

# Building Blocks

A report on the state of the childcare and early years sector in England



## Executive Summary

Embargoed until Monday 1 June 2015

## **Building Blocks: introduction**

The soaring costs of childcare regularly make the headlines – and for good reasons. The cost of childcare places a huge strain on family finances and makes it difficult for those who would like to return to work or study. The need to improve access to childcare has also been highlighted in the media recently with figures revealing that less than half of councils offer sufficient childcare provision

However, we know that it is high quality childcare that really makes a difference for children, especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The benefits of high quality childcare have been well-documented and driving up quality was rightly included as one of the main recommendations in the recent report from the House of Lords Select Committee. Despite all this, the quality of the care children receive gets little attention from policy makers and needs to become a priority for the new Government alongside issues of cost and accessibility.

Now that the Government has committed to an extension of the number of free early education places, the challenge remains how to ensure the childcare sector is supported to deliver these places at the level of high quality that children deserve. But our survey shows a childcare workforce at tipping point - highly motivated by the work they do, and highly respected and relied upon by parents, but on the verge of making decisions about whether their businesses are viable for the future.

PACEY wants to see a sector-wide strategy that supports childcare professionals to improve their skills throughout their career, and encourages them to do so through increased recognition, status, and the right level of funding. Our survey results demonstrate the direct link between investment in skills development and business confidence. Commitment to a workforce development programme would help grow a confident and motivated workforce able to deliver the Government's ambitious targets to increase access to high quality childcare.

For an overwhelming majority of childcare providers, the growing focus on structured learning rather than learning through play was named as their main concern for the children they care for. PACEY wants to see the Government focus on a policy agenda that is underpinned by the kind of child-focused, play-based care and education that has been proven to most effectively support children's whole development.

As the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years, we are dedicated to supporting childcare professionals to deliver the very highest standards of care and learning for the children they look after. We provide training, resources and publications, and offer advice and peer support through our nationwide network of PACEY local volunteers.

Our Building Blocks survey gives a detailed picture of the state of the childcare profession across England. Our aim was to identify the main challenges childcare workers are facing for the future and also to assess the level of confidence in the sector. Our largest and most comprehensive ever survey to date, it involved registered childminders, nannies, nursery workers and managers as well as parents.

The survey was conducted during February 2015. Responses were collated from 2,442 respondents including 2,080 childminders and 285 childcare professionals working in group settings across all nine regions of England. Responses were also received from 180 parents.

The survey looked at five key areas that we believe form the "building blocks" of a sustainable and effective early years childcare sector. These areas are:

1. A funding system that incentivises quality
2. Regulation that can be relied upon and trusted
3. A workforce strategy that supports professionals throughout their career
4. High quality, flexible childcare across a range of settings
5. A confident and optimistic profession – focused on quality.

## A funding system that incentivises quality

### Costs are increasing and the system is complex

Recent political debate has centred around issues of cost and accessibility of childcare. We want to see the quality of childcare receiving equal focus. We know that childcare of the highest quality is what makes the most difference to children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. High quality care, delivered by well-qualified staff in small adult to child ratios, is expensive to provide and current funding streams do not recognise this nor do they offer financial incentives for providers to improve.

Equally, the debate on costs often fails to acknowledge the shortfall in funding for free early education places that providers have to make up themselves. Many settings are being forced to cross-subsidise their free places through higher fees, or retracting the number of funded places, both undermining Government's aim to increase the affordability, accessibility and quality of early years education.

The survey reveals the extent of the pressures on childcare providers who are coping with escalating business costs and a complex funding system that poses significant problems to both providers and parents.

### What our survey told us about costs and funding

- 1. Costs are rising.** Over half of both group and home-based childcare providers reported that costs increased for *all elements* of care provision over the last 12 months. In particular, during the past 12 months:
  - 75 per cent of group providers reported that the cost of staffing had increased, and
  - 80 per cent of home providers reported that the cost of food provided for children in their care had increased. One in five group settings and one in 15 childminding settings reported a loss in the last 12 months.

**2. The future feels uncertain.** Just over a quarter of both group and home-based providers felt less or much less confident about their future business than 12 months ago.

59 per cent of group settings and 69 per cent of childminders said that they had no plans to grow their business in the next 12 months. This poses a major threat to delivering against government targets of increasing access to and uptake of early education, in particular by children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

**3. The funding system is complex.** With the three main forms of childcare funding all managed and delivered in different ways, the process of accessing payments is complex. For parents, in particular, it can be confusing. None of the funding streams are linked in any way to the quality of care a childcare setting offers.

- Around a third of providers reported problems with the free early education entitlement funding (EYE), with insufficient rates, delayed payment and excessive administration all listed as common issues encountered by providers.
- **Tax credits** were unambiguously rated as the most difficult scheme by both providers and parents alike. A third of parents who claimed tax credits reported problems in the last 12 months.

**“Free entitlement payments [need to] reflect actual cost of provision.”**

**“I would like parents to understand that while they want affordable childcare they also want to trust their children to well qualified staff and this costs money. I would like the government to truly appreciate how crucial the early years is and commit to it.”**

### **PACEY’s calls for action**

Taking urgent action to simplify the current childcare funding system will reduce the burden on providers and make it easier for parents. Linking funding to quality will incentivise the sector to improve, and provide the best value for investment. PACEY recommends that the Government:

- simplifies the childcare funding system and streamline administration across Government departments. A single point of payment for childcare would reduce confusion for parents and reduce the administrative burden for childcare providers.
- commits to a regular assessment of childcare provider finances. Childcare providers cannot be supported to grow and improve the quality of their services without an understanding their financial position and sustainability.
- reviews the level of funded early years education (EYE) places as a priority so that funding fully supports a diverse, high quality childcare offer for children and addresses the current shortfall in funding.
- improves the commercial, consumer and regulatory incentives to improve quality across all settings by (a) tying funding to quality improvement, such as minimum staff qualification levels, commitment to ongoing professional development and restricting delivery of EYE to settings rated good or outstanding, and (b) committing to improved information provision about childcare to parents, not only about funding but also regarding the importance of quality.

## **Regulation that can be relied upon and trusted**

### **Trust in the inspection system is critical**

Children, parents and funders all require assurances that childcare provision is of high quality and delivered by competent professionals, in an appropriate setting. They need to have confidence in the mechanisms that regulate and inspect the care children receive.

Changes over the last few years – including the introduction of the revised Early Years Foundation Stage and appointing Ofsted as “the sole arbiter of quality” have aimed to unify the system across different types of providers and support greater recognition for early years provision. However our survey reveals that there are concerns across the sector about the consistency of inspection judgements and concerns about the complaint procedure.

## What our survey told us about the inspection system

1. **There are concerns about the consistency of inspections.** More than one in seven registered providers believe their last inspection was inconsistent with that of other similar settings and confidence in Ofsted's complaint procedures in particular is low.
  - "Improving consistency of inspection" received the second highest ranking when respondents were asked what one thing would improve their experience as a childcare provider.
  - Two out of five (41 per cent) providers who received a less-than-good grading that they believed was inconsistent complained to Ofsted. Of those complaints, 5 per cent led to a change in grading.

**"[We need] consistent inspections by Ofsted as it is subjective to the individual assessor on the day."**

2. **There are concerns about Ofsted's complaint procedures.**

Ofsted has reviewed their complaints procedure in the last two years and although it was not clear whether respondents were commenting on the old or new system, the survey shows that confidence in Ofsted's complaints procedure is low. Respondents scored 42 out of 100 on our confidence scale.

Over a third of providers (38 per cent) said they felt complaining about their inspection could negatively affect their relationship with Ofsted in the future. 30 per cent felt it would have no effect.

**"I feel it would stay on record and count against me in future."**

3. **Parent views on Ofsted gradings are very mixed.** When asked how much they agreed with the statement, "a good Ofsted grading will mean the same standard of care and education for my child regardless of what type of registered childcare setting it refers to", approximately one third of parents agreed and a third disagreed. The survey also showed that parents do not regard Ofsted ratings among the most important factors to consider

when making their childcare choices. Ofsted rating ranked fifth, below proximity, cost and opening hours.

**4. The new Common Inspection Framework offers an opportunity to boost trust in the system.** A recurring theme in comments from respondents was a desire to see more consistency across settings. This suggests that the forthcoming common inspection framework offers Ofsted an opportunity to communicate a fair and transparent system for all settings:

**“I would like Ofsted to be more transparent as to their requirements. No more guessing to what Ofsted is looking for please! Standards should be standards across the board, there is too much variation at the moment.”**

### **PACEY’s calls for action**

PACEY recommends that in order to strengthen confidence in the inspection system, and ensure we have a robust framework against which to measure quality, the Government and Ofsted should:

- ensure that clear guidance is given in the introduction of the Common Inspection Framework, recognising the early years as a distinct educational stage.
- review the evaluation criteria so there is a closer association with children’s outcomes.
- place the inspection of early years on an equal footing with schools, and bring all early years inspections in-house at the earliest opportunity.
- be more open about how Ofsted quality-assures its outsourced Inspection Service Providers (ISPs) and their inspectors.
- ensure the inspection regimes are consistent across different types of provider. For example, Ofsted only carry out fast-tracked inspection for “requires improvement” nurseries, but not for childminders or registered nannies that “require improvement”.

- raise awareness amongst parents of Ofsted's role in assessing the quality of childcare across all settings as well as the importance of professional development as a marker of quality.

## A workforce strategy that supports professionals throughout their career

### **A continuously developing profession**

Over the last decade, there has been significant progress in raising standards and strengthening the professionalism of the early years workforce. A succession of national funding programmes, together with implementation of some recommendations from the Nutbrown review have seen an increase in the number of childcarers with relevant childcare qualifications. However, over the last Parliament, investment has been in sharp decline, with wider cuts to local authority budgets making it harder for childcare professionals to access ongoing training and development.

In recent years, the focus has been on entry requirements alone, with little attention given to ongoing professional development to support settings to rise to new challenges, for example, adapting to the new system of support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and working with health visitors to deliver the new integrated review.

Our survey reveals that while childcare providers are highly motivated to develop their own professional skills, there is a real risk that rising costs of training, lack of availability and flexibility will impact on childcarers being able to develop their own practice and progress their careers. More importantly, lack of access to professional development risks undermining the confidence of the sector – which poses a significant threat to whether businesses can expand to meet the Government's targets for wider access to childcare.

### **What our survey told us about skills development**

- 1. The cost of getting a childcare qualification has increased.** Overall, the cost of qualification courses has increased substantially for both home- and group-based.

- The cost of level 3 courses has increased more than sevenfold in the last three years, from £250 in 2012 to £1,900 currently.
- Just under half (44 per cent) of group setting respondents who weren't currently studying, and had received their last qualification over two years ago, said that the expense was the key reason why they weren't studying.
- The percentage of those receiving local authority support has also dropped from a half to a third. Support that once equated to almost twice the course cost (181 per cent) is now less than four-fifths (79 per cent), indicating providers are in the main having to fund training themselves.

**“Bring back free local training. Especially for safeguarding - there are not enough courses available.”**

**2. Childcare providers are becoming more qualified.** The proportion of childcare providers with relevant qualifications is on the rise - and shows a steep level of increase when compared with data from the last Childcare and Early Years Provider Survey 2013.

- Over three quarters of both home-based (78 per cent) and group providers (84 per cent) responding to the survey hold at least a level 3 qualification. Fewer than one in 10 (8 per cent) home-based providers had no qualifications and were not currently studying formal qualifications. Whilst the survey was a self-selecting sample, these figures compare favourably to the last available data in the Childcare and Early Years Provider Survey 2013 which showed that the proportion of childminders with at least a level 3 qualification was 66 per cent.
- Over a quarter (26 per cent) of group providers and 15 per cent of childminders have a qualification of level 6 or above. This is a huge increase on the latest government data which indicates that 7 per cent of childminders had level 6 or above and 12 per cent of staff in sessional settings.

However, our fear is that trend for improvement will stall as we know that the introduction of GCSE requirements for level 3 early years qualifications has led to a

substantial drop in applications, with some training providers reporting a drop in new applicants of 80 per cent for some courses.

**3. Childcare providers are committed to continuing professional development (CPD) to enhance their knowledge.** Survey respondents demonstrate they are using the flexibility and affordability offered by CPD (training, workshops and reading).

- 94 per cent of group settings offer staff CPD, and 86 per cent of home-based providers currently undertake CPD.
- Just under half (44 per cent) of both group and home-based providers who had not studied for a qualification in more than two years reported that they undertook CPD as an alternative to additional qualifications.

Expense was the biggest obstacle for those who didn't undertake any CPD. 78 per cent of group providers and 38 per cent of home-based cited this as a barrier to undertaking further CPD.

A third of home-based providers said it was hard to find the time and one in five said that there was a lack of available courses.

**“Easier access to training and information, most training courses take place during school hours when childminders are unable to attend.”**

**4. Providers are unanimously positive about the benefits further qualifications can bring.**

The highest ranking benefit listed by both group and home-providers was improved confidence (group, 89 per cent and home-providers, 74 per cent)

Providers with better Ofsted gradings were more likely to have undertaken CPD. On average, outstanding providers reported completing 19 hours a year of CPD and less than good providers reported 14 hours.

**5. Parents do not value the professional qualifications of staff or their commitment to CPD as a proxy for quality.** When parents were asked to rank factors that they take into account

when choosing childcare, they ranked whether the setting staff undertake any CPD activities bottom, indicating that more needs to be done to explain to parents the contribution of trained staff in providing high quality care for their children.

## **PACEY's calls for action**

We need a clear and accessible pathway for continuous professional development of the childcare and early years workforce – from apprentice level right through to Qualified Teacher Status. It is an investment that will not only improve outcomes for children but also support a more sustainable sector. This is critical not only for the country's economic future, but also ensuring that a highly trained workforce can help close the gap in achievement for those children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and giving all children the best start in life. PACEY therefore recommends that the Government should:

- work with the sector to map out a CPD pathway that supports childcare professional to develop throughout their career.
- set an appropriate level for the free entitlement funding so that businesses can invest in development and training for their staff.
- revisit the recommendations of the Cathy Nutbrown's sector review to look at improving the quality of teaching and placements; improving course content and opening clear channels through which registered childcarers could attain qualified teacher status.
- review the impact improvement initiatives are having on the number of new entrants to childcare qualifications courses. Entry requirements should include Functional Skills alongside GCSE qualifications.
- raise the profile of professional development, including CPD, - and its link to quality - amongst providers as well as parents.

## **High quality, flexible childcare across a range of settings**

Demand for childcare places continues to outstrip supply with one in three parents reporting that there are not enough places in their local area. Families who work atypical hours, or on temporary or zero hours contracts, are more likely to experience difficulties accessing childcare. With this pattern

of employment likely to increase in the future, there is a real challenge for providers to meet with changing demand.

In the last year or so, the expansion of early years provision based in schools (including care for two year olds) has been promoted as a possible solution to the sufficiency challenge. Results of a recent demonstration project suggest that the current landscape of funding and other support is inadequate for schools to take on these new responsibilities at a national scale.

The challenge is for policy makers to understand how to sustain diversity of current provision so that parents have a choice of high quality care in a variety of settings. What is clear is that providers will need to work in partnership to enable the sector to respond to Government targets to increase access to childcare. Our survey looked at how effectively these partnerships are currently working across professional groups.

## **What our survey told us about partnerships between providers**

The survey reveals growing partnerships between childcare providers and other stakeholders. However, the quality of these relationships is variable with childcare providers reporting a wide range of satisfaction of working with external partners.

- 1. Both group and home-based providers are partnering with local schools.** This has led to information sharing, visits between settings and supporting children's transitions. While 70 per cent of group settings are currently working with schools, less than half (42 per cent) of home-based providers are.
  - Providers report a mixed response from the schools they'd like to work more closely with. Group providers were more positive about a school's willingness to work with them, but approximately one fifth of both group and home-based providers felt that schools were unwilling to work with them.

**“We are based next to a school and they are very supportive. They allow us to use their resources and their outdoor space.” (group provider)**

**“We take our minded children to weekly ‘Learning together’ sessions for the children due to start school the following September. Reception class teacher visits setting regularly.” (childminder)**

Providers are proactive in making approaches to schools. Of those who were not currently working with schools, 37 per cent of group providers and 13 per cent of home-based providers had approached a school to work with them in the last 12 months. Again, the school’s response to being approached appears to have been ambivalent: 42 per cent of home-based providers rated the schools’ response as negative or very negative, compared to 23 per cent of group providers

**2. Partnerships between group providers and health professionals are commonplace.** 70 per cent of group providers are currently working with health professionals, but only 13 per cent of home-based providers reported that they are currently working with health professionals.

- Both settings report a more positive experience of approaching health professionals than schools. Approximately a third of both groups reported that health professionals were “fully” willing to work with them. Over half (54 per cent) of home-based providers, and 26 per cent of group providers, said health professionals were positive or very positive about being approached to work together.

**3. Perceptions of childcare professionals prevent strong partnerships.** A significant proportion of providers also mentioned *without prompting* that they experienced difficulties in working with schools and health professionals. Almost one in six providers (17 per cent of group and home providers) reported difficulties in working with their local health professionals. Schools also appear to be reluctant to engage with childcare providers, with one in seven of group providers spontaneously reporting schools’ unwillingness to work with them and one in five of home-based providers.

**“We moved to the school site five years ago and have tried to gain their trust building a relationship with them. The Reception teacher has minimal contact with us ... I do not believe they really know or appreciate what we do.” (group provider)**

**“It is hard to get the schools to work in partnership with me. They are reluctant to share information and regularly refer to me as 'the babysitter'.” (childminder)**

### **PACEY’s calls for action**

Children and parents need flexible, diverse and high quality childcare provision that meets their own particular family needs, and is suited to their child’s age, stage of development and personal needs and preferences.

PACEY believes that the Government needs to act now to ensure that the focus on school-based provision does not deny families access to a choice of high quality childcare across a range of settings.

In particular, the Government needs to:

- ensure that all providers are equally incentivised to fill their available spaces for children, including for 2-year olds. Distributing the financial support more evenly across childcare settings would meet the needs of a wider set of parents and children, and build on the excellent provision already carried out by the diverse childcare sector. Moreover, the majority of PVI providers are already equipped with settings and staff suitable for the needs of 2-year-olds, and as self-funding businesses they respond well to incentives.
- act on the feedback from the demonstration schools. Many schools provide excellent care for young children, but the feedback indicates that significant systemic investment is required to adapt school settings and staffing sufficiently to effectively meet the needs of 2-year-olds.
- introduce a clear framework for interaction between professionals, which includes childcare professionals. Home-based providers in particular are experiencing a poorer response from schools and have limited interaction with health professionals.
- ensure that work is undertaken by the Departments of Education and Health to dispel misconceptions about childcare provision amongst school and health professionals where they arise. While recent moves to improve collaboration and establish partnership working

are welcome, more could be done to recognise the valuable knowledge and insight of childcare providers, and in particular highlight the benefits of partnership working, for instance in delivering the new integrated review.

- establish local networks to bring professionals together and promote partnership working under the auspices of local authorities' new public health requirements.

## **A confident and optimistic profession, focused on quality**

Childcare professionals have witnessed substantial changes to their sector in recent years. Most of these changes have been positive and have led to a marked increase in the number of qualified staff. This professionalisation of the sector has resulted in consistent improvements in child outcomes and increased level of qualifications over time. As skills have increased, so have policy makers' expectations on childcare professionals. Just some of the recent changes childcare professionals have had to respond to include the changes to the system of support for children with SEND and delivering the new integrated reviews for 2-year-olds.

We know from our regular contact with childcare providers that the continued lack of adequate funding for providers to cover the cost of delivering the early years entitlement, as well as cuts to local support in the context of further expected cuts to public services are increasing the strain felt by childcare providers.

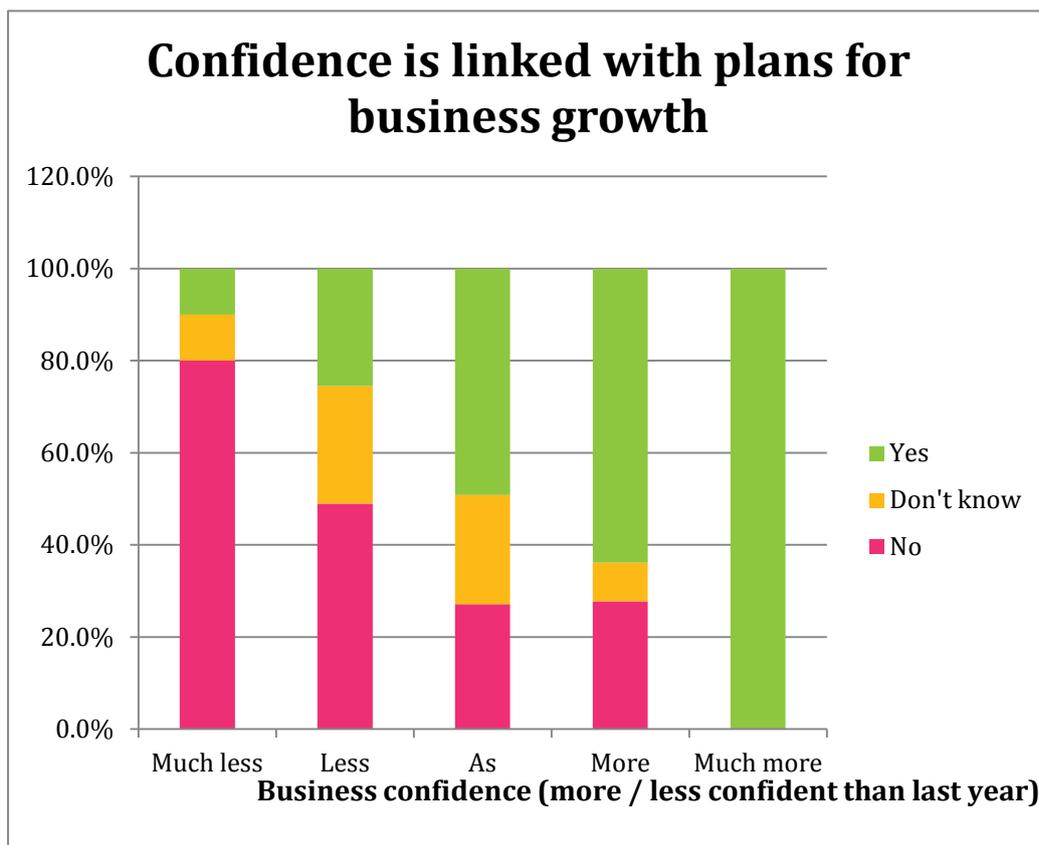
Through the survey, we wanted to investigate these concerns further. Uniquely for a survey of its kind, the survey asked providers about their level of confidence in the future of the profession. We also asked parents about their own confidence in the sector.

### **What our survey told us about sector confidence**

- 1. There is a significant threat to sustainability of childcare businesses in the next 12 months.** Just over a quarter of both group and home-based providers felt less or much less confident about their future business than 12 months ago. This confidence rating was linked closely with a setting's plans for growth and plans to stay in childcare:

- a fifth of home-based providers are unsure whether they'll be working in childcare in 12 months' time, compared with 16 per cent of group providers.
- 59 per cent of group settings and 69 per cent of childminders reported no plans to grow their business in the next year. When the government has stated such ambitious aims this is a real threat to delivery.

2. **There is a direct correlation between investment in CPD and plans for business growth.** As the diagram below illustrates - the more confident a setting is, then the more likely they are to plan to develop their business. All respondents who reported they are much more confident than last year said that they plan to grow their business. As our survey also shows that investing in CPD builds confidence, there is an even greater argument for further investment in CPD.



(y axis is: % of childcare workers planning business expansion)

- 3. Parents rely on providers for information about changes to childcare funding and arrangements.** Nearly a third (32 per cent) name their childcare provider as their first choice for information, rating them above gov.uk website, local authority and family information service.

Providers are well informed about changes to the sector, but are not confident in explaining these changes to parents.

Group providers rated themselves as more aware than home-based providers for all of the topics covered except Tax-Free Childcare.

4. While most providers are aware of recent changes, many do not feel confident in being able to explain to others what they mean. A quarter of providers do not feel at all confident explaining what the new baseline testing at reception means, and only 23 per cent felt confident explaining the changes to the SEND system.
- 5. Parents have a high level of confidence in their childcare.** Nine out of ten (93 per cent) parents are satisfied or very satisfied with their childcare and 87 per cent are willing to recommend their provider to others.

## **If you could change one thing?**

We asked childcare providers what one thing needed to be changed to improve their experience of being a childcare professional, and to improve the experience of childcare for children. Their responses were overwhelmingly consistent.

### **For providers:**

The results paint a picture of a workforce under considerable strain, with the burden of paperwork identified as an issue for a quarter of respondents. The second highest ranking area for improvement was Ofsted, with concerns about consistency of inspections being frequently mentioned. Other important factors include access to cheaper or more flexible

training; greater respect and recognition for them as professionals; increased pay; and fairer funding level for free funded places.

**“Focus on the children, not the paperwork.”**

**“Ofsted providing positive, consistent inspections instead of the complete dread most providers feel with negative inspections. Support not put down.”**

**“For childminders to be recognised more as professionals – not just someone who looks after children in their own home, it is much more than that.”**

**“Make training more affordable and easier to access.”**

### **For children:**

Childcare providers showed overwhelming agreement on what the priority should be for the children they care for. For over 50 per cent of respondents, a desire to reduce the emphasis on structured learning and focus on learning through play ranked higher than concerns about funding, child to carer ratios, or Ofsted.

It is clear that there has been a gradual erosion of focus on play in children’s early learning experiences, with recent indications including the omission of “learning through play” from the Early Years Teacher qualification, introduction of baseline testing in Reception and government calls for an increased focus on structured, teacher-led sessions.

Experts say that this in part explains why this country scores so poorly on UNICEF’s surveys of children’s sense of wellbeing compared to other European countries. Play is not only vital for children’s wellbeing, but playful and innovative thinking is essential for the 21<sup>st</sup> century business world. A 2010 study by IBM of 5000 CEOs found that creativity was selected as the “most crucial factor for success in business”. Just a few months ago CBI’s John Cridland reiterated his view that for employers, “enthusiasm, passion, creativity” was more important than qualifications.

**“Let children be children.”**

**“Take the focus away from getting children ready for school and instead believe in their natural curiosity.”**

**“Prepare children to be life-ready, not just school-ready.”**

## **PACEY’s calls for action**

Our survey shows that childcare professionals are highly motivated by the work they do, and highly respected and relied upon by parents, but without adequate investment, PACEY believes the childcare system will not be able to meet the challenges ahead. At a time when there are real economic and social drivers to get more parents into work and provide children from all backgrounds with the best start in life, it is vital that this is addressed as a priority by the Government. PACEY recommends that the Government should:

- review the level of funded EYE places and increase early years pupil premium (EYPP) to match the level of school pupil premium so that providers can focus on quality improvement.
- invest in a workforce development strategy that supports the workforce to improve continually through their career. A more skilled workforce is a more confident workforce, and this is vital to enable the sector to grow and meet the challenges ahead.
- conduct a review of reward and recognition to help identify ways to support further development and growth of an effective early years workforce.

- acknowledge the vital role childcare providers play in keeping parents informed on policy changes, and build this into the Government’s behaviour change and information campaigns.

- take notice of the growing call from practitioners, business leaders and childcare experts to make changes to early years education policy so that our youngest children are supported to have the space to play and thrive. PACEY would like to see the next Government focused on a policy agenda that is underpinned by the kind of

to focus on the child-focused, play-based care and education that has been proven to most effectively support children's whole development.

- reverse plans to introduce the baseline assessment for Reception children and instead use the EYFS as a more accurate indicator of the whole child's development. PACEY, as an active supporter of the Too Much Too Soon campaign, has joined other early years organisations and childcare experts to protest against the assessment.

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**Published by:** PACEY, June 2015

PACEY

Royal Court

81 Tweedy Road

Bromley

Kent

BR1 1TG

**Tel:** 0300 003 0005

**Email:** [info@pacey.org.uk](mailto:info@pacey.org.uk)

**Web:** [www.pacey.org.uk](http://www.pacey.org.uk)

**PACEY Local:** [www.pacey.org.uk/paceylocal](http://www.pacey.org.uk/paceylocal)