

# Submission to the Education Committee inquiry on life chances

## Introduction to PACEY

1. PACEY is the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years. Our aim is for all children to experience high quality childcare and early learning. We support early years professionals, including our 30,000 members, to provide high quality provision through training, resources, advice and peer support, and champion the vital role they play in preparing children for a bright future.
2. PACEY welcomes the Education Committee's inquiry into the impact that early years education has on determining children's life chances. As the Committee undertakes its work, early education in England is under serious threat. Great strides have been made in recent years, and the childcare and early years workforce is more highly qualified than ever, with nearly all (94 per cent) of early years settings graded 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted.<sup>1</sup> However, underfunding of the free entitlement, a dramatic decrease in government and local authority support and aspiration over a number of years is putting these gains – and the quality of early years provision in England – at risk.
3. Our submission will briefly outline some of the key evidence on the impact of early education on life chances before looking at some of the implications of the current landscape, and our recent research into specialist early years graduates in particular.

## The link between early education and life chances

4. It is now well-established that the first five years of a child's life have a long-term impact on his or her future health, well-being, and educational attainment.<sup>2</sup> The Social Mobility Commission has asserted that 'learning and development at this stage matters more than at any other'.<sup>3</sup> High quality early education supports a child's full development, including creativity, curiosity and self-confidence, which is essential not just for school but later life. It has been found to improve children's cognitive and social development outcomes and narrow the gaps between the most and least disadvantaged children.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ofsted (2017), [Childcare providers and inspections as at 31 December 2017](#) (Manchester: Ofsted).

<sup>2</sup> G. Allen (2011), [Early Intervention: The Next Steps](#) (London: HM Government).

<sup>3</sup> Social Mobility Commission (2017), [State of the Nation 2017: Social Mobility in Great Britain](#) (London: Social Mobility Commission).

<sup>4</sup> S. Mathers, N. Eisenstadt, K. Sylva, E. Soukakou and K. Ereky-Stevens (2014), [Sound Foundations: A Review of the Research Evidence on Quality of Early Childhood Education and Care for children Under Three](#) (London: The Sutton Trust).

5. The government-funded Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education (EPPSE) study has been following a cohort of children since 1997, when they were three- or four-years-old and attending a group pre-school setting. The study's flagship report found that children who attended pre-school made better progress by the end of KS1 than those that did not, and the higher quality the setting, the more progress they made.<sup>5</sup> Later reports<sup>6</sup> have found that the positive effects of early education can also be seen in the results of students' GCSEs and A-levels, with students who attended any pre-school more likely to take AS-level exams than those who had not, particularly if their pre-school had been high quality.<sup>7</sup>
6. Since 2014, the Study of Early Education and Development (SEED), has been following 8,000 two-year-olds taking up funded early education places from across England, and will continue to do so through to the end of KS1.<sup>8</sup> The aim is to look at the impact of funded early education on children's outcomes, and better understand the components of high quality childcare provision. The study has already found clear evidence that two- and three-year-olds benefit from both formal and informal early education and care, with those from disadvantaged backgrounds likely to benefit even more.<sup>9</sup> It has also found that improvements in child development at age three and four due to high quality early education and care can potentially save government money in the long run due to reduced Special Educational Needs (SEN), truancy, school exclusion, crime, smoking and depression and from improved employment rates and earnings.<sup>10</sup>
7. Research from overseas has also pointed to huge economic gains from investment in the early years and its workforce. The Nobel Laureate James Heckman has asserted that it yields greater economic returns than investment in any other sector of education, including schools and training and apprenticeships.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> K. Sylva, E. Melhuish, P. Sammons, I. Siraj-Blatchford and B. Taggart (2004), [The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education \(EPPE\) Project: Final Report](#) (Nottingham: DfES Publications).

<sup>6</sup> For the full range, see [www.gov.uk/government/collections/eppse-3-to-14-years](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/eppse-3-to-14-years).

<sup>7</sup> P. Sammons, K. Toth and K. Sylva (2015), [Pre-school and early home learning effects on A-level outcomes](#) (London: Department for Education).

<sup>8</sup> For the full set of reports, see [www.gov.uk/government/collections/study-of-early-education-and-development-seed](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/study-of-early-education-and-development-seed).

<sup>9</sup> The study also found that different setting types tend to produce specific benefits. For example, childminders were found to have a particularly positive impact on young children's cognitive development, and verbal ability in particular. Children attending a childminding setting were also found to have fewer emotional symptoms (such as anxiety and stress), and more behavioural self-regulation. Group settings were associated with more prosocial behaviour, such as sharing and showing empathy, and fewer peer problems and emotional symptoms. See E. Melhuish, J. Gardiner & S. Morris (2017), [Study of Early Education and Development \(SEED\): Impact Study on Early Education Use and Child Outcomes up to Age Three](#) (London: Department for Education).

<sup>10</sup> G. Paull and X. Xu (2017), [Study of Early Education and Development \(SEED\): The potential value for money of early education](#) (London: Department for Education).

<sup>11</sup> Qtd. in I. Siraj (2015), [An Independent Review of the Scottish Early Learning and Childcare \(ELC\) Workforce and Out of School Care \(OSC\) Workforce](#) (Edinburgh: Scottish Government), p. 124.

8. Unfortunately in England, too many children, particularly those living in areas of deprivation, are still attending early years settings that are not of a high quality.<sup>12</sup> The quality of early years provision is notably lower in disadvantaged areas, with 18% of settings in the most deprived areas rated less than 'good' compared with 8% in the least deprived.<sup>13</sup> Less than half of the poorest four-year-olds in England are ready for school, compared to almost two-thirds of other children.<sup>14</sup> By the end of reception year, there is gap of 18 per cent between the attainment of disadvantaged children and their better-off counterparts, which persists for years.<sup>15</sup> All the evidence suggests that high quality early education would go some way in narrowing this gap.

### The role of the early years workforce

9. Early years specialists across the globe agree that the key to providing high quality childcare and early education is well-trained and qualified professionals.<sup>16</sup> A number of studies have found quality to be closely associated with qualifications, leading many experts to assert that the key to high quality is upskilling the workforce. The aforementioned EPPSE study found a close relationship between higher staff qualifications and higher quality provision.<sup>17</sup> The SEED study has linked higher quality in non-domestic group settings with staff training and development, and for private, voluntary and independent (PVI) settings, it is associated with having a higher mean level of staff qualification and a higher staff to child ratio across the whole setting.<sup>18</sup> Studies elsewhere have found that unqualified staff have a negative effect on quality.<sup>19</sup>
10. Graduate leadership in particular has been associated with narrowing the gap between the most and least disadvantaged children.<sup>20</sup> In 2004, the Labour Government introduced a target that every early years setting be led by a graduate. Between 2006 and 2011, the Transformation Fund (TF) and the Graduate Leader Fund (GLF) supported practitioners in England to reach graduate level. The independent evaluation of the GLF found evidence that specialised early years graduate training pathways can lead to improvements in quality in

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<sup>12</sup> S. Mathers and R. Smees (2014), [Quality and Inequality: Do Three- and Four-year-olds in Deprived Areas Experience Lower Quality Early Years Provision?](#) (London: Nuffield Foundation).

<sup>13</sup> Ofsted (2016), [Unknown children – destined for disadvantage?](#) (Manchester: Ofsted).

<sup>14</sup> Social Mobility Commission (2015), [State of the Nation 2015: Social Mobility and Child Poverty in Great Britain](#) (London: Social Mobility Commission).

<sup>15</sup> Department for Education (2017a), [Early years foundation stage profile results in England, 2017](#) (London: Department for Education).

<sup>16</sup> OECD (2012), [Research Brief: Qualifications, Education and Professional Development Matter](#) (Paris: OECD).

<sup>17</sup> Sylva et al. (2004).

<sup>18</sup> E. Melhuish and J. Gardiner (2017), [Study of Early Education and Development \(SEED\): Study of Quality of Early Years Provision in England](#) (London: Department for Education).

<sup>19</sup> S. Mathers, K. Sylva and H. Joshi (2007), [Quality of Childcare Settings in the Millennium Cohort Study](#) (Nottingham: DfES Publications).

<sup>20</sup> J. Hillman and T. Williams (2015), [Early Years Education and Childcare: Lessons from Evidence and Future Priorities](#) (London: Nuffield Foundation).

group settings within the PVI sector.<sup>21</sup> Settings which gained a graduate leader made significant improvements in quality for pre-school children as compared with settings which did not. The evaluation also found that the more time graduates spent in rooms with children, the greater the impact they had on the quality of provision in that room.

11. However, the GLF ended in 2011, and the graduate target has quietly been dropped by subsequent governments.<sup>22</sup> Qualification levels and requirements in England remain significantly lower than in many other countries.<sup>23</sup> The overall proportion of graduates working in the PVI group settings remains comparatively low at 10%.<sup>24</sup>
12. In 2012, the independent and highly respected Nutbrown Review recommended that everyone working in childcare and early years should be supported to achieve a full and relevant Level 3 qualification, and that all group settings should be led by an early years specialist graduate.<sup>25</sup> Another major review of the quality of early childhood education and care for under 3s recommended that in addition to holding a full and relevant Level 3 qualification, all practitioners should have access to support from a graduate.<sup>26</sup> These recommendations commanded broad support from the childcare and early years sector.
13. Six years on, however, these are no longer aspirations being advocated by the Government. New research has pointed to a downward trend in qualification levels, as settings experience high staff turnover because they cannot afford to retain their experienced staff, invest in their training and development – or even recruit them in the first place.<sup>27</sup> A recent report found that 30 per cent of nurseries and pre-schools have cut their training budgets, training, 18 per cent have lowered ratios, and 13 per cent have lowered their qualification mix in order to cut costs.<sup>28</sup>

### Decline in specialist early years graduates

14. Two new graduate early years qualifications were introduced by government in the past decade: the Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) in 2006 and the Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) in 2013. However neither EYPS nor EYTS comes with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) at the end of the course, which means they do not attract the same recognition, status, pay, conditions and opportunities as the wider teaching profession. It also means that graduates

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<sup>21</sup> S. Mathers, H. Ranns, A. Karemaker, A. Moody, K. Sylva, J. Graham, and I. Siraj-Blatchford (2011), *Evaluation of the Graduate Leader Fund: Final report* (London: Department for Education).

<sup>22</sup> For example, there is no mention of it in the Early Years Workforce Strategy. See Department for Education (2017b), *Early Years Workforce Strategy* (London: Department for Education).

<sup>23</sup> K. Stewart and L. Gambaro (2014), *World Class: What Does International Evidence Tell Us About Improving Quality, Access and Affordability in the English Childcare Market?* (London: Resolution Foundation).

<sup>24</sup> S. Panayiotou, S. McGinival, J. Kent, C. Smit, C. Witsø and E. Edwards-Hughes (2017), *Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers: England 2016* (London: Department for Education).

<sup>25</sup> C. Nutbrown (2012), *The Nutbrown Review: Foundations for Quality* (London: Department for Education).

<sup>26</sup> Mathers et al. (2014).

<sup>27</sup> S. Bonetti (2018), *The early years workforce: A fragmented picture* (London: Education Policy Institute).

<sup>28</sup> Ceeda (2018), *About Early Years: autumn snapshot* (Stockton on Tees: Ceeda).

holding these qualifications are not permitted to lead teaching in maintained schools, significantly limiting their career options.<sup>29</sup> Many have found that their pay, career prospects and pathways are not all that different from their colleagues with a Level 3 qualification,<sup>30</sup> and on average they earn half the hourly rate of their QTS counterparts.<sup>31</sup> This is despite the fact that entry requirements for Early Years Initial Teacher Training (EYITT) leading to EYTs are identical to those for trainee primary school teachers.<sup>32</sup>

15. The Department for Education (DfE) acknowledged last year that Early Years Teachers (EYTs) have 'limited career choices' and that PVI settings are finding it 'difficult' to recruit and retain graduate staff.<sup>33</sup> The DfE's Early Years Workforce Strategy outlined plans to consult on allowing EYTs to lead teaching in maintained primary schools. The DfE has also said it will consider 'how wider work on strengthening QTS could offer positive opportunities for raising the status and parity of early years teachers.' However, to date no further announcements have been made. Meanwhile, autumn enrolment for EYITT in 2017-18 was at its lowest yet at just 595, and reports continued to surface of courses closing and new EYTs having difficulties finding employment.<sup>34</sup>
16. In light of these developments, PACEY and Voice conducted a survey<sup>35</sup> to gather evidence from Early Years Teachers, Early Years Initial Teacher Training (EYITT) course leaders and past EYITT students.<sup>36</sup> Respondents to the survey displayed a striking commitment to and passion for working in the early years. However, there was also widespread agreement that the status quo is not working. Nearly all respondents were concerned about the fact that an EAYT does not earn the same or have the same recognition as a teacher with QTS, even though they receive training of a comparable rigour, and are delivering the same curriculum. In our view, if the pay and conditions of Early Years Teachers do not improved, the sector will lose talented and dedicated teachers who understand the uniqueness of a child's early development.
17. The key findings from our survey are:

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<sup>29</sup> Academies and independent schools, however, are free to hire teachers without QTS and pay whatever they like.

<sup>30</sup> J. Osgood, A. Elwick, L. Robertson, M. Sakr and D. Wilson (2017), [Early Years Teacher and Early Years Educator: a scoping study of the impact, experiences and associated issues of recent early years qualifications and Training in England](#) (London: Middlesex University).

<sup>31</sup> S. Hawthorne and M. Brown (2016), "[Early Years Pay and Conditions Survey 2016](#)," *Nursery World*, 16 October 2016.

<sup>32</sup> The requirements for both are a degree, at least a C grade in English, maths and science GCSEs, and passing a numeracy and literacy test.

<sup>33</sup> Department for Education (2017b).

<sup>34</sup> K. Morton (2017), "[Early Years Teacher trainees down for a third year](#)," *Nursery World*, 1 December 2017.

<sup>35</sup> Our online survey ran between 27th November 2017 and 15th January 2018 and received 428 responses. A majority of these (67 per cent), were from past EYITT students whilst 18 per cent were from EYITT course leaders and 15 per cent from current EYITT students.

<sup>36</sup> S. Kalitowski (2018), [Improving early years graduates' prospects, career progression and reward](#) (PACEY and Voice).

- a. The picture concerning the number of EYITT routes offered and students enrolled is mixed; in some places these are declining, and in others they have remained steady or even increased.
- b. Most people that hold or are pursuing EYTS have a strong desire to work in an early years setting directly with children.
- c. The majority of EYTs find it difficult to gain graduate-level employment.
- d. Schools are by far the employer of choice for the majority of current and prospective EYTs, though a minority are currently employed by them.
- e. Most EYTs have not gone on to further courses to gain QTS, but a notable minority have.
- f. Half of current EYT trainees think it is likely they will go on further courses to gain QTS.
- g. A majority of course leaders are in favour of granting QTS to EYTs.
- h. There is a stark difference between the impact of EYTS on confidence and everyday practice compared to career and income. This is much less marked for QTS.
- i. Improved pay, conditions and recognition are crucial to recruiting and retaining specialist early years graduates, and improving the EYTS qualification.

## Recommendations

18. To stem this exodus of specialist graduates working in early years, government needs to take urgent action. In view of our findings, PACEY and Voice have made a number of short- and medium-term recommendations.

*As soon as is reasonably practicable, the Department for Education should:*

- a. **Allow Early Years Teachers to lead nursery and reception classes in maintained schools.**  
This proposal was consulted on last year as part of the Early Years Workforce Strategy<sup>37</sup> and should be implemented as a stopgap measure until more meaningful reform can be achieved (see recommendations 7 and 8 below).
- b. **Reinstate the target that every setting in England should benefit from graduate pedagogical leadership.**  
Some argue that not every early years setting needs a qualified teacher. We profoundly disagree: every child deserves the best quality early education available.

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<sup>37</sup> Department for Education (2017b).

There is also compelling evidence that this is the best way to narrow the persistent and significant inequality gap between the most and least disadvantaged children.<sup>38</sup> For this reason, settings in disadvantaged areas should be prioritised in the first instance. Without further investment in more graduate-level roles, the sector will lack the career pathways and progression opportunities it requires to recruit and retain talented professionals.

c. **Provide sustainable funding for the free entitlement that enables all settings to be able to pay graduate-level wages to at least one member of staff.**

Recent research has found that the primary barrier to employing an Early Years Teacher is the cost of their salary, particularly in light of the underfunding of the 15 and 30 hours of government-funded childcare.<sup>39</sup> The cost of employing a graduate must be factored into the Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF), and the latter must reflect the actual cost of providing high quality early education and childcare.

d. **Provide better guidance and support for settings about graduate qualifications.**

Many settings, particularly in the PVI sector, are not aware of what existing government funding is available to support graduate qualifications. Some settings are much better than others at supporting and releasing staff for this purpose. In addition, some settings do not provide appropriate mentors for student placements, with staff often unaware of the teaching standards the students need to meet. Guidance and support is needed from government to enable more PVI settings to support and release staff to undertake graduate qualifications.

e. **Require more transparency of EYITT course structures and outcomes.**

It is clear from our research that many EYITT courses lack transparency in terms of the advertised course structure and outcomes, especially when modules are taught jointly or alongside more general teacher training courses (which may result in QTS). This is misleading and may seriously disadvantage some EYT graduates.

f. **Improve statistical data used for reporting and planning for EYITT qualifications.**

Historically, DfE data has not differentiated between primary initial teacher training and early years initial teacher training. Although there are signs that this is being addressed, there is still lack of detail on the number of places allocated and filled, and qualifications achieved. It is also difficult to ascertain definitive details on the number and identities of course providers.

*In the medium-term, the Department should:*

g. **Replace Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) with a new early years specialist route to QTS, specialising in the years from birth to seven.**

This is the only realistic way to improve the pay, conditions, career pathways and professional status of specialist early years graduates. It is simply wrong that an

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<sup>38</sup> Department for Education (2017a).

<sup>39</sup> K. Morton (2018). "[Exclusive: Survey reveals barriers to training and employing EYTs](#)," *Nursery World*, 22 January 2018.

Early Years Teacher working in a PVI setting cannot earn the same or enjoy the same recognition as a nursery school or reception teacher – despite the fact that they are delivering the same curriculum and have undergone comparable training. As Cathy Nutbrown observed in her independent review of early education and childcare qualifications, ‘However hard we try, I do not believe a status that is not the same as QTS will ever be seen as equal to QTS.’<sup>40</sup> This is all the more important given the proposed reforms to strengthen QTS, which, if currently implemented, would further widen the divide between QTS and EYTS. They will put off even more students from pursuing the latter. The new route must be the same as any other QTS route, save for its early years specialism. It would replace the current primary and early years (3-7) QTS route offered by many institutions.

**h. Establish accessible and affordable routes for individuals holding Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS), or its predecessor Early Years Professional Status (EYPS), to be able to access routes to obtain QTS as a priority.**

As our survey shows, many Early Years Teachers are put off from going on further courses to gain QTS because they are expensive and time-consuming. They also feel it is fundamentally unjust that they have to undergo further study when they have already received a graduate-level qualification. The Department should remove this barrier to progression and make it significantly easier for EYTs and EYPs to obtain QTS.

**i. Require Reception teachers to have early years training.**

Any primary school teacher with QTS can teach Reception without early years-specific training, but an Early Years Teacher is currently not permitted to teach older children. We therefore propose that all teachers delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) be required to undergo a certain amount of early years-specific training. The content and amount of training required should be determined following consultation with the sector.

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<sup>40</sup> Nutbrown (2012).