any future changes to the EYFS have the full benefit of the most up to date evidence and reflect best practice from across the sector.

I would very much welcome the chance to meet with you as soon as possible to introduce PACEY, and I look forward to hearing from your office to arrange a possible meeting date. I would also be happy to help arrange some visits to early years settings in your constituency, for example a nursery and a childminder.

Yours sincerely,



**Liz Bayram**

Chief Executive, Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years

**CC:** Rt Hon Gavin Williamson MP, Secretary of State for Education

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<sup>i</sup>Ofsted (2019), Childcare providers and inspections as at 31 March 2019 (London: Ofsted).

<sup>ii</sup>Ofsted (2019).

<sup>iii</sup>Department for Education (2018), *Childcare and early years providers survey: 2018* (London: Department for Education).

<sup>iv</sup>Ofsted (2019).

<sup>v</sup>E. Melhuish, J. Gardiner & S. Morris (2017), *Study of Early Education and Development: Impact Study on Early Education Use and Child Outcomes up to Age Three* (London: Department for Education).

<sup>vi</sup>L. Ang, E. Brooker & C. Stephen (2017), "A Review of the Research on Childminding: Understanding Children's Experiences in Home-Based Childcare Settings", *Early Childhood Education Journal* 45: 261.

<sup>vii</sup>S. Bonetti (2018), *The early years workforce: A fragmented picture* (London: Education Policy Institute).

<sup>viii</sup>Our findings and recommendations around early years specialist graduates are available at [www.pacey.org.uk/news-and-views/news/archive/2018-news/april-2018/urgent-action-needed-to-revert-loss-of-early-year/](http://www.pacey.org.uk/news-and-views/news/archive/2018-news/april-2018/urgent-action-needed-to-revert-loss-of-early-year/).