Quality Matters in Early Childhood Education and Care

UNITED KINGDOM (ENGLAND)

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OECD

Quality Matters in Early Childhood Education and Care: United Kingdom (England) 2012

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and Kelly Makowiecki

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FOREWORD

This publication is intended to be a quick reference guide for anyone with a role to play in encouraging quality through England's early childhood education and care (ECEC) curriculum.

There is a growing body of evidence that children starting strong in their learning and well-being will have better outcomes when they grow older. Such evidence has driven policy makers to design an early intervention and re-think their education spending patterns to gain "value for money". At the same time, research emphasises that the benefits from early interventions are conditional on the level of "quality" of ECEC that children experience.

What does "quality" mean? *Starting Strong III: A Quality Toolbox for Early Childhood Education and Care* has identified five policy levers that can encourage quality in ECEC, having positive effects on early child development and learning.

- Policy Lever 1: Setting out quality goals and regulations
- Policy Lever 2: Designing and implementing curriculum and standards
- Policy Lever 3: Improving qualifications, training and working conditions
- Policy Lever 4: Engaging families and communities
- Policy Lever 5: Advancing data collection, research and monitoring

Of the five policy levers, England has selected **Policy Lever 4: Engaging families and communities** for its current policy focus.

This policy profile for England would not have been possible without the support of the national authority and the stakeholders involved. The OECD Secretariat would like to thank the national co-ordinator, Karuna Perera, for her work in providing information. We would also like to thank all those who gave their time to respond to our many questions, provide comments on preliminary drafts and validate the information for accuracy. We would also like to thank consultants Janice Heejin Kim and Matias Egeland who worked on sections of the preliminary drafts as part of the OECD team on Early Childhood Education and Care.

The online version of the quality toolbox can be found at: **www.oecd.org/edu/earlychildhood/toolbox**. The online toolbox has additional information, such as a country materials page where actual documents from OECD countries are presented, including curricula, regulatory frameworks and data systems information. All information related to the OECD Network on ECEC is available at: **www.oecd.org/edu/earlychildhood**.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD 3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 7

INTRODUCTION 9

Aim of the policy profile 9
Structure of the report 9
Notes 11

CHAPTER 1. WHERE DOES THE UNITED KINGDOM (ENGLAND) STAND REGARDING POLICY OUTCOMES AND INPUTS? 13

Spider web chart on policy outcomes 14
Spider web chart on policy inputs 18
Notes 21

CHAPTER 2. WHAT DOES RESEARCH SAY? 23

Highlights from "Research Brief: Parental and community engagement" 24

Why do parental and community engagement matter? 24
Which aspects of parental and community engagement matter most? 24
Policy implications 26
Research gaps 26

Research Brief: Parental and community engagement 27

What is parental and community engagement? 27
What is at stake? 27
Why does it matter? 28
What aspects matter most? 30
What are the policy implications? 36
What is still unknown? 37
Notes 38
References 39

CHAPTER 3. WHERE DOES THE UNITED KINGDOM (ENGLAND) STAND COMPARED TO OTHER COUNTRIES? 45

Strengths 46
Potential areas for reflection 50
Notes 62

CHAPTER 4. WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES? 63

Common challenges 64
England's efforts 65
Possible alternatives strategies: Lessons from New Zealand, Nordic countries and the United States 67
Notes 73

ANNEX A. DEFINITIONS AND METHODOLOGY 75

ANNEX B. FIGURES FOR SPIDER WEB ON POLICY OUTCOMES 77

Notes 86

ANNEX C. FIGURES FOR SPIDER WEB ON POLICY INPUTS 87

Notes 95

ANNEX D. NOTES TO THE SPIDER WEBS 97

ANNEX E. METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES FOR THE SPIDER WEBS 99

Tables

Table 1.1. Maximum and minimum value on the child outcomes spider web chart 17
Table 1.2. Maximum and minimum value on the policy inputs spider web chart 20
Table 2.1. Types of parental and community engagement 27
Table 3.1. Inclusion of parents in evaluation of ECEC services 47
Table 3.2. Preferred approaches to engaging families and communities 51
Table 3.3. Parental satisfaction surveys on provision of ECEC services 53
Table D.1. Overview of available indicators per country: Policy outcomes 97
Table D.2. Overview of available indicators per country: Policy inputs 98
Table E.1. Spider web methodological notes and data sources: Policy outcomes 99
Table E.2. Spider web methodological notes and data sources: Policy inputs 101

Figures

Figure 1.1. An overview of child outcomes for learning and well-being 16
Figure 1.2. An overview of policy inputs 19
Figure 2.1. Impact of home learning environment (HLE) 30
Figure 3.1. Child obesity going up 48
Figure 3.2. Expectations of parents regarding their children's education and skills 52
Figure 3.3. Changes in the percentage of divorced or separated adults with children 54
Figure 3.4. Children in couple household by parental employment status 54
Figure 3.5. Households by number of children 55
Figure 3.6. How working time arrangements are set 56
Figure 3.7. Gini coefficients in income inequality 57
Figure 3.8. Trends in income inequality 57
Figure 3.9. Trends of international migrants 58
Figure 3.10. Immigrant status, language spoken at home and reading performance 59
Figure 3.11. Children aged zero to five living in homes with poor environmental conditions 60
Figure 3.12. Content of professional development 61
Figure B.1. Enrolment rates of children under age three in formal care 78
Figure B.2. Enrolment rates in formal early education at age three 78
Figure B.3. Enrolment rates in early education (preschool) at age five 79
Figure B.4. PIRLS Reading achievement in 2001 and 2006 80
Figure B.5. PISA Reading performance in 2000 and 2009 81
Figure B.6. Reading performance dispersion 81
Figure B.7. PISA Mathematics performance in 2003 and 2009 82
Figure B.8. Mathematics performance dispersion 82
Figure B.9. PISA Science performance in 2006 and 2009 83
Figure B.10. Science performance dispersion 83
Figure B.11. Staying in school/education 84
Figure B.12. Maternal employment rates, age of youngest child under three years 85
Figure B.13. Maternal employment rates, age of youngest child three to five years 85
Figure C.1. Public spending on early education and childcare per child at age three 87
Figure C.2. Public spending on early education and childcare per child at age five 88
Figure C.3. Public spending on family benefits in cash and tax measures 89
Figure C.4. Components of net childcare costs for couple families in 2008 90
Figure C.5. Components of net childcare costs for single parent families in 2008 91
Figure C.6. Child-related leave periods: Maternity leave in weeks 92
Figure C.7. Child-related leave periods: Paternity leave in weeks 93
Figure C.8. Staff-child ratio in formal ECEC services 94

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Family and community engagement in early childhood education and care can greatly contribute to ensuring continuous early development experiences for young children.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is receiving increased policy interest in England, as improving quality in the ECEC sector is a subject of growing importance. England considers improving quality through family and community engagement as a priority, as co-operation between the ECEC sector, parents and the community can contribute to providing a more continuous child development process. Parental and community engagement can also strengthen the quality of parenting and the home-learning environment. Additionally, it can enhance children's early development and mitigate the negative effects of family background. The continuity of children's experiences across different environments is greatly enhanced when ECEC centres co-operate with parents and communities and adopt consistent approaches to child development and learning.

On ECEC outcome indicators, England, in general, performs above the OECD average, such as on enrolment rates in ECEC and children's reading performance. However, England can improve the staying-in-school rate of children and its labour market outcomes.

England performs above the OECD average on most ECEC outcome indicators but underperforms on others. On participation, England has a relatively large share of children attending some form of ECEC. On child outcome indicators, England performs well in reading and science. Possible policy changes from an international comparative perspective include improving maternal labour market participation of mothers with young children and improving students' performance on PISA mathematics.

For better ECEC policies, England could improve staff-child ratios in ECEC and parental leave policies for fathers.

On policy input indicators, England performs below average on possibilities for paid paternity leave and the quality indicator "staff-child ratio" in child care. However, England has above-average public expenditure levels on young children and family benefits and maternity leave entitlements. England could consider improving possibilities for parental leave for fathers and implementing better staff-child ratios.

In England, the importance and value of involving parents and communities in providing good care and education for young children is increasingly recognised. England has a clear government plan to enhance parental and community engagement, as laid down in *Supporting Families in the Foundation Years*; involves parents in evaluating ECEC services; has plans to strengthen the co-operation between ECEC and health services; targets disadvantaged families to decrease inequity; and supports young parents.

International comparative data suggests potential areas for reflection in England, such as implementing new approaches for family and community engagement; better meeting family, children and societal needs; and improving the communication skills of ECEC staff.

Capitalising upon its strengths, England could further enhance quality in ECEC through strengthening parental and community engagement. Other country practices would suggest such options as: 1) reflecting on approaches to involve parents and communities; 2) reflecting parental views and opinions in ECEC programming; 3) reflecting upon societal changes to meet family and children's needs, such as the increase in divorce rates, full-time working parents, increasing income inequality and increasing immigrant populations; and 4) further improving the communication skills of ECEC staff.

England could learn from New Zealand, Nordic countries and the United States, as they have taken measures including engaging parents in curriculum development; training staff on communicating with parents; and implementing home programmes to improve parenting and literacy.

Common challenges countries face in engaging families and communities in ECEC are: 1) lack of awareness and motivation; 2) communication and outreach; 3) time constraints; 4) increasing inequity; and 5) co-operation with other services and other levels of education.

England is making several efforts to tackle these challenges by, for example, revising entitlement to free hours of ECEC to meet parental needs. To further their efforts, England could consider strategies implemented by New Zealand, Nordic countries and the United States, such as involving parents in curriculum development; training staff specifically on communication and co-operation with community services; setting flexible times for contact hours between staff and parents; developing specialised parenting home programmes; and bridging between ECEC provisions and different community services.

INTRODUCTION

Aim of the policy profile

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is becoming a policy priority in many countries. A growing body of research recognises that it provides a wide range of benefits, including social and economic benefits, better child well-being and learning outcomes as a foundation for lifelong learning, more equitable outcomes and reduction of poverty, and increased intergenerational social mobility. But these positive benefits are directly related to the "quality" of ECEC.

Definitions of quality differ across countries and across different stakeholder groups depending on beliefs, values, a country's (or region's) socio-economic context, and the needs of the community of users. While definitions should be interpreted with caution and sensitivity when comparing cross-country practices, the OECD has taken a two-tier approach to define "quality" to proceed policy discussions. Therefore, this policy profile considers quality in terms of "structural quality"[1] and "process quality"[2] and sets out "child development" or "child outcome" as quality targets.

Based on international literature reviews findings, the OECD has identified five levers as key policies to encourage quality in ECEC:

1) Setting out quality goals and regulations
2) Designing and implementing curriculum and standards
3) Improving qualifications, training and working conditions
4) Engaging families and communities
5) Advancing data collection, research and monitoring

Of the five levers, England has selected "engaging families and communities" to be the theme of this policy profile. As reference countries in focus for international comparison, England has selected New Zealand, Nordic countries and the United States.

Structure of the report

This report consists of four chapters:

Chapter 1: Where does England stand regarding policy outcomes and inputs?

The first chapter present two spider webs, which give a quick overview on: 1) policy outcomes over the lifecycle of a child, such as participation rates in ECEC, PISA performance scores and labour market outcomes; 2) policy inputs indicating which of the policies in place can influence ECEC and opportunities for parental engagement, including public ECEC expenditure, parental leave policies and classroom conditions, such as staff-child ratios.

The spider webs can show where you stand compared to the OECD average and can draw attention to areas (outcomes and inputs) which might require more policy attention.

Chapter 2: What does research say?

This chapter aims to help you to brief political leaders, stakeholders and the media about the latest research and explain why family and community engagement matter for better child development. It includes an overview of research findings on why involvement matters, what the effects are on child development and on the quality of ECEC provision, different involvement options, policy implications from research, and knowledge gaps in current research.

Chapter 3: Where does England stand compared to other countries?

Chapter three provides an international comparative overview of where your country stands with regard to family and community engagement based on data and information collected through the "Survey for the Quality Toolbox and ECEC Portal" and other OECD work related to this theme. It identifies the strengths and areas for reflection for England in comparison with the selected reference countries. The section can provide insight into which aspects of family and community engagement England might consider taking policy action on, and it can raise awareness about policy issues.

Chapter 4: What are the challenges and strategies?

Chapter four presents the challenges countries have faced in enhancing family and community engagement and gives alternative approaches to overcome these challenges. This chapter provides a quick overview of what New Zealand, Nordic countries and the United States have done to tackle challenges in enhancing the involvement of families and communities in ECEC.

NOTES

1 Structural quality consists of "inputs to process-characteristics which create the framework for the processes that children experience". These characteristics are not only part of the ECEC location in which children participate, but they are part of the environment that surrounds the ECEC setting, *e.g.*, the community. They are often aspects of ECEC that can be regulated, though they may contain variables which cannot be regulated (Litjens and Taguma, 2010).

2 Process quality consists of what children actually experience in their programmes – that which happens within a setting. These experiences are thought to have an influence on children's well-being and development (Litjens and Taguma, 2010).

CHAPTER 1

WHERE DOES THE UNITED KINGDOM (ENGLAND) STAND REGARDING POLICY OUTCOMES AND INPUTS?

England performs above the OECD average on most ECEC outcome indicators but underperforms on others. On participation, England has a relatively large share of children attending some form of ECEC. On child outcome indicators, England performs well in reading and science. Possible policy changes from an international comparative perspective include improving maternal labour market participation of mothers with young children and improving students' performance on PISA mathematics.

On policy input indicators, England performs below average on possibilities for paid paternity leave and the quality indicator "staff-child ratio" in child care. However, England has above-average public expenditure levels on young children and family benefits and maternity leave entitlements. England could consider improving possibilities for parental leave for fathers and implementing better staff-child ratios.

In recent years, the underpinning principles for policy intervention are shifting from a current-income, social-welfare model to a life-cycle, human capital development model. In the life-cycle model, ECEC is considered to play a critical role.

A growing body of research suggests that ECEC generates a higher rate of return on public intervention than later stages of education, and even more so for disadvantaged children. It argues that ECEC lays the foundation for subsequent stages in life, such as better student performance, less poverty, more equitable outcomes, less dropouts and greater labour market success.

From a labour market perspective, it is argued that access to affordable, high-quality ECEC permits mothers to take an equal place in the workforce, boosting household income and giving some families vital help out of poverty. It is also argued that this will improve female workforce participation, increasing the tax base for society in general.

The first spider web chart aims to spotlight the **policy outcomes** of your country with a life-cycle approach. This will be presented in comparison with the OECD average and the highest scored country (at the maximum value of 100) and the lowest scored country (at the minimum value of 0). *First*, the tool could help you to see where you stand against the international standards. *Second*, it can imply which outcomes might require more policy attention in the international comparison perspective, independent of the domestic policy discussions. *Third*, it can set the scene for you to reflect upon how your selected quality focus could help improve the target outcomes.

The second spider web chart aims to spotlight the **inputs** from ECEC policy. This tool can help you compare how your positioning on the outcomes in the international landscape relates or does not relate to that on the input side. It can also help you to understand that your selected quality focus is part of the policy package, which can – if planned well and in combination with other policy interventions – have effects to avoid cancelling out the effects.

In the Annexes, England is compared with not only other OECD countries but, in particular, with the reference countries selected by England wherever the comparative data are available. The selected countries are New Zealand, Nordic countries and the United States.

Spider web chart on policy outcomes[1]

On the selected policy outcome indicators across different life-cycle stages, the United Kingdom performs above the OECD average on most outcome indicators, such as ECEC enrolment rates for different age groups and reading performance in PIRLS and PISA. However, on the indicators mathematics in PISA, the share of 18-to-24-year-olds continuing education and maternal employment rates with the youngest children aged three to five, the United Kingdom performs below the OECD average (Figure 1.1). A more detailed comparison and additional information can be found in Annex B.

On participation in early childhood education and care

- The United Kingdom scores well above the OECD average regarding enrolment of children under the age of three in formal care as well as three-year-olds and six-year-olds in formal early education (preschool): a majority of children in these age groups attend some form of ECEC.

On learning outcomes in school

- Reading: British children in the United Kingdom in grade four perform above the international average in the PIRLS reading assessment. Older students score slightly better than their international peers: 15-year-olds in the United Kingdom have a PISA reading test score slightly above the average.

- Math: 15-year-old students in the United Kingdom perform slightly below the OECD average on the PISA math assessment.

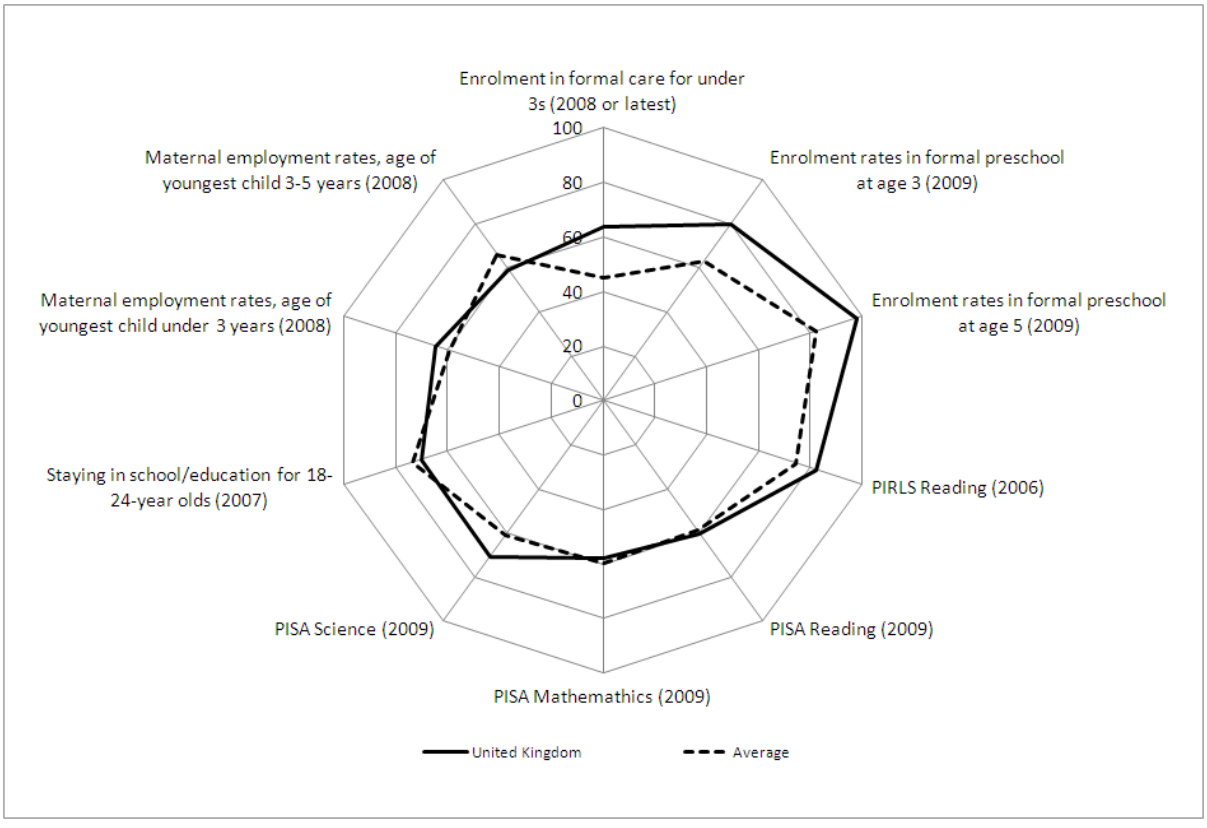
- Science: 15-year-old students in the United Kingdom perform well above average on the PISA science assessment.

- Further education or training: The share of students that stay in school after compulsory schooling age and seek further education or training is below the international average.

On labour market outcomes for women

- In the United Kingdom, employment rates of mothers with a child under the age of three are above the OECD average. However, when children grow older, maternal employment rates decrease: mothers with three-to-five-year-old children have lower employment rates than the international average in the United Kingdom.

Figure 1.1. An overview of child outcomes for learning and well-being



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 100, where 100 was set at the maximum value and 0 was set at the minimum value, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case. The average is calculated by taking into account all OECD countries with available data. See Table 1.1 for maximum and minimum value countries.

Source: 1) Enrolment in formal care for the under 3s - For children 0-2: Australia, ABS Childcare service (2008); Canada, National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (2008); Japan, Statistical Report on Social Welfare Administration and Services (2008); New Zealand, Education Counts' statistics (2008); the US, Early Childhood Program Participation Survey (2005); European countries, EU-SILC (2008) except Germany: administrative data; Nordic countries: NOSOSCO (2007-08); Other: National Authorities. For children 3-5: OECD Education database; Canada, National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (2008); Korea, Ministry of Health and Welfare, and Eurostat (2008) for non-OECD. 2) Enrolment rates in formal early education at ages 3 and 5 - OECD Education Database, November 2011. 3) PIRLS reading: PIRLS 2006 (OECD Family database, 2011). 4) PISA reading, mathematics and science: OECD, PISA 2009 Database. 5) Staying in school/education for 18-24-year olds: Eurostat database (data extracted September 2009) from Eurydice & European Commission, Gender differences in Educational Outcomes: study on the measures taken and the current situation in Europe, EC, December 2009. 6) Maternal employment rates, age of youngest child under 3 years and 3-5 years – OECD Family database, May 2011.

Table 1.1. Maximum and minimum value on the child outcomes spider web chart

Indicator on child outcomes	Minimum value	Maximum value
Infant survival (per 1000 live births)	Turkey (983)	Luxembourg (998.2)
Enrolment in formal ECEC for the under 3s (%)	Czech Republic (2.2)	Denmark (65.7)
Enrolment rates in formal preschool at age 3 (%)	Netherlands (0.05)	France (100)
Enrolment rates in formal preschool at age 5 (%)	Turkey (50.9)	Australia; France; Ireland; Mexico; New Zealand (100)
PIRLS Reading Score (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study)	Turkey (449)	Luxembourg (557)
PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) Reading Score	Mexico (425)	Korea (539)
PISA Mathematics Score	Mexico (418)	Korea (546)
PISA Science Score	Mexico (415)	Finland (554)
Staying in school/education (% of the population aged 18-24 in further education or training)	Turkey (52.8)	Slovenia (95.8)
Maternal employment rate, age of youngest child under 3 years	Hungary (15.5)	Slovenia (74.6)
Maternal employment rate, age of youngest child 3-5 years	Turkey (21.4)	Iceland (83.6)
Proportion of adults who completed upper secondary education, voting	Austria (96.6)	Czech Republic (55.5)
Proportion of adults who completed upper secondary education, volunteering	Netherlands (34.2)	Portugal (2.1)

Spider web chart on policy inputs[2]

On the selected child policy indicators, the United Kingdom performs below the OECD average on paid paternity leave entitlements and the regulated staff-child ratio in child care services for zero-to-three-year-olds. On all other indicators, the United Kingdom scores equal or above the OECD average (Figure 1.2). A more detailed comparison and additional information can be found in Annex C.

On public spending on young children

- The United Kingdom has different public expenditure portfolios for different age groups and for different services:
  - The level of public expenditure on **child care and education** at **age three**, as a percentage of median working-age household income, is well above the OECD average in the United Kingdom, close to the maximum value of the scale.
  - The level of public expenditure on ECEC for **five-year-olds** is also above the OECD average; however, it can be improved compared to the maximum value country.
  - Regarding public expenditure on **family cash benefits and tax credits**, as a percentage of GDP, the United Kingdom spends well above the OECD average.

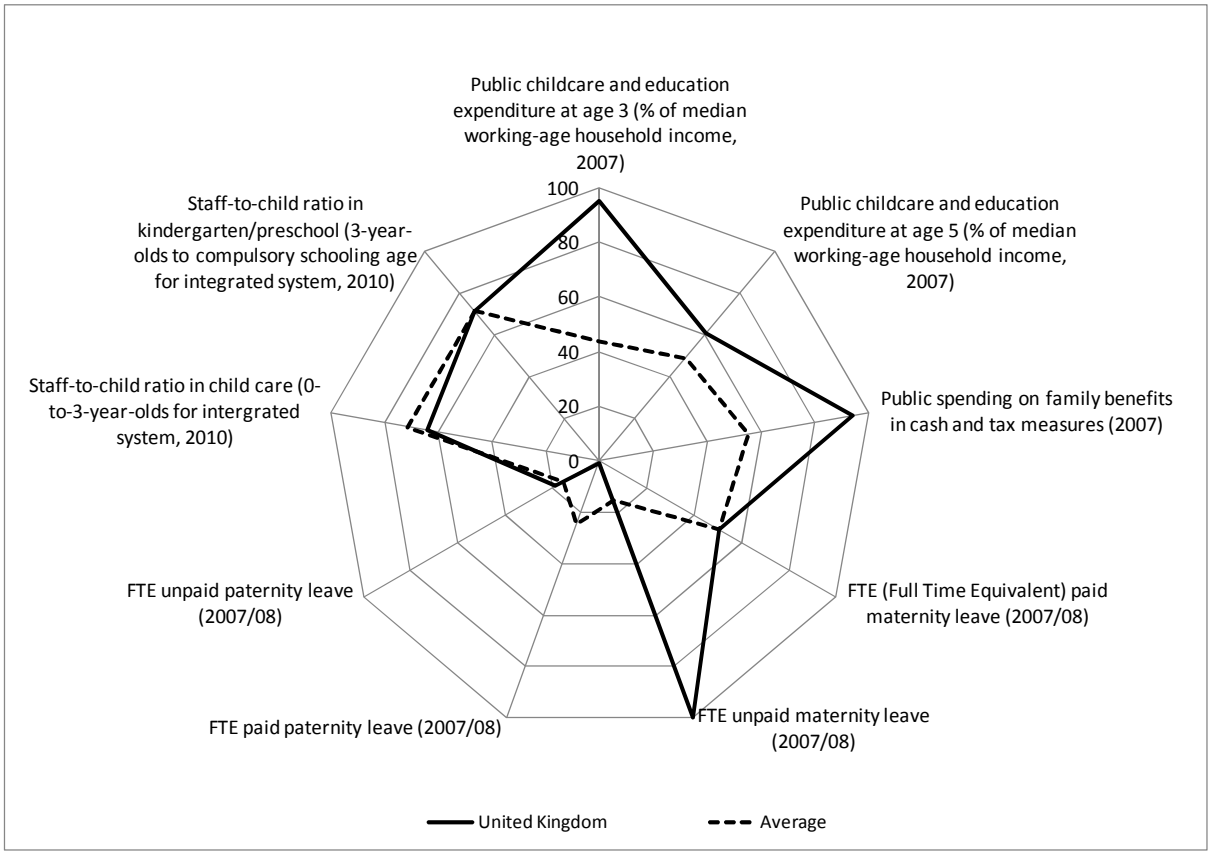
On parental leave policy

- The United Kingdom scores around the OECD average for paid maternity leave, while unpaid maternity leave entitlements in the United Kingdom are the most generous among OECD countries.
- The entitlement to paid paternity leave in the United Kingdom is nearly non-existent, while unpaid paternity leave entitlements are slightly longer than the OECD average.

On regulated staff-child ratio[3]

- The average regulated staff-child ratio for the zero-to-three-year-old age group is one caregiver per seven children in child care services. In England, a caregiver looks after slightly more children (eight children per staff member) than the average.
- In kindergarten and preschool services, the regulated staff-child ratio is 15 children per kindergarten teacher in England. This is similar to the total average.

Figure 1.2. An overview of policy inputs



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 100, where 100 was set at the maximum value and 0 was set at the minimum value, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case. The average is calculated by taking into account all OECD countries with available data. For staff-to-child ratio, all countries and jurisdictions are included in calculation of the total average, and data regards England only. See Table 1.2 for maximum and minimum value countries.

Source: 1) Public child care and education expenditure at age 3 and 5 (% of median working-age household income) – OECD (2011), Doing Better for Families, OECD Publishing. 2) Public spending on family benefits in cash and tax measures - Social Expenditure Database (www.oecd.org/els/social/expenditure), 2010, and ESSPROS, 2010. (OECD Family database, 2011). 3) FTE (Full Time Equivalent) paid/unpaid maternity and paternity leave - Moss, P. and M. Korintus (2008), International Review of leave Policies and related research, DTI Employment Relations Research Series, No. 100; Missoc tables: Social Protection in EU Member States; OECD Babies and Bosses (various issues) or information provided by National authorities in non EU countries. (OECD Family database, 2011). 4) Staff-to-child ratios in child care or kindergarten/preschool services – OECD Network on Early Childhood Education and Care's "Survey for the Quality Toolbox and ECEC Portal", June 2011.

Table 1.2. Maximum and minimum value on the policy inputs spider web chart

Indicator on policy inputs	Minimum value	Maximum value
Public child care and education expenditure at age 3 (% of median working-age household income)	Switzerland (2.3)	Sweden (43.4)
Public child care and education expenditure at age 5 (% of median working-age household income)	Slovenia (5.9)	Hungary (46.9)
Public spending on family benefits in cash and tax measures (% of GDP)	Korea (0.2)	Luxembourg (2.6)
FTE (Full Time Equivalent) paid maternity leave (weeks)	Australia; United States (0)	Greece (25.4)
FTE unpaid maternity leave (weeks)	Austria; Chile; Estonia; France; Germany; Korea; Luxembourg; Mexico; Netherlands; Poland; Portugal; Slovenia; Spain (0)	United Kingdom (39.2)
FTE paid paternity leave (weeks)	Estonia; Ireland (0)	Germany (11.6)
FTE unpaid paternity leave (weeks)	France; Greece; Hungary; Korea; Luxembourg; Netherlands; Spain (0)	Slovenia (10.2)
Staff-to-child ratio in formal day care services for 0-to-3-year-olds	Georgia (USA) (1:17)	Finland (1:7)
Staff-to-child ratio in preschool/kindergarten services for 3-to-6-year-olds	Japan (1:35)	Finland (1:4)

NOTES

1 Outcomes in the spider web are referring to the United Kingdom, since data on these outcomes are only collected for the United Kingdom. Separate data for England is therefore not available.

2 Inputs in the spider web are referring to the United Kingdom unless indicated otherwise, since data on these inputs are mostly only collected for the United Kingdom.

3 For staff-child ratio, all countries and jurisdictions are included in calculation of the total average and refers to data regarding England only.

CHAPTER 2

WHAT DOES RESEARCH SAY?

Parental and community engagement can improve the quality of ECEC provision, the quality of parenting and the home-learning environment. Additionally, it can enhance children's early development and mitigate the negative effects of family background. The continuity of children's experiences across different environments is greatly enhanced when ECEC centres co-operate with parents and communities and adopt consistent approaches to child development and learning.

The factors of family and community engagement that matter most in enhancing the quality of ECEC and children's development are: the quality of the home-learning environment; parenting skills; participation in ECEC activities; partnerships between parents, communities and ECEC centres; and partnerships with the wider community. A combination of these approaches is also possible. Sound research on the effects of family and community engagement approaches and evaluations of engagement initiatives are needed.

This section contains "Highlights from 'Research Brief: Parental and community engagement'" and "Research Brief: Parental and community engagement". The former is intended to be a quick reference of the latter, which includes full analyses and references.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM "RESEARCH BRIEF: PARENTAL AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT"

Why do parental and community engagement matter?

- Parental and community engagement can:
  - Improve the quality of ECEC provision, the quality of parenting and the home-learning environment.
  - Enhance children's early development, their later academic success and high school completion, their social development and can result in greater social cohesion.
  - Mitigate the negative effects of family backgrounds and act as a social network that supports parents and empowers disadvantaged families.
- Its influences are critical, especially in the first five years of a child's life.
- The continuity of children's experiences across different environments is greatly enhanced when ECEC centres co-operate with parents and communities and adopt consistent approaches to child development and learning. This makes ECEC (and other) services more responsive to what children need.

Which aspects of parental and community engagement matter most?

The home-learning environment (HLE)[1]

The home-learning environment (HLE) is one of the most powerful influences upon child development. Improving the HLE has been found to be one of the most effective approaches to boost children's later achievements.

- **The quality and frequency of parent-child interactions** have strong positive effects on children's cognitive (*e.g.*, math) and literacy development.
- That which parents do to engage children in everyday activities, contributing to their development, is often referred to as "**home curriculum**"; it can have positive effects on children's curiosity, exploration and cognitive development, especially for children in disadvantaged families.
- **Reading stories at an early age at home** can improve reading performance: children who are frequently (on a daily basis) read to and told stories are more likely to recognise letters of the alphabet, count to 20 or higher, and write and read at an early age than children who are less often involved in home literacy activities.

- ECEC centres that are effective in enhancing the HLE often **provide activities and materials for parents and children** to do together and offer tips on how to get children engaged in early learning at home.

Parenting at home

- Gains in **parenting skills** and **knowledge of child development and learning** are largest when parents participate in education/training courses or are advised (*e.g.*, by ECEC centres) on these topics. This has positive results on the quality of the HLE, self-confidence in good parenting, and ability of parents to help children in their learning activities.

Participating in ECEC activities

- **Volunteering** and **participating in decision making bodies** by parents has been found to have little or no impact on children's achievement, although it does contribute to a better understanding of the ECEC curriculum, a greater respect for ECEC professionals, and a closer involvement of parents in the development and learning of their children.

Partnerships between parents, communities and ECEC centres

- **Frequent communication** between ECEC staff, community services, such as health services, and parents enhances opportunities for mutual learning.

- It is important for parents, ECEC centres and community services to **share common goals** for child development, while inspiring parents to have high but **realistic aspirations** for their children.

- **Home visits** by ECEC professionals are associated with greater confidence in parents' interactions with children's ECEC programmes, greater knowledge in child development and greater engagement in home-learning activities; while children are found to be more engaged in centre-based activities and are more likely to participate in group activities. Professionals increase their understanding of how the child's home environment might affect their performance in ECEC.

Partnerships with the wider community

- **Tapping into community resources** (*e.g.*, libraries, museums, telephone support) can positively correlate with an increase in the quality of the HLE and enhance children's social and cognitive development.

- **Supporting hard-to-reach families and neighbourhoods** is important in achieving improved child outcomes for all children and increasing equity. Special programmes or targeted materials in combination with involvement of community services, such as health or social services, can be developed for these families and neighbourhoods to ensure appropriate needs-based implementation.

Combining different approaches

- **Implementing plural approaches** may encourage wider parental and community engagement and might better serve the needs of centres, families, communities and children. Different approaches can be combined to increase the success rate of meeting ECEC policy goals and can contribute to greater child development.

Policy implications

- Since the HLE has a large impact on child development, close partnerships between ECEC centres and parents concentrating on improving the HLE in the early years is of particular importance. Focus on development or stimulation of implementing a home curriculum, conducting home visits, and raising awareness among practitioners and parents on the importance of the HLE are effective measures in raising the quality of the HLE.

- Including parental engagement as a benchmark for quality ECEC services encourages ECEC providers to more frequently involve and co-operate with parents.

- Recognising parents and wider communities as strategic partners for integrated ECEC services helps to ensure broad public support and a multi-perspective contribution to decision making.

- Because leadership is critical in family and community engagement, ECEC workers might need special or additional training to help them develop the skills needed to promote family-centre partnerships and community involvement.

Research gaps

- Sound research on effective parental and community engagement approaches and the effects of engagement on child development or ECEC quality from non Anglo-Saxon countries is needed.

- Effects of targeted strategies regarding parental/community engagement on hard-to-reach groups is needed.

- Evaluations on the impacts of community initiatives, especially non-formal initiatives, to strengthen ECEC services are rarely conducted.

- The effects of parental and community engagement on neighbourhoods (*e.g.*, incidences of violence or the socio-economic situation of the neighbourhood) remain largely unknown.

RESEARCH BRIEF: PARENTAL AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

What is parental and community engagement?

Parental engagement refers to the formal and informal relations that parents have with ECEC services. The engagement can take a variety of forms and meanings depending on the education stage of the child concerned (*e.g.*, early child care or preschool) and the perspective taken on the issue (*e.g.*, early years practitioner, teacher, parent, researcher). Literature often uses the terms "family-school partnership", "parental involvement", "family involvement" and "parental engagement" interchangeably.

Community engagement refers to the connections between ECEC services and all forms of input and contribution by community services to ECEC (Litjens and Taguma, 2010). Community can be defined as "people from the same neighbourhood" in a narrow sense or "the whole community, including NGOs, etc." in a broader sense.

The most common and widely used parent and community engagement strategies (Oakes and Lipton, 2007; Epstein, 1995) can be summarised into six categories of constructive engagement.

Table 2.1. Types of parental and community engagement

Child-focused	
Communicating	Design effective forms of centre-to-home and home-to-centre communications about programmes and children's progress.
Parenting	Help all families establish home environments to support children as learners (*e.g.*, parenting classes).
Stimulating development at home	Provide information and ideas to families about how to help children at home with stimulating children's development and other curriculum-related activities, decisions and planning.
Centre-orientated	
Volunteering	Recruit and organise parent/communities help and support (*e.g.*, helping to plan and run centre events and fundraising activities, accompanying trips, donating their time to improve facilities, or assisting in the centre and sharing their skills and expertise).
Decision making	Include parents/communities in centre decisions; develop parent councils and parent-staff organisations.
Collaborating with community	Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen programmes, family practices and children's learning and development.

Source: Adapted from Epstein *et al.*, 1995.

What is at stake?

Children spend the larger, if not largest, part of their young life in their direct home environment, interacting with their parents[2], siblings, other family members and neighbours. Over the last decades, however, the amount of time children spend with their families and neighbours, as well as the types of interactions with them, have changed due to factors such as changing family structures, increasing maternal employment and increasing immigration in many OECD countries (OECD, 2006).

Parents' willingness to delegate part of the care for their children to ECEC services does not mean that the importance of the parent's role has diminished. It is still widely acknowledged that parental behaviour in the child's first five years is critical for the development of important academic and social skills and abilities. The current challenge for ECEC services is to embrace the crucial role of parents in young children's development and involve them in the services as much as possible (OECD, 2006).

The continuity of children's experience across environments is greatly enhanced when parents and staff members exchange information regularly and adopt consistent approaches to socialisation, daily routines, child development and learning. When done well, it can improve the quality of the centre, parenting at home and the home-learning environment. Families with low socio-economic status (SES) could particularly struggle to provide appropriate care and enrichment for children due to a lack of resources to do so (Barbarin *et al*., 2008; Boyce *et al*., 2010; Ermisch, 2008; Feinstein *et al*., 2007, 2008; Hauser-Cram *et al*., 2003).

Young children's development is not exclusively dependent on the input of parents and ECEC centres (day care, early education). Children grow up in a neighbourhood and are part of a community. Therefore, it is important that different services – formal ECEC services, day care, health services and out-of-school services – work together and create a "continuum of services" that is reassuring for parents and can meet the needs of young children. Community involvement in ECEC is important not only for providing expanded services and referrals where necessary but also as a space for partnership and the participation of parents.

Patterns of parental, family and community engagement in ECEC differ from country to country. Several formal and informal mechanisms are used to foster full participatory and managerial engagement. Some challenges of actively engaging parents include cultural, attitudinal and linguistic barriers. It is particularly difficult to ensure equitable representation and participation across families from diverse backgrounds (OECD, 2006).

Why does it matter?

Parental engagement

The involvement of parents in young children's education is a fundamental right and obligation. Both the OECD (2006) and UNICEF (2008a) argue that ECEC services should recognise mothers' and fathers' right to be informed, comment on and participate in key decisions concerning their child. Research shows that there is a substantial need and demand for a parental component in ECEC services (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). Research also demonstrates that parental engagement in ECEC services enhances children's achievements and adaption (Blok *et al*., 2005; Deforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Edwards *et al*., 2008; Harris and Goodall, 2006; Powell *et al*., 2010; Sylva *et al*., 2004; Weiss *et al*., 2008).

Examples of successful ECEC services that promote parental engagement (*e.g.*, Early Headstart, the Perry Preschool and the Chicago Parent Centres from the United States) offer evidence that parental engagement matters (UNICEF, 2008b). The federally funded Chicago Parent Centre's programme in the United States has been cited as evidence that parent participation has a major impact on children's academic success and social development, and that it is an effective strategy for reducing the dropout rate. Each year parents took part in the programme increased the chances – by 16% – that their child would complete high school. For students whose parents were involved for the whole six years of

the project, more than 80% graduated from high school, compared with 38% of students whose parents did not participate (Reynolds and Clements, 2005).

Community engagement

The involvement of wider community services (*e.g.*, health or social services and sport organisations) or community members in ECEC plays an important role in the development of young children. Community support of the early development process is considered as one of the characteristics common to high-quality ECEC centres (Henderson *et al*., 2002). The earlier the role of the community in the lives of young children is recognised, the better the chances children have of achieving at school and in life in general (Cotton, 2000). If the connection between schools and communities is strong, it is easier for children to develop the skills needed to be successful socially, emotionally, physically and academically (Edwards *et al*., 2008, Oakes and Lipton, 2007; OECD, 2006).

Families with different socio-economic backgrounds (defined by factors such as parental education, income and occupation) have different capacities to provide their children with a nutritious and healthy lifestyle, provide for quality child care and invest in other learning resources, *e.g.*, books and visits to libraries and museums (Bradley *et al*., 1989). A family's socio-economic background is, therefore, powerfully associated with a child's educational development (Duncan *et al*., 1998).

A study of children adopted between the ages of four and six into families that vary widely in socio-economic backgrounds highlights the impact of the environment children grow up in (Duyme *et al*., 1999). Adopted children (without any genetic links with their adoptive parents) have shown that non-genetic parents' SES factors can impact the cognitive development of a child. The IQ of these children was measured before adoption, and all children, whether adopted by low- or high-SES families, had higher IQ's after adoption. But children adopted by higher-SES families had significantly larger gains in IQ than children adopted in lower-SES families because they were raised in richer, more stimulating environments. ECEC services, in collaboration with other services that can mitigate the negative effects of family backgrounds, are especially important for children with socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

In the child's environment (family, neighbourhood), risk factors have a negative effect on the child's development of intellectual skills, school achievement, social-emotional competence, social adjustment and health (Van Tuijl and Leseman, in press) even to the extent that poverty leads to irreversible effects on brain functioning (Hackman and Farrah, 2009). Edin and Lein (1997) show that, in poor families, child care and medical care arrangements are unstable or of low quality. Additionally, their economic hardship often results in chronic stress. This is more prevalent among low-income populations because they have fewer resources to mitigate these events (McLeod and Kessler, 1990; Shonkoff and Philips, 2000). The connection between economic status and mental health is important because poor mental health is related to harsh, inconsistent, less involved parenting and less caring interactions. In turn, this has been associated with behavioural problems, for example, children are more often involved in fights and less capable of collaborating with peers; and it can cause severe attention issues leading to decreasing school performance (Shonkoff and Philips, 2000). A strong community can act as a social network that supports parents to reduce stress and maintain positive emotions and gives them tools for raising their child.

If the quality of the social network is low, it may lead to low emotional involvement and cohesion (Van Tuijl and Leseman, in press). Community engagement means a higher level of social cohesion (mutual trust between neighbours and common values) and (informal)

social control and collective efficacy (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000). Collective efficacy relates to neighbourhood levels of violence, personal victimisation, homicide, etc.

Moreover, a continuum between ECEC services, parents, neighbours and other civil society stakeholders can enhance co-operation between different services leading to a comprehensive services approach. Comprehensive services are more responsive to what children actually need in terms of their overall development and to what parents need for child care, health care and other opportunities. A strong comprehensive system of community and formal ECEC services empowers disadvantaged families to cope with their specific poverty-related problems (Van Tuijl and Leseman, in press, Weiss *et al*., 2008).

A precondition is that ECEC programmes and communities – as well as parents – design and implement common standards and foster similar goals, because standards reflect the values of people who set them (Bodrova *et al*. 2004). ECEC services engaging families and communities is especially important in low income, minority communities where differences in socio-economic background and cultural values about child rearing and education are likely to negatively affect child development (Larner, 1996).

What aspects matter most?

It has been argued that evaluating outcomes of parent or community engagement on children's performances and development is difficult due to varying definitions of what constitutes engagement and disagreement on how best to measure such engagement (Marcon, 1999). However, a few studies have compared different effects of parent or community engagement.

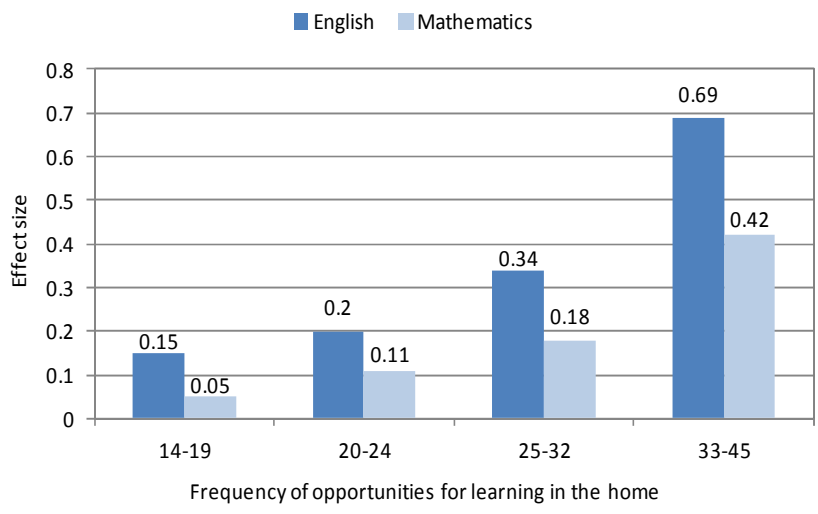
Home learning environment (HLE)

Parent-infant interactions within the HLE

Children of parents who were least involved in the HLE at ages 10 to 36 months scored less well on cognitive skills test (*e.g.*, in mathematics) later in life than children who experienced positive parent-child interactions in the HLE (Figure 2.1). The same effects were shown in research by Sylva *et al*. (2004), and these outcomes were still continuing at age seven plus.

Figure 2.1. Impact of home learning environment (HLE)

English and Mathematics attainment at age 11



Source: Melhuish, 2010.

Programme guiding parents and providing materials

Reviews by Deforges and Abouchaar (2003) and Harris and Goodall (2006) indicate that the most effective approach to boost children's later achievement and adjustment is support for parents to actively engage in children's learning activities at home. The HLE is one of the most powerful influences upon children's development (Belsky *et al*., 2007; Melhuish, 2010). It includes such activities as reading to children, singing songs and nursery rhymes, going to the library and playing with numbers.

The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) study of England has shown the importance of parent-child activities in contributing to the quality of children's HLE. The research results indicate that programmes which directly promote activities for parents and children to engage in together are likely to be most beneficial for young children (Sylva *et al*., 2004).

The quality of the HLE is also found to be strongly associated with the child's "at risk" status. A poorer quality HLE in the early years has been put forward as one of the possible reasons for the lower attainment levels observed at the start of compulsory education in "at risk" children. There are several ways in which ECEC services can help enhance the HLE, including providing activities and materials for parents and children to do together, offering parents tips on reading aloud to children and offering literacy learning kits. ECEC staff can also encourage parental engagement in early learning by providing them with resources and activities that further the work that is being addressed within the classroom. This helps families feel more connected to their child as well as to the programme (Halgunseth and Peterson, 2009).

Home curriculum

ECEC services can inspire parents to offer their children all kinds of learning situations at home, both informal and explicit. Henderson and Mapp (2002) stress the importance of seizing learning opportunities during informal interactions. Parents can involve children in daily routines (*e.g.*, meals, phone calls, making grocery lists, getting dressed), enrich these routines with stimulating discussions, and trigger their children's curiosity and exploration urges. This kind of "home curriculum" boosts children's language development, cognitive development and academic achievement (Foster *et al*., 2005; Weigel *et al*., 2006).

Scandinavian research reveals that existing social, cultural and religious practices in the home provide children with a variety of written activities (Hjort *et al*., 2009). A more effective home curriculum also includes more explicit learning activities, such as shared book reading. This activity has a major impact on children's cognitive and language development (Ermisch, 2008; Leung *et al*., 2010). There is strong evidence that parents can be trained to participate in book reading in ways that boost this development effectively (Huebner *et al*., 2010).

Support for parents to foster their children's learning is especially needed in low income families and dysfunctional families. Parents with limited education and low social status tend be less capable of engaging their children in learning activities (Ermisch, 2008; Feinstein *et al*., 2007, 2008). ECEC services can effectively support these parents to realise a successful curriculum at home (Boyce *et al*., 2010).

Reading stories at an early age at home

A popular form of parental engagement seems to be helping with children's reading development: this has been well researched, and clear benefits have been found (Keating and Taylorson, 1996). Research undertaken in the United States with three- and four-year-olds has shown that early learning activities at home make a difference: children who are

frequently read to and told stories are more likely to recognise all letters of the alphabet, count to 20 or higher, write their own names and read. In addition, children who are taught letters, words or numbers and are taken to the library regularly are more likely to show signs of emerging literacy (Nord *et al*., 1999).

The PIRLS study[3], undertaken across 40 countries, has also shown a positive relationship between engaging in early literacy activities at home prior to compulsory education and reading performance at the age of ten. The study recorded the following parent-child activities: reading books, telling stories, singing songs, playing with alphabet toys (*e.g.*, blocks with letters of the alphabet), playing word games and reading aloud signs and labels. Findings show that the reading performance of children in the highest frequency of parent-child activities (*i.e.*, on a daily regular basis) is well ahead of that of their peers with lower frequencies of parent-child activities (Mullis *et al*., 2003; 2007).

Volunteering and participating in decision-making processes

Other types of parental engagement, such as volunteering and participation in parent councils or parent-teacher organisations, while recognising its importance for parental satisfaction and staff support – have been found to have little or no impact on children's achievement (Deforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Harris and Goodall, 2006).

Knowledge about parenting and child development

Reviews show that parenting programmes affect both parents and children positively. The OECD found that children whose parents often read to them show markedly higher scores in PISA 2009 than students whose parents read with them infrequently or not at all, regardless of their family's socio-economic background (OECD, 2011). The Harvard Family Research Project found that about one-third to one-half of the variation in school outcomes between poor and not poor children can be accounted for by differences in parenting (Brooks-Gunn and Markman, 2005). Parents strongly influence child outcomes and children's cognitive and linguistic development. Parental attributes found to be important are education, training and employment. Aspects of parenting that are found to matter for child development include the interactions with children, the HLE and parental understanding or knowledge of child development (Yoshikawa, 1995).

The overall findings from parenting programmes indicate that:

- Parents feel more secure in interactions with their children, boost their sense of well-being and benefit their children (Diamond and Hyde, 2000; Scott, 2003; Sylva *et al*., 2004);
- Parents increase self-confidence in good parenting, particularly for poor families (Epstein, 2001);
- Parents better understand appropriate educational practices and improve children's educational outcomes, especially in literacy (Cooter *et al*., 1999; Bryant *et al*., 2000);
- Parents are more likely to talk directly with the practitioner and be better able to help their children at home with learning and homework (Corter *et al*., 2006);
- Participants reduce their reliance on public assistance, find employment, earn college credit or degrees, and own homes after their experience with the programme (Halgunseth and Peterson, 2009); and

- Access points provided at ECEC centres or through home visits have been reported as key in empowering parents to engage in their children's learning (Sime *et al*., 2009).

Gains in parenting skills and knowledge of child development and learning were found through participation in education courses and engagement in the ECEC service (Mitchell *et al*., 2008). Furthermore, training parents of preschoolers to help their children's learning at home has been found to have positive results on later school achievements, regardless of family background or income (Graue *et al*., 2004). Early Head Start parents participating in programmes offering child development services with parenting education through home visits were found to be more supportive of their children during play, more likely to read to their children every day, and less likely to smack their children than parents who did not participate (Love *et al*., 2005).

Strategic partnership between parents, communities and ECEC services

Frequent communication

Starting Strong II pointed out that the frequency of parent-staff relationships is linked positively with the quality of care provided in centres (OECD, 2006), although a High/Scope study suggests that much depends on the content of the contact (Schweinhart and Weikart, 1997). Drop-off and pickup meetings, for example, can remain routine and focus only on immediate concerns. For this reason, it was emphasised in *Starting Strong II* that if these encounters do not provide opportunities for mutual learning, they should be supplemented by focused parent-staff meetings, newsletters and home visits (OECD, 2006).

A survey on parental needs shows that parents in Korea mainly utilise media and the on-line community to obtain and share information about child rearing and early childhood education. In contrast, parents in Japan regard neighbourhoods and grandparents as main sources for child-relevant information. Japanese parents frequently use child welfare centres to meet other parents and visit local public health centres to consult issues on child care and support (Hwang, Nam and Suh, 2010).

Shared goals

It is important for ECEC staff to communicate with parents about programme goals and the best way to achieve them since parents can have misconceptions, such as school readiness (Bodrova *et al*., 2004). They conceive readiness largely in terms of the ability to name objects, letters or numbers, without recognising the importance of inferential skills. Parental views and expectations of ECEC may, however, vary among countries and even regions. In Sweden, for instance, parents are found to demand that ECEC focus on both play and learning-oriented activities (Sheridan *et al*., 2009).

The EPPE study found ECEC settings that produced good socio-cognitive outcomes for children had "strong parental involvement, especially in terms of shared educational goals with parents" and provided "regular reporting and discussion with parents about their child's progress" (Siraj-Blatchford *et al*., 2003). There is also evidence that a combined home and centre-based ECEC approach has a positive impact on children's development (Blok *et al*., 2005; Brooks-Gunn and Markman, 2005; Sylva *et al*., 2004). However, real partnerships and complementary practices are essential to achieving the best results (Bodrova *et al*., 2004; Van Tuijl and Leseman, in press).

The Early Authors Programme is a United States-based 12-month early literacy intervention implemented in child care centres in ethnically and linguistically diverse, urban low-income communities.[4] The programme approaches literacy skills by emphasising highly meaningful

language interactions and positive attitudes through empowering activities involving children and families (Bernhard *et al*., 2008).

Parental aspirations

Some see parents mainly as supporters of the ECEC facility, assisting as volunteers; others see them merely as users or clients of ECEC services. Some view them as partners in a joint enterprise (Bloomer and Cohen, 2008; Moss, 2007); parents and professionals strive for the same educational aims at home and at the centre and harmonise their activities to achieve the best possible results for children. For this joint effort, it is critical that professionals communicate with parents about their aspirations for their children's achievements and their expectations about the best educational practice.

ECEC facilities should inspire parents to have high hopes for their children because parental aspirations and expectations are strongly related to children's achievement (Fan and Chen, 2001). It is especially important to raise the aspirations of low-income parents. Research suggests that children from low-income families enter a path of diminished expectations (Hauser-Cram *et al*., 2003).

Home visits

Home visits are associated with greater confidence in parents' interactions with children's education programmes and greater knowledge in children's development. Children who receive home visits from ECEC practitioners have been found to have greater engagement in literacy activities and are more likely to choose to participate in group activities. Staff also benefit, as they gain positive relationships with children and families and better understand how the child's home environment might affect school performance (Halgunseth and Peterson, 2009).

There is wider evidence on the benefits of targeted home visitation programmes, such as Home Interaction Programme for Parents and Youngster[5] (HIPPY). HIPPY is a home-based programme that centres on the role of parents as home educators. It focuses on pre-literacy and pre-numeracy and is provided for two years, starting when the child is four. The HIPPY evaluation in New Zealand showed that children who have participated in HIPPY have scored higher in a variety of school achievements (literacy, reading, word recognition, numeracy), adjust better in class and show less disturbing behaviour (less fighting with peers and more active participation). In particular, HIPPY children have been found to be less likely to become in need of targeted support for literacy skills development (BarHava-Monteith *et al*., 1999).

The High/Scope Perry Preschool programme[6] provides preschool education and home visits to disadvantaged children during their preschool years (from age three). The Perry Study stemming from the programme follows participants from ages three through to 40. The programme lasts two years and consists of two-and-a-half hours a day of preschool in addition to weekly home visits by preschool teachers. Findings show that the impact of the programme varies by gender and with age. The programme appeared to have a significant effect on males' criminal activity, later life income, and employment at ages 27 and 40; whereas it had more effect on education and early employment for females ages 19 and 27. The general pattern is one of strong early results for females and later results for males (Heckman *et al*., 2010).

Strategic partnership with the wider community

Tapping into community resources

Research cites family and community engagement as key to children's motivation for learning and development (Barton, 2003). In Canada, engagement with local organisations offering information to ECEC providers and the use of community-based resources (toy lending libraries, telephone support, etc.) positively correlates with more sensitive care giving and children's early social development (Doherty *et al*., 2000).

Supporting harder-to-reach families

In Ireland, partnerships between ECEC programmes and community services have been found to be effective in approaching and supporting harder-to-reach families, such as Roma and travelling families. Specialists offer those families tailored services designed with respect to their cultural context, which improve children's skills as well as those of parents. The development of distance learning materials in collaboration with community members and consultants specialised in travelling education has enhanced the likelihood of achieving improved child outcomes on literacy rates and math skills. Specialists understand how to design effective learning materials for children within their communities, and parents learn how to implement different learning approaches for young children (Robinson and Martin, 2008).

Targeting families and neighbourhoods

Neighbourhood conditions matter more for disadvantaged than advantaged children (Cook *et al*., 1998). In 1994, five Head Start programmes in the United States developed model substance abuse prevention projects with a goal to strengthen families and neighbourhoods of economically disadvantaged preschool children. The initiative, named "Free to Grow", targeted families and neighbourhoods of Head Start children in an effort to protect them from substance abuse and its associated problems. It included a strong focus on community-based strategies in the form of coalitions, implementation of "safe space" task forces that ensured safe and substance abuse-free spaces for young children, and training in substance abuse prevention. Different community services were included in the implementation, *e.g.*, local police forces, youth organisations, churches and numerous grassroots organisations. Outcomes included increased parental engagement in ECEC, cleaner and safer schools and neighbourhoods, improved relationships among residents and between ECEC practitioners, parents and community members, and stronger community norms against drug and alcohol use (Harrington, 2001).

Combination of different approaches

A programme or centre does not need to limit itself to one approach. Several forms of parental and community engagement can be used simultaneously and complement each other. Since ECEC settings provide services for a range of people with different backgrounds, not every strategy or type of engagement meets all needs or is suitable for each child, family or community. Therefore, implementing plural approaches may encourage parent and wider community engagement. An example of combining different engagement approaches is the REAL project, explained below.

The REAL (Realising Equality and Achievement for Learners) project

Hannon and Nutbrown (2001) have reported on the REAL project in which ten preschool centres in areas of high deprivation in Sheffield (England) took part. Eighty-eight families participated in the 12-18 month programme. The programme included a combination of five components, including home visits by the preschool teachers; provision of literacy resources;

centre-based group activities; special events (*e.g.*, group library visits); and postal communication. Adult education for the parents was also incorporated into the programme through an accredited course on REAL along with information, advice and support for accessing other providers' courses. Each preschool teacher was funded to work one half-day per week with eight families.

The evaluation provided strong evidence of the benefits of the programme to the children, parents and teachers. Parents' experiences were reported as "extraordinarily positive". Preschool teachers greatly valued the opportunity to work closely with parents and found it changed their thinking, although they felt that other responsibilities in the school made their work on the project difficult. Parents and teachers noted "global benefits", as well as specific literacy benefits, for the children. Results showed the programme group was ahead of the control group in terms of literacy development and letter recognition (Hannon and Nutbrown, 2001).

What are the policy implications?

Including parental engagement as a benchmark for quality ECEC services

One suggestion is the use of a "quality report card" based on a list of dimensions and critical components by which any non-formal, informal or formal activity can be evaluated. This should include support for the sharing of educational aims and regular communication about the child's progress (Jualla and Van Oudenhoven, 2010).

Engaging parents and wider communities as strategic partners for integrated ECEC services

This means that national authorities involve regional and local authorities, NGOs, private businesses and community groups in policy and decision making and recognise them as partners in the ECEC coalition. This helps ensure broad public support and a multi-perspective contribution to decision making. A key success factor is the availability of substantial funding, for example, to pay parents and community members who are the main implementers of the programme. Funding can also be used to encourage and implement co-operation.

Concentrating efforts on improving the HLE in the early years

Early literacy projects for children, as well as parenting and empowerment activities for parents, can be delivered through ECEC services and in close partnership with parents. The focus should be on "home curriculum", especially shared book reading at home as well as home visits. Focusing on socio-economically disadvantaged families and children is of particular importance. Awareness should be raised about the importance of good HLEs and the possibilities available in local communities to engage in ECEC. This can be done through public relations campaigns, parental education, etc.

Training staff on parental and community engagement

ECEC centre's attitudes and actions toward parent involvement are largely influenced by administrators and practitioners. Because leadership is critical in family and community engagement (OECD, 2006), administrators and practitioners may need special training to help them develop the skills needed to promote family-centre partnerships and community involvement (Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, 2003; Sime *et al.*, 2009).

Practitioners' training programmes can include general information on the benefits of and barriers to parental and community involvement; information on awareness of different family backgrounds and lifestyles; techniques for improving two-way communication between home/community and the centre; information on ways to involve parents in helping their children learn in school and outside; and ways that centres can help meet families and communities' social, educational and social service needs (Litjens and Taguma, 2010; OECD, 2006).

What is still unknown?

Research from non-Anglo-Saxon countries

While there is a general recognition of the importance of parental and community engagement in improving children's learning outcomes, determining what precisely constitutes successful parental or community engagement in ECEC services is much harder. A number of long-term child outcomes could be measured to test the effectiveness of involving parents or communities in different ways; but for robust data to be gathered and sound conclusions to be made about "what works", significant investments would be required to undertake well-designed experimental longitudinal research. Most large-scale and technically sound studies on the impact of parental engagement were conducted in the United States and the United Kingdom (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Harris and Goodall, 2006; OECD, 2006). Sound research in other countries and cultures is needed. Parental engagement in children's schooling may have different meanings in different cultures (Huntsinger and Jose, 2009). Little is known about how these differences affect the outcome of parental engagement.

Research on the effects of different communication strategies

Although there is a growing body of research that points to the importance of communication between parents and ECEC staff, there is no strong evidence as to which particular strategy works best.

Effects on hard-to-reach groups

Relatively little is known about effective ways of increasing parental engagement in hard-to-reach groups (Harris and Goodall, 2006). More research is needed on targeted strategies to involve parents of ethnic minority children and parents who are not interested in being active ECEC participants.

Evaluation of community initiatives

There is hardly any literature describing the difference in impact between community initiatives with the aim to strengthen educational programmes and community initiatives with a more autonomous goal. A challenge is the evaluation of the quality of non-formal/informal community-based activities because they are heterogeneous and, therefore, hard to compare. Elaborate research on the effects of non-formal activities remains necessary.

Neighbourhood effects

Although there is a large body of literature suggesting that neighbourhood conditions influence development and behaviour, it seems hard to define "precise, robust and unbiased" estimates of neighbourhood effects (Duncan and Raudenbusch, 1999; Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000).

NOTES

1 HLE includes activities from which children's development can benefit, such as reading to children, singing songs and nursery rhymes, going to the library and playing with numbers.

2 For the purpose of this paper, the term "parents" refers to all carers holding prime responsibility for the upbringing and care of a child.

3 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, http://pirls.org.

4 The intervention stresses the importance of active parental engagement and collaboration in ECEC. It contains five key aspects: a) involving literacy specialists working with preschool teachers; b) bringing technology and book making equipment into the classrooms; c) children self-authoring books with the help of literacy specialists, educators and parents; d) parents coming in for on-site group parent/family meetings in which parents and other family members share family stories and, together, make books based on the stories; and e) frequent reading, sharing, display and dissemination of the children's self-authored books in the classroom and the larger community. The intervention did not focus on teaching children literacy skills specifically but concentrated on children and families creating meaningful self-authored texts on the assumption that this approach would motivate children, teachers and families to engage in literacy activities. The evaluation included pre- and post-test assessments. Evaluation findings were found to be positive: the participating three- and four-year-olds' language and literacy developmental outcomes were found to be enhanced by the programme activities. The programme appeared to not only increase children's absolute language skills but also prevent children living in poverty from continuing to fall further behind in comparison with national age norms. There was also evidence of a qualitative change that took place in classrooms: teachers and literacy specialists noted that "the children became more verbal, formed fuller sentences and saw the connections between writing and reading". Qualitative data indicated that the programme strengthened the children's identities and fostered their self-esteem (Bernhard *et al*., 2008).

5 HIPPY is the Home Interaction Programme for Parents and Youngsters which originated in Israel in the late 1960s and has been implemented with positive results in a number of countries. More details are available at: www.hippy.org.il/.

6 The High/Scope Perry Preschool approach has its own curriculum (High/Scope curriculum) and is used in both public and private half- and full-day preschools, nursery schools, Head Start programmes, day care centres, home-based day care programmes, and programmes for children with special needs. Originally designed for low-income, "at-risk" children, the High/Scope Perry preschool approach is now used for the full range of children and has been successfully implemented in both urban and rural settings both in the United States and overseas.

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CHAPTER 3

WHERE DOES THE UNITED KINGDOM (ENGLAND) STAND COMPARED TO OTHER COUNTRIES?

In England, the importance and value of involving parents and communities in providing good care and education for young children is increasingly recognised. England has a clear government plan to enhance parental and community engagement; involves parents in evaluating ECEC services; has plans to strengthen the co-operation between ECEC and health services; targets disadvantaged families to decrease inequity; and supports young parents.

Capitalising upon its strengths, England could further enhance quality in ECEC through strengthening parental and community engagement. Other country practices would suggest such options as: 1) reflecting on approaches to involve parents and communities; 2) reflecting parental views and opinions in ECEC programming; 3) reflecting upon societal changes to meet family and children's needs, such as the increase in divorce rates, full-time working parents, increasing income inequality and increasing immigrant populations; and 4) further improving communication skills of ECEC staff.

In England, the importance and value of involving parents and communities in providing good care and education for young children is increasingly recognised. The *Supporting Families in the Foundation Years* document is a good example of this. It lays out several aims and initiatives of family and community engagement in England. Current practice for the involvement of families and communities in child care and education has some strengths, notably the inclusion of parent's voice in assessing programmes and services and increasing co-operation with health services. However, most strengths of England's family and community engagement policies are based on future measures and initiatives that the government is planning to implement.

These initiatives show that the government is increasingly aware of the relevance and opportunities of involving parents and communities in ECEC. Although the government has some interesting initiatives planned, there are aspects of current practice and family contexts that can be reflected upon and can contribute to strengthening policies and practices for family and community engagement in ECEC.

Strengths

Involvement of parents in evaluating ECEC services

Parents of children in ECEC have a right to be informed and heard regarding their children's experience in care or education programmes, and their experiences with provisions and staff. Furthermore, parents can be an important source of constructive feedback and input to ECEC programmes. In order to achieve this, several countries include parents in the monitoring and assessment of ECEC services.

Some countries involve parents in the evaluation of ECEC services. When parents are part of the monitoring process, they are rarely the sole agent but tend to be included together with ECEC staff and managers (Table 3.1).

In England, parents are involved in evaluating child care as well as pre-primary education services. Parents can evaluate services through observations in conjunction with ECEC staff members and management. In other countries where parents are involved in the evaluation exercise, evaluation methods typically include evaluation forms, surveys and questionnaires.

Feedback from parents can contribute to improving the quality of ECEC services in England and can provide useful information for staff and managers.

Table 3.1. Inclusion of parents in evaluation of ECEC services

Country or region	Institutions under evaluation	Parents in conjunction with…	Type of evaluation
Denmark	Child care centres, Pre-primary education (Kindergarten)	ECEC staff	Survey
England (UKM)	Care centres, Pre-primary Education	ECEC staff, Management	Observations
Finland	Child care , Family care, Pre-primary education	ECEC staff, Children	Questionnaires, Portfolios
Flemish Community (BEL)	Care centres	missing	Survey
Italy	Care centres, Preschool	ECEC staff, Management	Survey, Observations, Portfolios
Japan	Kindergarten, Care centres	Local stakeholders	Evaluation forms, Consultation
Norway	Kindergarten	ECEC staff	Observation, Questionnaires
Poland	Kindergarten	ECEC staff, Management, Local stakeholders	Questionnaires, Interviews
Slovak Republic	Preschool	ECEC staff	Checklist
Slovenia	Preschool	ECEC staff, Management	Evaluation forms, Questionnaires
Sweden	Preschool	ECEC staff, Management	Evaluation forms

Source: OECD Network on Early Childhood Education and Care's "Survey for the Quality Toolbox and ECEC Portal", June 2010.

Existence of a clear government plan to enhance parental and community engagement

In *Supporting Families in the Foundation Years*, the English government recognises the importance of involving families and communities in the early education of children. The document sets out the plan for reform and how people working with young children can work most effectively to give children the support they need at the earliest opportunity. With the help of experts, the government developed the document to guide staff in enhancing family and community engagement and to guide parents and communities in stimulating early development. This is an important step in improving family and community engagement, and it is the starting point for actual changes.

In Norway and New Zealand, the importance of family and/or community engagement is emphasised in policy papers. However, in New Zealand, this is limited to highlighting the relevance of the involvement of families, while Norway considers community engagement to be highly relevant. The Norwegian Ministry of Education stressed the importance of community involvement in early education in the draft White Paper No. 28 (2007-08) on language learning and development.

Close co-operation with health services to improve children's health

Child obesity is one factor that affects child well-being, and in many countries it is on the rise (Figure 3.1). In 2005-06, between 10-30% of 15-year-olds in OECD countries were considered obese, while this was between 8-19% five years earlier.

In the United Kingdom, over 10% of 15-year-olds were considered obese in 2005-06; and although this is below the OECD average, it is a growing aspect of concern for the society. As a proportion of the United Kingdom's families and children have an unhealthy lifestyle, the government is implementing several measures in co-operation with health services to improve young children's health. These measures resemble those taken in the United States.

Health outcome measures have been identified in the National Health Service (NHS) Outcomes Framework and the developing Public Health Outcomes Framework. They support local partners to work together on common outcome goals to support health improvement; prevent ill health by, for example, increasing breastfeeding and reducing maternal smoking; reduce health inequalities; and protect the population, for example, through vaccination programmes, improving life expectancy and preventing mortality.

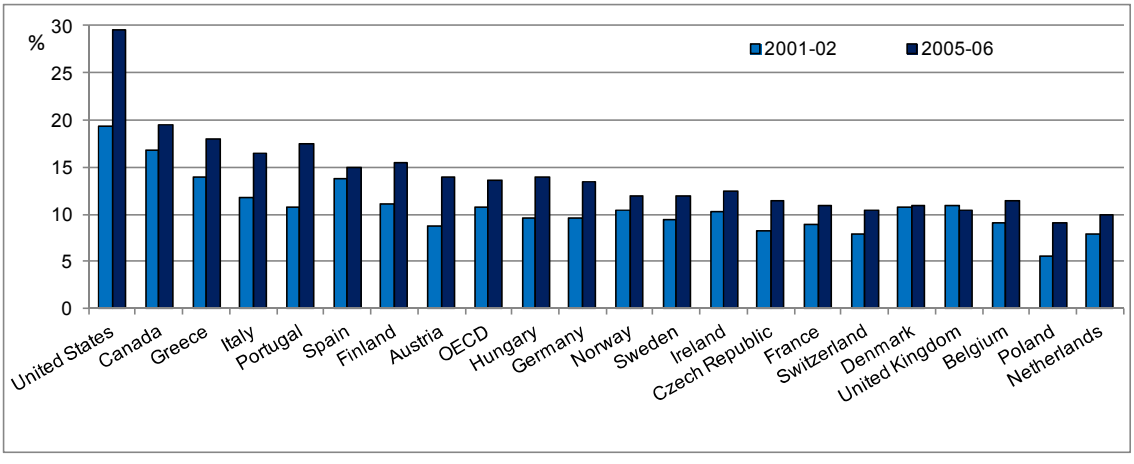
The United Kingdom also has a plan to develop a population-level measure linked to the Healthy Child Programme of child development at ages two to two-and-a-half. The Healthy Child Programme from pregnancy to age five is the overarching framework for NHS foundation years provision, providing prevention and early intervention for children and their families. It combines preventative programmes for all children and families with additional support and early intervention in response to expressed need to resolve problems early, prevent deterioration and predict need where there are known problems or risk factors, such as a child with a disability or family issues like substance misuse or other complex problems.

The government is acting to strengthen the Healthy Child Programme through its commitment to an extra 4 200 health visitors by 2015. This expansion is intended to provide the capacity to lead comprehensive delivery of the Healthy Child Programme through the health-visiting model set out in the Health Visitor Implementation Programme. This will be provided through universal provision with communities and families or through more targeted support – depending on the need.

Norway also co-operates with health services, although in a different manner than in the United Kingdom: in Norway, co-operation with health services was established in the project *Språkløftet* (Language Promotion) in finding and guiding children with a need for language stimulation to participate in ECEC. In Groruddalen (Oslo), the project offers 20 hours per week of free time in kindergarten for all children ages four and five. Co-operation between the services has meant an increase in participation for all children, but especially for minority language children.

Figure 3.1. Child obesity going up

Percentage of 15-year-olds suffering from obesity



Source: OECD (2009), *Health at a Glance 2009*; *OECD Indicators from OECD (2010), Trends shaping education 2010.*

A network of information provision and support on parenting

Most parents look first to family and friends for advice about parenting issues and then to professionals and other trusted organisations, largely from the voluntary and community sector. Since July 2011, 11 respected organisations receive funding to provide national family support services online and by telephone. These services provide support on a range of issues from behaviour or mental health problems to advice on benefits. The services also provide therapeutic sessions, such as relationship counselling. This recognises that families might need help and support in child-rearing as well as that there is a lack of awareness regarding the existence of certain services or benefits.

Targeting disadvantaged families to reduce inequity in society

In England, free early education places have been provided for all three- and four-year-olds since April 2004. From September 2010, it was increased from 12.5 to 15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year. The government plans to extend it to the 20% most disadvantaged two-year-olds from 2013 and to around 40% by 2014. The introduction of free early education for disadvantaged two-year-olds will be an important stepping stone for families, bringing many of them into contact for the first time with nurseries, childminders and children's centres. It is also a great step forward in ensuring all (disadvantaged) children will have equal opportunities in education and decreasing inequity in society between advantaged and disadvantaged children. Trials are already underway in 18 local authorities to inform how the national entitlement to disadvantaged two-year-olds should be introduced. These trials will help local authorities learn from each other about how best to address some of the challenges involved in delivering the entitlement, and the pilot local authorities will take a lead in disseminating the lessons from the trials.

Norway also offers free part-time kindergarten, but only to children in areas with a high proportion of migrant families. The measure is universal within these areas to avoid stigma. Participation in kindergarten stimulates the child's social and language development and helps prevent children-at-risk from falling behind their peers.

Supporting young parents

England is doubling the number of places on the Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) to 13 000 by 2015, so that more vulnerable first-time teenage mothers and young fathers can benefit from this intensive support from early pregnancy until the child is two. It offers intensive and structured home-visiting, delivered by specially trained nurses. FNP uses in-depth methods to work with both young mothers and fathers, on attachment and relationships and psychological preparation for parenthood. Family nurses build supportive relationships with families and guide first-time teenage parents to adopt healthier lifestyles for themselves, learn to care well for their babies and plan their own futures.

Meeting parental needs in the usage of free ECEC hours

Enabling free early education to be accessed more flexibly supports child development by ensuring that more children are able to receive all their free hours. Currently, 14% of children aged three and four access less than their full entitlement. For many parents, an extra hour at either end of the working day could enable them to manage their work commitments and family lives. The Department for Education has just completed a consultation on making small but significant changes to the free entitlement to enable the free hours to be used slightly earlier (from 7:00 rather than 8:00) or slightly later (to 19:00 rather than 18:00), but with a maximum of ten free hours per day, and to enable providers to offer the full 15-hour entitlement over two days rather than a minimum of three.

Using research to inform policy

The United Kingdom attempts to promote evidence-based policy making, especially in the area of longitudinal research. The United States has the oldest studies, such as the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project (from 1962), the Abecedarian Programme (since the 1970s), etc. Only in the last two decades, a growing number of OECD countries have launched such studies. The National Child Development Study dates back to 1958. The aim is not limited to measuring the impact of family and community engagement on child development; but the topics include parental involvement, family relationships and home environment in addition to factors such as economic activities, income and housing of family environments. The 1970 British Cohort Study and the Millennium Cohort Study both continue to identify factors affecting child development, including family factors.[1] The Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) focuses the effects of preschool, in particular. The study has highlighted the importance of the quality of home learning environments (HLEs), which has contributed to not only facilitating policy discussions on what HLEs mean for children and how to enhance HLEs through public policy. The study has been rigorously quoted not only in the country but also internationally.

Potential areas for reflection

The following potential areas for reflection are identified as a result of desk-based international comparison without stakeholder's views, such as through a country visit, due to the constraints of the working methods involved.

Approaches to family and community engagement

Policy approaches to family and community engagement vary between countries. The most commonly used approaches for family and community engagement include: 1) making it a legal obligation, and 2) involving parents or communities in decision-making bodies. Finland and the Scandinavian countries involve parents in decision-making bodies (Table 3.2).

While a majority of countries make it an "obligation" for ECEC services to engage parents in their activities, a few countries (*e.g.*, Norway and Sweden) also make it a parental "right". In several countries (*e.g.*, Norway), parents and community members can run an ECEC centre and receive public subsidies if following a certain set of standards or quality framework.

To attract political attention and stimulate discussion on the topic, England is recognising the importance of family and community involvement in ECEC increasingly. The *Supporting Families in the Foundation Years* document is a great example of this. Although this might increase awareness of family and community engagement and ensure that ECEC providers implement parental and/or community engagement activities, thought can be given to making it a legal obligation for centres to engage parents/communities as is done in Finland (for parents and communities) and New Zealand (for parents only).

Table 3.2. Preferred approaches to engaging families and communities

Panel A. Parental engagement

Making it a legal obligation	Making it a parental right	Putting it in a policy paper	Involving parents in decision making	Allowing parents to be providers
Australia, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Japan*, Manitoba (CAN), Netherlands*, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal*, Prince Edward Island (CAN), Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey	Czech Republic, Norway, Poland, Prince Edward Island (CAN), Slovenia, Spain, Sweden	New Zealand, Norway, Slovak Republic, Sweden	Australia, Belgium, British Columbia (CAN), Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Manitoba (CAN), Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Prince Edward Island (CAN), Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey	Belgium, Germany, Manitoba (CAN), Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Slovak Republic, Sweden

* Only regarding kindergartens/preschools for Japan and Portugal; only regarding child care for the Netherlands.

Panel B. Community engagement

Making it a legal obligation	Putting it in a policy paper	Involving community members in decision making	Allowing community members to be providers
Australia, Belgium, Finland, Japan*, Mexico, Norway, Portugal*, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey	Norway, Slovenia, Spain	Australia, Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey	Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Japan, Manitoba (CAN), Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway

* Only regarding kindergartens/preschools for Japan and Portugal.

Note 1: "Making it a legal obligation" refers to ECEC providers being obliged to provide opportunities for parents or community members to be engaged in ECEC or being obliged to accept the engagement of parents/communities.

Note 2: Belgium refers to both the Flemish and French Communities of Belgium.

Source: OECD Network on Early Childhood Education and Care's "Survey for the Quality Toolbox and ECEC Portal", June 2011.

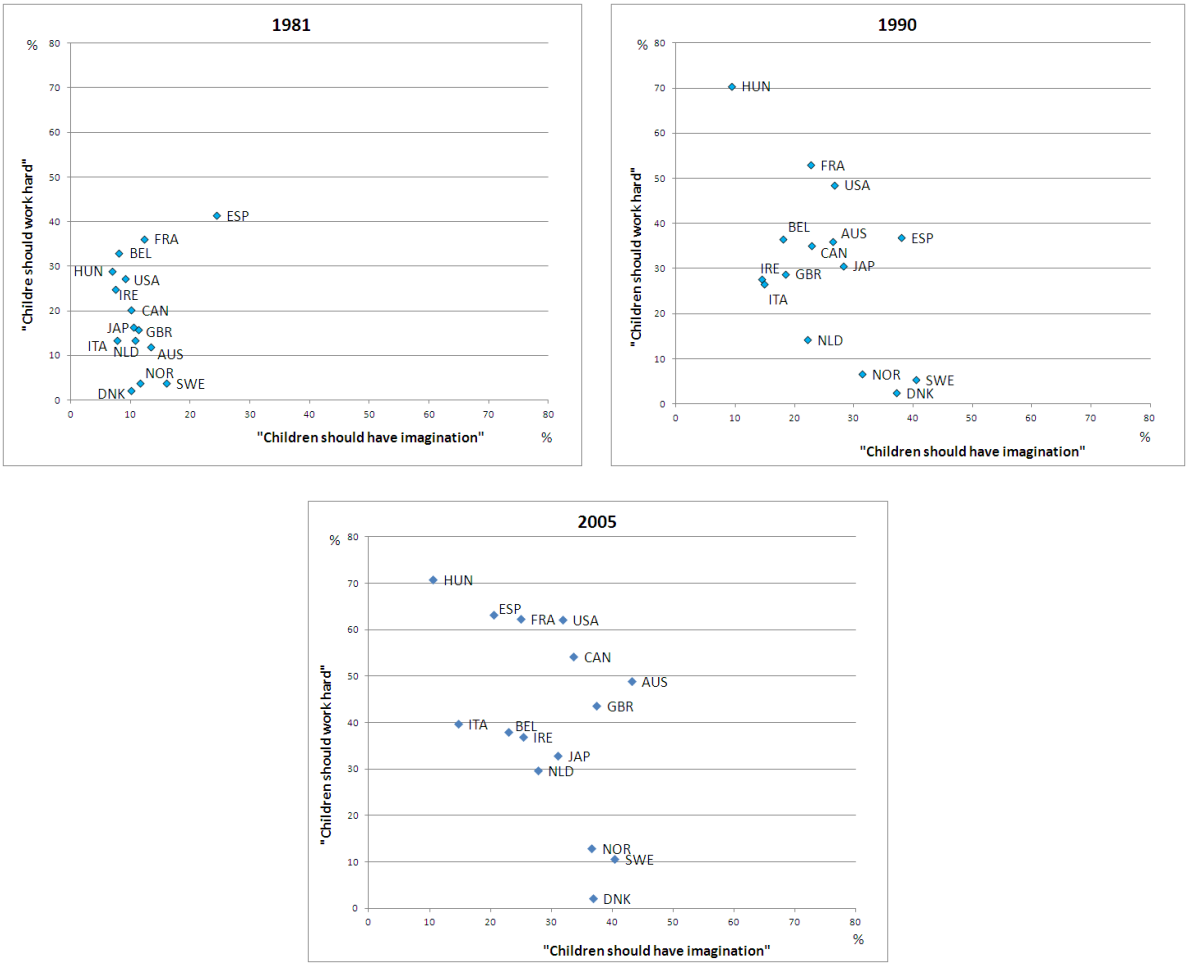
Reflection of parental expectations

As parents in England are involved in evaluating ECEC services, their opinions of staff and activities are important: they can provide inputs to programming and contribute to enhancing quality. Parental expectations change over time, and for parental satisfaction purposes, it might be useful to reflect parental expectations – to a certain extent – in ECEC programmes.

"Working hard" and "having imagination" are two typical features of parental expectations of children. The World Values Survey[2] indicates the parental expectations of certain values, such as "having imagination" and "working hard", have risen over time (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2. Expectations of parents regarding their children's education and skills

The percentage of respondent that consider the statements "Children should have imagination" and "Children should work hard" to be important qualities for children in 1981, 1990 and 2005



Note: Data from the World Values Survey is presented from 1981, 1990 and 2005 or the nearest available year for each country.

Source: World Values Survey (2009), Four-wave Aggregate of the Values Studies, Online Data Analysis, www.worldvaluessurvey.org, accessed November 2011.

The inclusion of parents in the evaluation and assessment of ECEC services in the United Kingdom makes sure that their voice is heard and feedback received. Nevertheless, England might wish to consider monitoring parent's satisfaction more directly. The United Kingdom, for instance, commissioned a survey of parent's satisfaction with the Sure Start programme in 2008. Regular parental satisfactions surveys administered in Scandinavian countries have provided up-to-date and useful feedback (Table 3.3). This might allow more input that more closely track potential changes and trends in parent's experiences and views.

Table 3.3. Parental satisfaction surveys on provision of ECEC services

Types of provisions	Administrator of the survey	Frequency	Country
Kindergarten/ Preschool	ECEC centre	every 3 years	Korea
		missing	Norway, Slovenia
	Local authority	1 to 2 times per year	Sweden
		every 2 years	Denmark
		missing	Prince Edward Island (CAN)
	Institute of evaluation	missing	Spain
Child care centres	ECEC centre	every year	Italy
		at least once during the child's participation in child care	Flemish Community (BEL)
		missing	Norway, Slovenia
	Local authority	1 to 2 times per year	Sweden
		every 2 years	Denmark
		missing	Prince Edward Island (CAN)

Note: Countries with an integrated ECEC system are listed under both "kindergarten" and "child care" since their ECEC system integrates care and early education.

Source: OECD Network on Early Childhood Education and Care's "Survey for the Quality Toolbox and ECEC Portal", June 2011.

Changing family compositions and situations

Changing family compositions and situations can impact whether parents have the possibility to be engaged in ECEC. The risk of non-engagement in ECEC is particularly high for some groups, such as teenage parents, single mothers and full-time working parents. Changing family situations, as well as compositions, are aspects which might impact parental engagement in ECEC and are areas for consideration when implementing or designing policies regarding family engagement. Besides supporting teenage parents, as England is currently doing through its Family Nurse Partnership (FNP), additional co-operation and support to help meet the needs of parents and children in changing family situations might be considered to ensure equal opportunities for all young children.

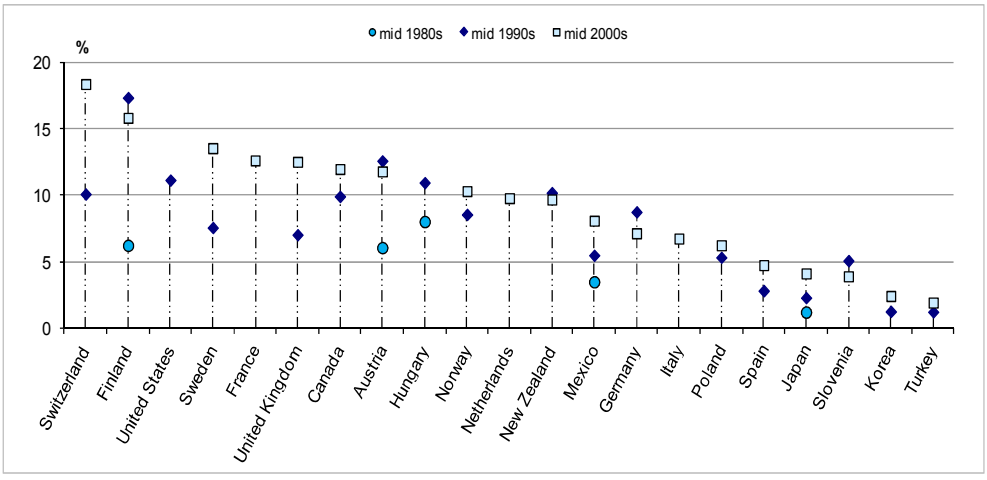
Increasing divorce rates

Divorce rates for families with children have increased in most OECD countries since the mid-1980s (Figure 3.3). Changes in family structures are likely to affect children's home environments, *e.g.*, having older parents, more single parents and nuclear families.

The proportion of parents that separate or divorce in United Kingdom is about 12.5%, which is lower than the rate in Finland, the United States and Sweden, albeit higher than in Norway and New Zealand. In the United Kingdom, as elsewhere, the proportion of separated parents has increased, an implication being that parental engagement programmes in ECEC will deal with an increasing proportion of separated parents or recomposed families.

Figure 3.3. Changes in the percentage of divorced or separated adults with children

Proportion of parents separating or divorcing



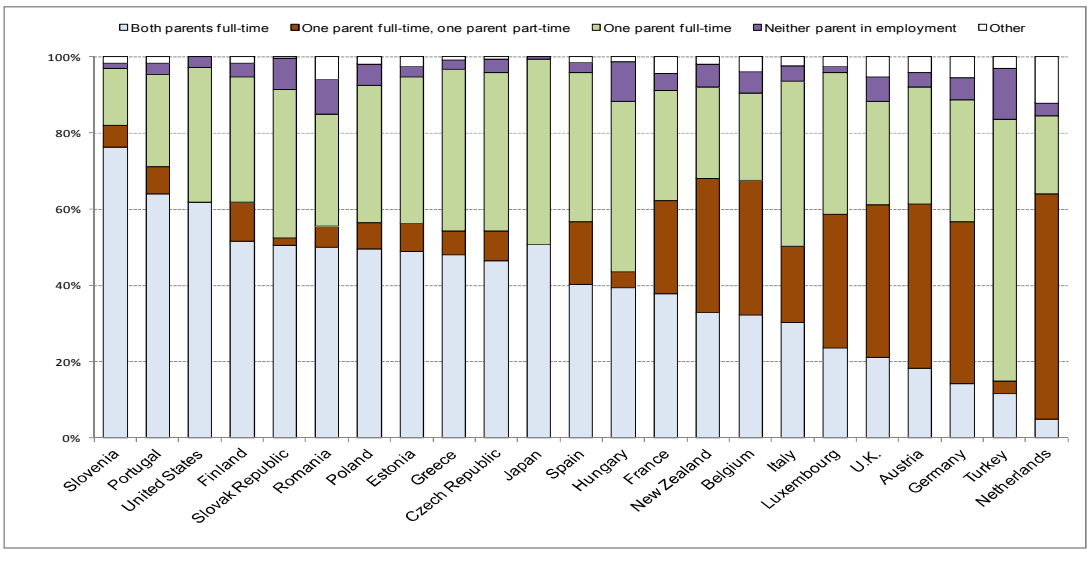
Source: OECD Family Database, June 2011.

Working parents with fewer children

Most parents in the United Kingdom are working: a large majority (>60%) of parents both work full time, or at least one of them does while the other works part time (Figure 3.4). This can indicate that these parents have fewer opportunities to be engaged in ECEC.

Additionally, families are having fewer children. Most households with children have only one or two children (Figure 3.5). Having more children, as used to be the trend a few decades ago, is becoming rare in the United Kingdom. The proportion of one-child families in the United Kingdom is marginally higher than the OECD average but below that of Finland, New Zealand, Norway and the United States. The increase of families with few children implies that ECEC services are becoming an increasingly important arena for children to interact with peers at a young age.

Figure 3.4. Children in couple household by parental employment status

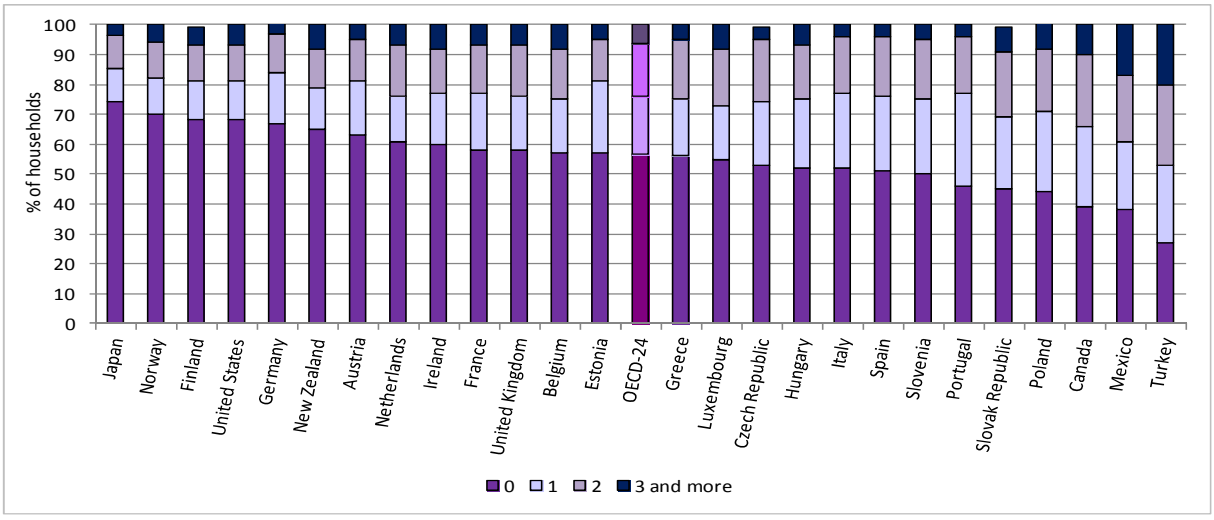


Note 1: For the United States and Japan, it is not possible to distinguish between full-time and part-time work; year 2008. For New Zealand, children aged 0-18: the category 'one parent full-time, one part-time' refers to the situation where either the father works full-time and the mother works part-time (28% of all couple households) or the father works part-time or is unemployed and the mother is employed (7% of all couple households).

Source: OECD Family database, November, 2011.

Figure 3.5. Households by number of children

As percentage of households, mid 2000s



Note 1: For OECD non EU countries, data refer to children aged less than 18 living within the household and still dependent with the exception of New Zealand where children are classified as dependent if not in full-time employment. For Member States of the European Union, data include children not yet 15 years of age, or aged 15 to 24 and dependent (not employed and with at least one parent in the household).

Note 2: Year: 2007 for all countries except Australia (2003), Canada (2006), Ireland (2002), New Zealand (2006), Norway (2001) and the United States (2005). For Canada: data refer to the proportion in Census families.

Source: OECD Family Database, January 2011.

Flexible working time opportunities

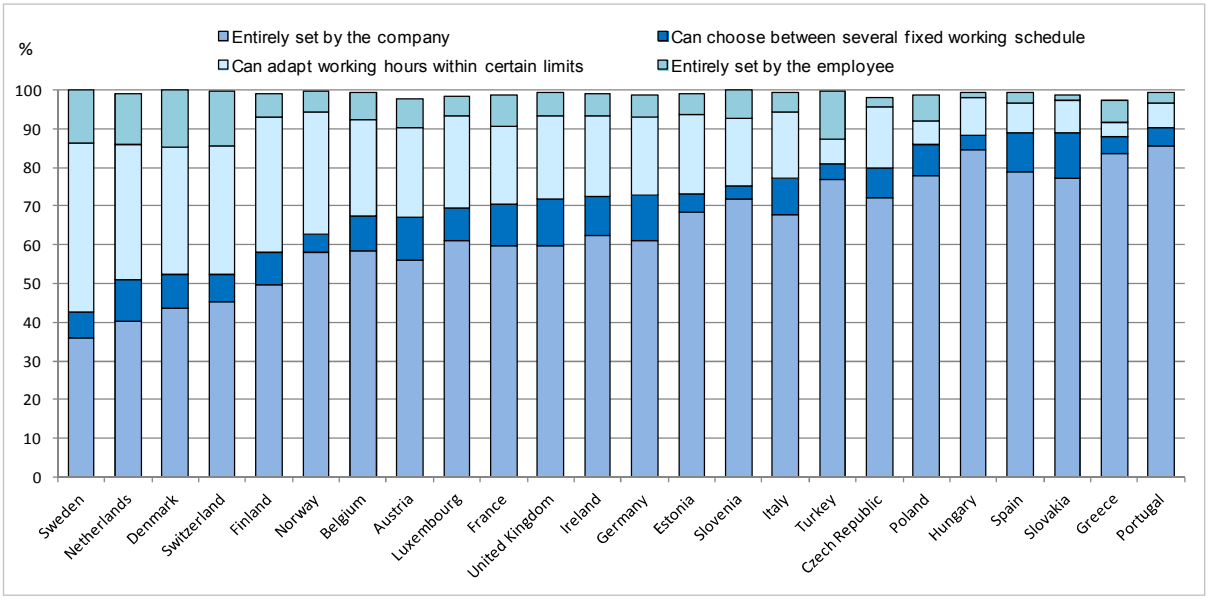
Working conditions are key determinants of families' ability to reconcile work and family life. Flexibility in working time allows parents to adjust their working schedule to correspond with child care or kindergarten hours. However, the extent to which employees have some control over their working time varies considerably across countries (Figure 3.6).

In the Nordic countries, as well as in the Netherlands and Switzerland, many employees have some freedom in their working time arrangements. By contrast, the control of working time by employees is very limited in Greece, Hungary and Portugal where more than 80% of employees report that working time is entirely set by the employer.

In the United Kingdom, less than half (around 40%) of all employees have some flexibility in setting their work time, while in Finland and Sweden, at least half of all workers can, in some way, control their own working hours.

That the majority of employees in the United Kingdom have limited or no chance to adapt their working hours can entail a challenge for ECEC providers to engage parents. For instance, providing opportunities for parents to involve themselves in ECEC-related activities outside of normal working hours can facilitate their involvement.

Figure 3.6. How working time arrangements are set



Source: OECD Family Database, June 2011.

Increasing income inequality

In the mid-2000s, the Gini coefficients of income inequality[3] illustrated notable discrepancies among OECD countries, despite growing affluence. The distribution varies widely with Mexico having the greatest income inequality and Denmark and Sweden have the smallest (Figure 3.7). The United Kingdom has an average income inequality that is above the OECD average.

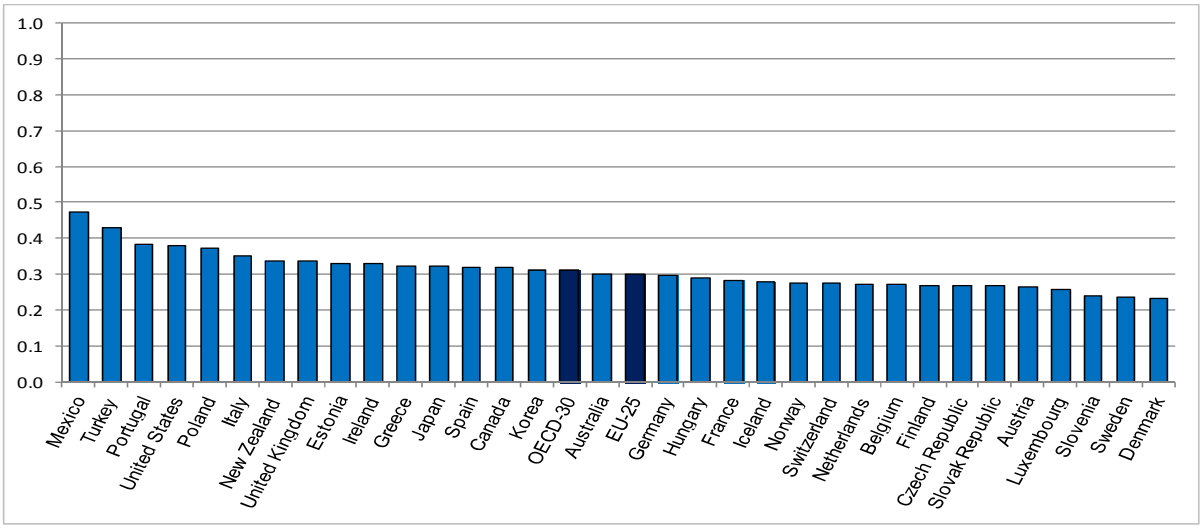
Income inequality in the United Kingdom increased between the 1980s and 1990s and remains comparatively high. It decreased during the 1990s and 2000s but much less than it increased between the 1980s and 1990s (Figure 3.8). Income inequalities have significantly increased from the mid-1980s to mid-2000s in Finland, New Zealand and the United States.

High income inequality entails that the resources parents have available will vary greatly. Programmes aiming to improve children's home environment and development will have to take into account these differences. Differences in the economic status of parents may vary between different areas but can also vary significantly among parents with children in the same ECEC centre. Disadvantaged families, for example, might have fewer opportunities to become engaged or send their children to child care and have fewer resources to build up a strong home curriculum.

England has taken great measures in increasing the participation of low-income children by providing free ECEC for all three- and four-year-olds and is planning to provide free ECEC to disadvantaged two-year-olds. This might increase parental engagement in ECEC. Besides participation in ECEC, there might be a need to support (disadvantaged) families in facilitating learning opportunities, activities and resources in the home environment.

Figure 3.7. Gini coefficients in income inequality

Mid-2000s



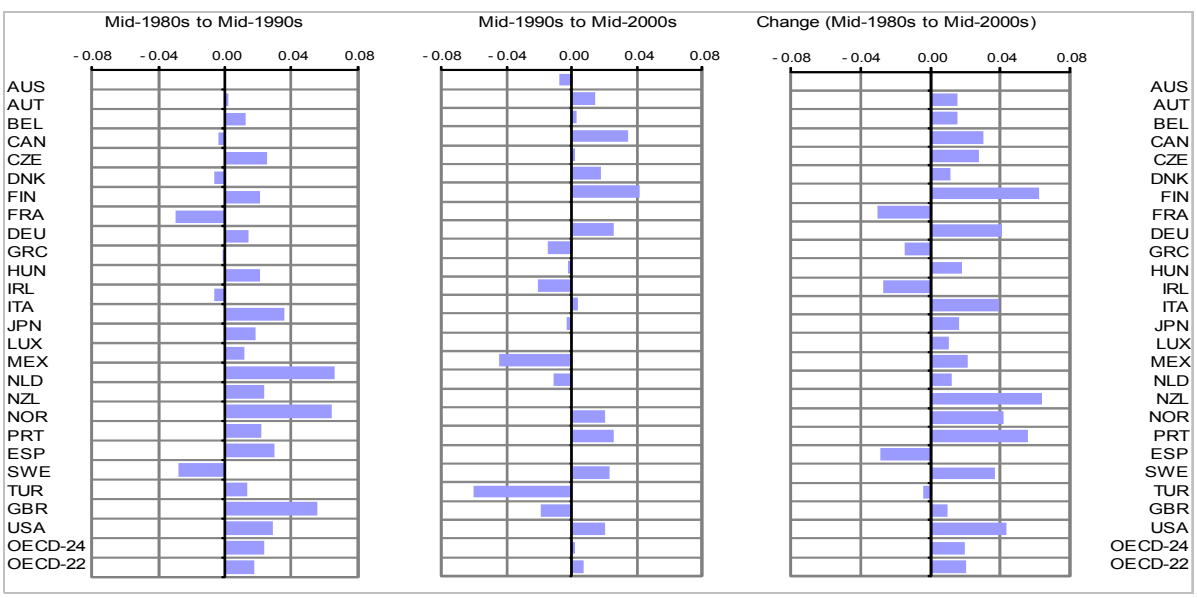
Note 1: Income inequality is measured here in terms of the distribution of household disposable income after taxes and transfers. To facilitate comparisons across households, disposable household income in cash is adjusted for household size with an elasticity of 0.5 (the square root scale). Values of the Gini coefficient range between 0 in the case of "perfect equality" and 1 in the case of "perfect inequality" – one person has all the income; the quintile share ratio is the ratio between the top quintile and the lowest quintile; and, the inter-decile income ratio concerns the ratio of the top and bottom deciles (OECD Family Database).

Note 2: Countries are ranked, from left to right, in increasing order in the Gini coefficient. The income concept used is that of disposable household income in cash, adjusted for household size with an elasticity of 0.5.

Source: OECD Family Database, January 2011.

Figure 3.8. Trends in income inequality

Point changes in the Gini coefficient over different time periods



Note: In the first panel, data refer to changes from around 1990 to the mid-1990s for the Czech Republic, Hungary and Portugal and to the western *Länder* of Germany (no data are available for Australia, Poland and Switzerland). In the second panel, data refer to changes from the mid-1990s to around 2000 for Austria, the Czech Republic, Belgium, Ireland, Portugal and Spain (where 2005 data, based on EU-SILC, are not deemed to be comparable with those for earlier years). OECD-24 refers to the simple average of OECD countries with data spanning the entire period (all countries shown above except Australia); OECD-22 refers to the same countries except Mexico and Turkey.

Source: OECD (2008), *Growing Unequal? Income Distribution and Poverty in OECD Countries*; Computations from OECD income distribution questionnaire.

Reflection to meet the needs of an increasing immigrant population

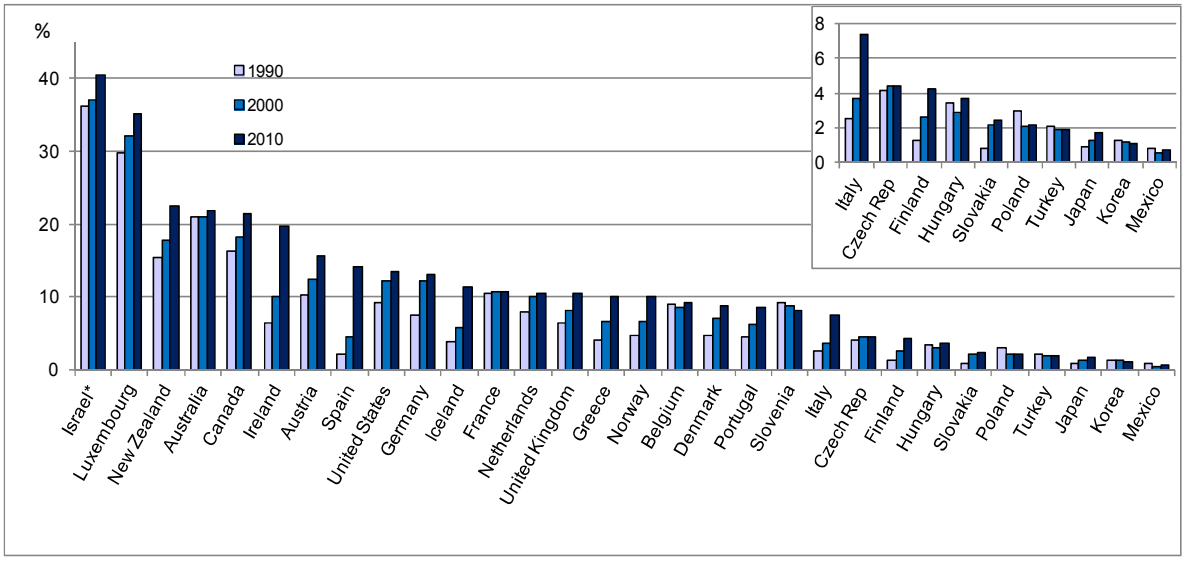
Net migration has tripled in several OECD countries since the 1960s (Figure 3.9). In recent years, some countries experienced a sudden inflow; others still have a relatively small proportion of immigrants, experiencing only a slow increase (*e.g.*, less than 5%); others experienced a steady inflow at a moderate rate (*e.g.*, 5-15%); and some countries experienced an increase at a fast rate (*e.g.*, 15-40%).

In the United Kingdom, over one in ten children has an immigrant background. In 1990, this was still one in 20, indicating that the United Kingdom is experiencing a relatively rapid increase of immigrant children in schools and ECEC services. The proportion of immigrants in the United Kingdom is lower than in New Zealand and the United States but higher than in Nordic countries.

With more than 10% of the population being immigrants, developing strategies for parental and community engagement that consider the needs of this group could be of high relevance in the United Kingdom. Additionally, it might be harder to reach these families regarding family and community engagement and inform them of involvement opportunities. It might be worth considering targeted measures for these families.

Figure 3.9. Trends of international migrants

As a percentage of the total population in 1990, 2000 and 2010



Note: International migrants are defined as individuals whose country of birth is not that in which they reside.

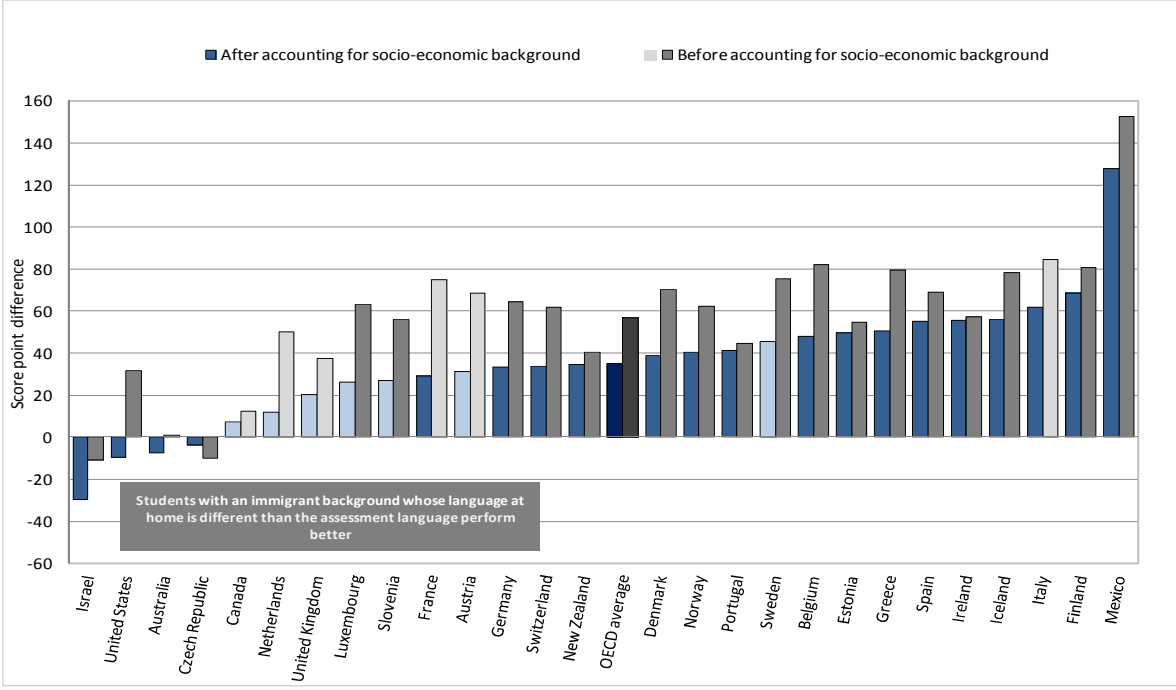
Source: OECD (2010), Trends shaping education 2010.

Immigrant children are often found to underperform in education compared to their native peers. There are significant differences in reading performance at age 15 between immigrant and native students in almost all countries. The educational performance of immigrants is strongly influenced by their socio-economic status and the language spoken at home.

In the United Kingdom, immigrant status and language spoken at home adversely impacts reading performance, less so than in New Zealand and Nordic countries (Figure 3.10). Still, the difference in reading abilities suggests that immigrant groups can be beneficially targeted with, for instance, home literacy programmes in conjunction with ECEC providers.

Figure 3.10. Immigrant status, language spoken at home and reading performance

Performance differences in reading between students with an immigrant background whose language at home is different from the language of assessment and students without an immigrant background



Note 1: Countries are ranked in ascending order of score point differences between students without an immigrant background and students with an immigrant background who speak a language at home that is different from the language of an assessment, after accounting for the economic, social and cultural status of students.

Note 2: Score point differences that are statistically significant are marked in a darker tone.

Source: OECD PISA 2009 Database, Table II.4.

Reflection to meet children's disadvantaged living environment

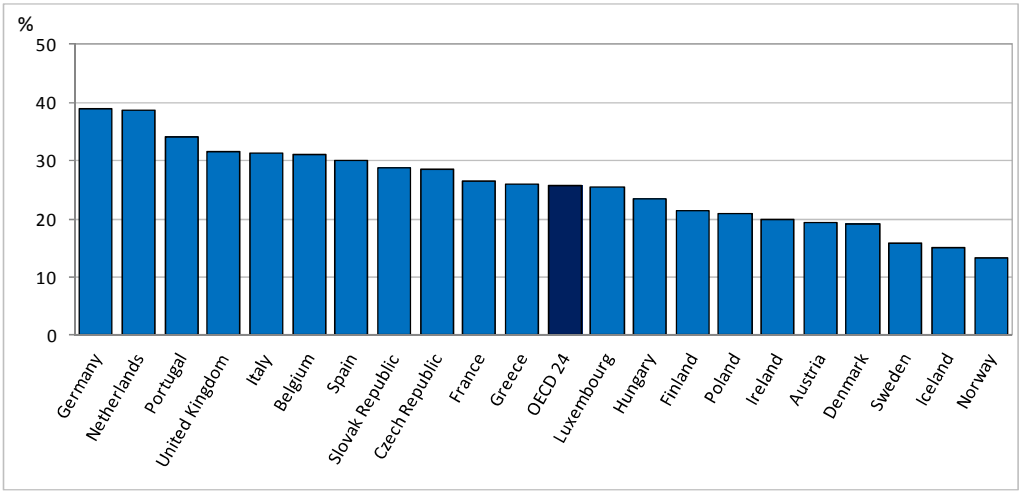
The quality of the home environment is measured using indicators of the proportion of children living in poor environmental conditions and the number of children being victims of an unfavourable home or out-of-home environment. Poor environmental conditions include children living in noisy areas affected by dirt, grime, pollution or litter.

On average, one in four children experience poor local environmental conditions in OECD countries (Figure 3.11). Children in Nordic countries live in relatively safe and clean environments, while over one-third of young children in the United Kingdom experience poor local environmental conditions.

Family engagement programmes in ECEC might consider addressing such health and well-being issues. In areas with a poor environment, involving the community can be beneficial.

Figure 3.11. Children aged zero to five living in homes with poor environmental conditions

Mid-2000s



Note: Local environmental conditions are assessed through questions on whether the household's accommodation "has noise from neighbours or outside" or has "any pollution, grime or other environmental problem caused by traffic or industry" for European countries; whether there is "vandalism in the area", "grime in the area" or "traffic noise from outside" for Australia; whether "noises from neighbours can be heard" for Japan; and whether there is "street noise or heavy street traffic", "trash, litter or garbage in the street", "rundown or abandoned houses or buildings" or "odours, smoke or gas fumes" for the United States. Data is for various years from 2003-06. Canada, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Switzerland and Turkey are missing.

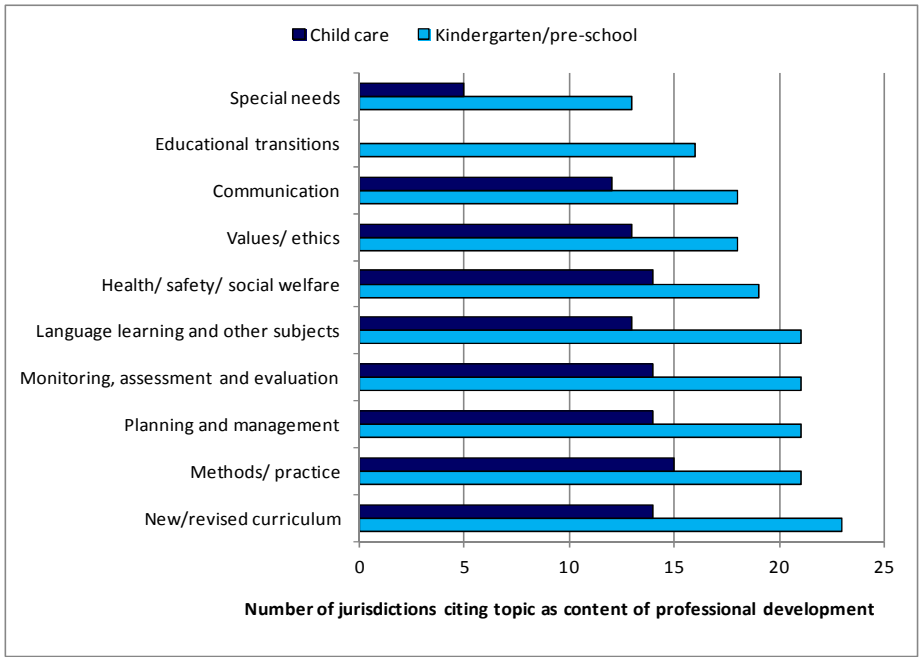
Source: OECD, *Doing Better for Children*, 2009.

Staff communication skills

In addition to implementing measures and initiatives to enhance family and community engagement, ECEC staff need the skills for and knowledge of engagement possibilities as well as the skills to communicate with parents and professionals from other services.

Most countries do not focus on communication in the professional training of child care or preschool staff, while there might be a need for staff to be trained in communicating with adults outside of the ECEC centre. This can also contribute to enhanced engagement.

Figure 3.12. Content of professional development



Note 1: Countries were given a range of topics to select from, including the possibility to list topics not mentioned in the selection. Answers indicating "other" without specifying which topic was referred to with "other" are not included in this figure.

Note 2: Countries with an integrated ECEC system who indicated that the subjects of professional development were similar for the whole ECEC sector/ECEC age range: responses have been included in both "child care" and "kindergarten/preschool" since the content of professional development refers to the whole ECEC age range, including ECEC workers with younger children (herein referred to as "child care").

Source: OECD Network on Early Childhood Education and Care's "Survey for the Quality Toolbox and ECEC Portal", June 2011.

NOTES

1 See table on research in the online version of *Starting Strong III: A Quality Toolbox for ECEC* at www.oecd.org/edu/earlychildhood/toolbox.

2 The World Values Survey is a global research project that explores people's values and beliefs, how they change over time and what social and political impact they have. It is carried out by a worldwide network of social scientists who, since 1981, have conducted representative national surveys in almost 100 countries: www.worldvaluessurvey.org.

3 The Gini coefficient of income is a measure of the inequality of the income distribution in a country. A value of 0 expresses total equality and a value of 1 maximal inequality.

CHAPTER 4

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES?

Common challenges countries face in engaging families and communities in ECEC are: 1) lack of awareness and motivation; 2) communication and outreach; 3) time constraints; 4) increasing inequity; and 5) co-operation with other services and levels of education.

England has made several efforts to tackle these challenges by, for example, revising entitlement to free hours of ECEC to meet parental needs. To further their efforts, England could consider strategies implemented by New Zealand, Nordic countries and the United States, such as involving parents in curriculum development; training staff specifically on communication and co-operation with community services; setting flexible times for contact hours between staff and parents; developing specialised parenting home programmes; and bridging between ECEC provisions and different community services.

This chapter aims to identify alternatives England could consider when facing challenges in enhancing family and community engagement. It first describes common challenges countries are facing and then presents the different approaches England has been using to tackle these challenges. Lastly, it identifies strategies undertaken by New Zealand, Nordic countries and the United States (where available).

Common challenges

Lack of awareness and motivation

Motivating parents to engage in the early childhood education and care of their children and encouraging centres to involve families is challenging due to a lack of awareness among parents, staff and centre management about the importance of parental involvement. In addition, there are insufficient incentives stimulating parents to become involved.

Motivating the community to engage in ECEC and encouraging centres to involve the community have not been major policy objectives in many OECD countries. The notion of "community" varies across countries and across centres within a country: it is thought of as a neighbourhood where children grow up, as well as wider community partners, including public services for young children, education services, libraries and museums, NGOs, private foundations and faith organisations.

There is a lack of awareness among staff, centre managers and parents about the potential resources within communities. There is also a lack of knowledge among community organisations about how they can work with ECEC centres.

Communication and outreach

Many countries experience challenges in informing parents and the community about how they can get involved. There is insufficient awareness and knowledge among parents and community members and organisations about how they can participate or where they can find this information. A lack of communication channels between the national government, local governments, ECEC staff and parents or communities is one of the key outreach challenges.

In countries where ECEC services are provided with a market-oriented approach, it is important that parents have all the information necessary for them to make informed decision about their choice of ECEC services.

Time constraints

Involving parents who work or study full-time, work non-standard hours or those getting back into employment poses a great challenge. The magnitude of the challenge is increasing as family structures, circumstances and lifestyles are changing.

Increasing inequity

Growing inequity in economic, social and cultural backgrounds of children in ECEC centres is becoming a challenge in many OECD countries. It is often reported that deprived families, despite the fact that their children need high-quality ECEC the most, often have lower interest, lack of knowledge and lack of time to be engaged in ECEC.

Increasing diversity can also be a challenge for getting parents engaged in ECEC services. Often reported barriers include different cultural needs, views or languages.

Uneven parental engagement with different socio-economic backgrounds can result in greater inequity. It is therefore particularly important that real efforts are made to reach out to the most deprived families. Collaboration with parents is especially important in low income, minority families where differences in socio-economic background and cultural values about child rearing and education are likely to affect the home learning environment.

Co-operation with other services and other levels of education

Many countries experience challenges in promoting co-operation across different services for children, and such co-operation is critically important for holistic and continuous child development. This is often due to the fact that these services are managed and administered by different authorities. This is also due to ECEC staff and managers having insufficient knowledge about the various services that have been offered to or made available for the children and families who use their centres.

England's efforts

England has made several efforts to tackle these challenges and is making increased efforts in enhancing family and community engagement. However, most initiatives are measures which have not been implemented yet and are plans for implementation on a short-term basis (as is described in *Supporting Families in the Foundation Years*).

To increase awareness and motivation

Developing an awareness campaign

The Department for Education is helping the ECEC sector lead a parenting campaign to raise greater awareness of the importance of high-quality parenting skills, building strong family relationships for children in the foundation years, and promoting the evidence around practice that supports parental engagement in their children's learning.

Engaging parents as providers or support to providers

Parents in England can start a registered child care service at their home. These childminders provide child care in their own home, looking after small groups of children (up to six at a time).

Funding television programmes to motivate parental engagement

The United Kingdom launched *CBeebies*[1] in 2002, which is a television channel produced by the BBC, a British public service broadcaster, aimed at children age six and under. The channel launched a website with activities (such as games, songs and print-outs) related to the programmes, which parents can implement with their children at home. In 2011, the BBC launched a new micro site called *CBeebies Grown-ups*[2], full of advice and help for parents in bringing up children and toddlers. The BBC, *CBeebies* included, is funded publicly through charging homes a television licence fee, which is set by the national government.

To improve communication and outreach

Developing central information services

Since July 2011, 11 respected organisations in England receive funding to provide national family support services online and by telephone. These services provide support on a range of issues from behaviour or mental health problems to advice on benefits. The services also provide therapeutic sessions, such as relationship counselling. Through these channels,

parents, as well as community services, receive trustworthy and expert information on parenting, ECEC and other child services.

Additionally, Family Information Services[3] (FIS) are available in many districts and cities. The services act as a central information point, supporting parents and carers who need child care and information about education. Each FIS has close links with child care provisions, preschools, schools, youth clubs and libraries and can inform parents about any of these services so that parents can choose which service best suits their needs.

To meet parental time constraints

Meeting parental needs in provision of free hours of ECEC

England is implementing measures to ensure that children can make use of all or more of the free hours they are entitled to. Currently, 14% of children aged three and four access less than their full entitlement. For many parents, an extra hour at either end of the working day could enable them to manage their work commitments and family lives. The Department for Education has just completed a consultation on making small but significant changes to the free entitlement to enable the free hours to be used slightly earlier (from 7:00 rather than 8:00) or slightly later (to 19:00 rather than 18:00), but with a maximum of ten free hours per day, and to enable providers to offer the full 15-hour entitlement over two days rather than a minimum of three.

To decrease inequity

Introducing free ECEC for disadvantaged two-year-olds

In England, free early education places are provided for all three- and four-year-olds for 15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year. The government plan to extend it to the 20% most disadvantaged two-year-olds from 2013 and to around 40% by 2014. It is a great step forward in ensuring all (disadvantaged) children will have equal opportunities in education and decreasing inequity in society between advantaged and disadvantaged children.

Evaluating parenting interventions for vulnerable families

England has contracted the National Academy of Parenting Research on a five-year contract until March 2012 to conduct a programme of parenting and family research, examining and evaluating innovative parenting interventions that work with vulnerable families. Part of this includes a project on the Commissioning Toolkit[4], which describes many of the parenting programmes offered in England and highlights the programmes which are most effective.

Co-operating with job centres to help parents out of unemployment

Many children's centres in England work closely with Jobcentre Plus and other agencies to help families out of poverty and unemployment. They help families to access a range of work-focused services in their community including benefits advice, adult and community learning, careers advice, volunteering opportunities and employment support.

To co-operate with other services and levels of education

Strengthen co-operation with health services

Health outcome measures have been identified in the National Health Service (NHS) Outcomes Framework and the developing Public Health Outcomes Framework. They support local partners to work together on common outcome goals to support health improvement; prevent ill health by, for example, increasing breastfeeding and reducing

maternal smoking; reduce health inequalities; protect the population through, for example, vaccination programmes, improving life expectancy and preventing mortality.

The United Kingdom also has a plan to develop a further outcome measure linked to the Healthy Child Programme at age two to two-and-a-half. The Healthy Child Programme from pregnancy to age five is the overarching framework for NHS foundation years provision, providing prevention and early intervention for children and their families. It combines preventative programmes for all children and families with additional support and early intervention in response to expressed need, to resolve problems early, prevent deterioration, and to predict need where there are known problems or risk factors, such as a child with a disability or family issues like substance misuse or other complex problems.

Investing in expanding the workforce of co-operative programmes to meet family's needs

The government is acting to strengthen the Healthy Child Programme through its commitment to an extra 4 200 health visitors by 2015. This expansion is intended to provide the capacity to lead comprehensive delivery of the Healthy Child Programme through the health-visiting model set out in the Health Visitor Implementation Programme. This will be provided through universal provision with communities and families or through more targeted support – depending on the need.

Possible alternatives strategies: Lessons from New Zealand, Nordic countries and the United States

To increase awareness and motivation

Making family and/or community engagement a policy priority, an obligation or right

In **Finland**, parental engagement is included in different legislations. According to the Day Care Act, the objectives of day care are to support parents in raising their children and to promote children's personal and balanced development together with their parents. The Basic Education Act, Section 3.1, mentions that "those providing education (including pre-primary education) shall co-operate with children's parents". In the *Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education* for six-year-olds, co-operation with parents is stated in Section 5.2 as an element of the curriculum which should be implemented in preschool. Parental engagement and partnership with parents are also highly raised issues in the *Finnish National Guidelines for Early Childhood Education and Care* (2005).

Finland also made it a legal obligation for municipalities to set up a plan for arranging and developing child welfare services (Child Welfare Act 2007/147). The plan should include arrangements for co-operation between the different public authorities and the organisations and institutions that provide services for young children. Additionally, Finland's *Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education* (2010) states that every effort must be made to involve as many people as possible in implementing education to ensure commitment to and compliance with it.

In **Sweden**, parents of children in preschools have a right to a minimum of one "development dialogue" per year in which ECEC staff discuss the development of the child with the parents. Parental engagement is also included as an aspect in Sweden's *Curriculum for the Preschool*, which is a binding document.

In **Norway**, to ensure opportunities for engagement and co-operation between kindergarten staff and parents, both the former 1975 and 1995 Kindergarten Acts and the current 2005 Kindergarten Act state that every kindergarten must have a parent council comprised of parent/guardians of all children in kindergarten and a parent-staff co-ordinating committee

comprised of representatives of parents/guardians and staff so that each group is equally represented. The owner of the kindergarten can also be part of the committee. Parental engagement is integrated in the legislation through the purpose clause and the *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens*.

Additionally, the Norwegian Kindergarten Act (sections 8, 21 and 22) defines the responsibility of the municipalities to co-operate with social and child welfare services, kindergartens, schools and special education assistance and share information among the various services. Chapter 5 of the *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens* describes the co-operation with other institutions and services in more detail. Additionally, the Ministry of Education stressed the importance of community involvement in early education in the draft of White Paper No. 28 (2007-08) on language learning and development.

Providing public financial resources to involved parents

In the **United States**, parents and community members participating in substance abuse prevention projects were paid a monthly remuneration for their efforts and work. In 1994, five Head Start programmes developed model substance abuse prevention projects with a goal to strengthen families and neighbourhoods of economically disadvantaged preschool children. The initiative, named Free to Grow, targeted families and neighbourhoods of Head Start children in an effort to protect them from substance abuse and its associated problems. A key success factor of these programmes was the substantial amount of funding, which made it possible to pay a monthly remuneration (USD 100) to parents and community members who were the main implementers of the programme.

Engaging parents or communities as providers or support to providers

In **New Zealand**, parents can run play centres as parent co-operatives. Parents are then closely involved in both running the centre and working with the children during session times. Typically, they are open for one to five sessions each week to provide play, social and learning opportunities for children. These play centres are often less formal than other Early Childhood Education (ECE) services in New Zealand. All ECE services, including parent-led play centres, can receive an ECE Funding Subsidy. They are eligible for up to six hours each day and 30 hours each week of ECE Funding Subsidy for each licensed child place. This funding offsets the cost of providing early childhood education and care, so that parents do not need to pay the full amount. The services receive this funding directly from the Ministry of Education.

In **Norway** and **Sweden**, many parents establish and run kindergartens. They receive earmarked funding for this as well as guidance material. In 2005, 14% of all Norwegian kindergartens were run by parents. The number of parents running kindergartens has gone down to 11.6% since the right to a kindergarten place was introduced in 2009. In Sweden, parents can run preschools as “parent-co-operatives”. In 1983, the government made state grants available to parental co-operatives. In 2009, Sweden had just over 900 preschools with 21 000 children run by parent co-operatives (4.6% of all children in preschool).

In **Norway**, there is a large variety in ownership of kindergartens. NGOs, churches, parents, business communities, private owners and companies can open and run kindergartens as long as it meets legal requirements and has been approved by the local authorities. In a period when kindergarten places were lacking, the business community engaged in running and providing ECEC services as well as co-operation with ECEC services. The motivation for businesses to engage in ECEC has been to ensure that their employees have care and education places for their children and to stimulate continuous parental employment.

Engaging parents in an advisory or management body for ECEC policies and services

Norway has established a national advisory board of parents for ECEC called *FUB*. The board makes parents' voices heard in contemporary ECEC policies and secures parents' perspectives in the development of ECEC. The board also provides the Ministry with advice on the co-operation between kindergarten and family homes. Each ECEC provision is required to have a parent council. This council has the right to express an opinion on all matters of importance relating to parental relationships with the kindergarten.

Engaging parents in setting the curriculum

Finland's *Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education* (2010) states that it is important to provide parents and guardians with opportunities to participate in setting objectives for, planning and evaluating the educational work within pre-primary education. Parents in Finland are involved in the development of the educational plan of their child. Parents set the objectives of the educational plan of their child in co-operation with ECEC staff. Also, parents and ECEC staff work together to plan on how to achieve these objectives. This stimulates engagement of parents and encourages further involvement since they are familiar with the curricular plan of their child. Staff also inform parents about the curriculum in the centre and provide parents with advice on how they can implement elements of the curriculum at home.

Parents in **Norway** are actively involved in establishing the annual plan for pedagogical activities in Norwegian kindergartens. The co-ordinating committee of each kindergarten draws up this annual plan and includes parents as its members.

Providing support materials to staff

In **Norway**, the former Ministry of Children and Family Affairs established the parental guidance programme (1995-98). In 2006, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training created the handbook "Children in Multilingual Families"[5], which provides parents with answers to frequently asked questions about children's bilingual or multilingual development. In addition to offering advice to parents, it also helps staff in day care centres respond to parents' questions and reflections on the bilingual development of their children. It includes examples and articles on how to involve parents actively in language stimulation.

Information material on involving parents in preschools in **Sweden** has been developed by the National Agency for Education and distributed to ECEC centres, *e.g.*, a booklet focusing on resources in language stimulation presents examples and articles on how to actively engage parents in language stimulation both in and outside preschools.

Engaging parents in evaluating ECEC activities

In **Finland**, the *National Curriculum Guidelines on ECEC* states that parents and children must be involved in the evaluation of curricular activities. Parents are expected to monitor and evaluate the attainment of the goals set in the curriculum.

Norway's *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens* states that parents have to be actively encouraged to take part in quality monitoring and reviewing the kindergarten activities. The most common methods of parents reviewing kindergartens are through meetings organised by kindergarten staff and sending out surveys. Eighty-five percent of Norwegian kindergartens make use of the surveys.

Embedding community engagement in a wider evaluation process

In **Norway**, the early development project *Språkløftet* (Language Promotion), which stimulates participation in the ECEC of children in need of language stimulation through co-operation with health services, will be subject to an evaluation in 2012.

To improve communication and outreach

Organising meetings and activities

Sweden organises at least one development dialogue per year. This is a meeting with ECEC staff and parents to discuss the development and learning of their child. In addition, preschools hold regular meetings with parents to provide them with opportunities to exercise influence over how the goals can be turned into concrete pedagogical activities. Furthermore, parents are involved in the evaluation of preschool activities and have opportunities to participate in work on quality improvement.

Ensuring that parents can make informed choices in market-oriented services

Iowa (**United States**) has a website[6] that provides free online information for parents about ECEC in their state. The information is primarily for families with children aged zero to five. The website informs parents objectively about early child development and education and provides information about which services can be contacted for which purpose. The page directs parents to the service(s) needed for stimulation of early child development, *e.g.*, early education or health services. The Iowa Child Care Resource and Referral website[7] provides information to parents about which licensed child care centres are available in their neighbourhood.

Training staff on communication with other services

Finland developed training opportunities dedicated to how staff can improve communication and co-operation with parents and community services. In Finland, this is included in the initial education of ECEC workers.

To meet parental time constraints

Changing the operational hours

Norway adapted the opening hours and provision of ECEC services to changing parental needs during the 1990s. This resulted in longer and more flexible opening hours of kindergartens. Additionally, meetings with parents can be planned in the evenings for parents who work and/or study.

Setting more flexible times for contacts and communication

Several countries, including the **Netherlands** and **Finland**, organise informational meetings for parents conducted by ECEC staff or parent umbrella organisations and debates about ECEC services at times more convenient for working parents. Meetings and debates are organised in the (late) evening to stimulate their engagement, as they are unable to participate in activities during regular work hours.

To decrease inequity

Developing targeted interventions

In 1994, five Head Start programmes in the **United States** developed model substance abuse prevention projects with a goal to strengthen families and neighbourhoods of economically disadvantaged preschool children. The initiative, named Free to Grow, targeted families and neighbourhoods of Head Start children in an effort to protect them from substance abuse and its associated problems. It included a strong focus on community-based strategies in the form of coalitions, implementation of “safe space” task forces that ensured safe and substance abuse-free spaces for young children and training in substance abuse prevention. Different community services were included in the implementation, *e.g.*,

local police forces, youth organisations, churches and numerous grassroots organisations. Outcomes included increased parental involvement in ECEC, cleaner and safer schools and neighbourhoods, improved relationships among residents and between ECEC practitioners, parents and community members, and stronger community norms against drug and alcohol use.

The Manukau Family Literacy Programme (MFLP) in **New Zealand** offers learning opportunities to parents of children in ECEC. The MFLP is targeted at low-decile communities. Enrolment is sought from family members in the child's household who have low or no educational qualifications. The programme is delivered over the regular early childhood centre week using an integrated approach consisting of 20 hours per week for the parent. It has four components: 1) an adult education component designed to extend basic education skills of participants and help them acquire successful interpersonal skills; 2) children's education to promote growth and development of young children and engage parents in their child's learning; 3) exercising Parent and Child Together Time involving shared learning experiences between child and parent; and 4) parent learning of parenting skills and other family and parenting issues. Currently, 80 families are taking part in this programme.

Developing specialised home programmes

The Parent-Child Home Programme[8] in the **United States** is an early childhood literacy, parenting and school readiness programme. The programme uses trained professionals to work with families with a low-educational background and aims to strengthen families and child development through home visits. Home Visitors help parents realise their role as their children's first and most important teacher, generating enthusiasm for learning and verbal interaction through the use of engaging books and stimulating toys during regular visits of half-an-hour, twice per week. Families participate in the two-year programme when their children are two and three years old, completing the programme as they turn four and transition into pre-kindergarten or Head Start. A child can, however, enter the programme as young as 16 months, and some sites serve families with children up through four years of age if there are no other preschool services available in the community.

Assisting parents to provide qualitative home learning environments

In **New Zealand**, the Early Reading Together initiative has been implemented. It is a programme which helps parents of young children (infants to six-year-olds) to support their children's language and literacy development at home and is specifically designed to support children and parents from diverse language/literacy, cultural, educational and socio-economic backgrounds. It is implemented on a voluntary basis by junior school teachers, early childhood educators and librarians and includes three workshops of one hour and fifteen minutes each, spread over three weeks: the time commitment is low. Its results include increased competence of parents on assisting their children at home with reading.

Providing training for parents

Norway combines Norwegian language training for immigrant parents with open access to kindergartens. Parents can take up language training while their children are being taken care of in kindergartens. The objective is to stimulate immigrant parents to learn the language and stimulate participation of immigrant children in ECEC. When immigrant parents learn the native language, there is also a chance that their involvement and interest in the early education of their children increases.

Providing support in different languages

The **Netherlands**, **Norway** and **Sweden** have developed informational material in multiple languages about how to stimulate early development in the home environment, available ECEC services, the importance of ECEC and how parents can be involved in the education of their young children. For example, Norway has developed a booklet focusing on resources in language stimulation for minority speaking children. The booklets can be used by professionals with parents or handed out to parents for individual use.

Targeting low socio-economic neighbourhoods

In 1994, five Head Start programmes in the **United States** developed model substance abuse prevention projects, named Free to Grow, with a goal to strengthen families and neighbourhoods of economically disadvantaged preschool children. The projects targeted families and neighbourhoods of Head Start children in an effort to protect them from substance abuse and its associated problems. It included a strong focus on community-based strategies in the form of coalitions, implementation of "safe space" task forces that ensured safe and substance abuse-free spaces for young children, and training in substance abuse prevention. Different community services were included in the implementation, *e.g.*, local police forces, youth organisations, churches and numerous grassroots organisations. Outcomes included increased community involvement in ECEC, cleaner and safer schools and neighbourhoods, improved relationships among residents and between ECEC practitioners, parents and community members, and stronger community norms against drug and alcohol use.

To co-operate with other services and levels of education

Reinforcing co-operation between ECEC and other social services

In **Norway**, co-operation with health services was established in the project *Språkløftet* (Language Promotion) in finding and guiding children with a need for language stimulation to participate in ECEC. In Groruddalen (Oslo), the project offers 20 hours per week of free time in kindergarten for all children ages four and five. Co-operation between the services has meant an increase in participation for all children, but especially for minority language children.

Bridging between ECEC centres and different community services

In **Norway**, the project *BOKTRAS*[9] is based on co-operation between public libraries and kindergartens, with the aim of introducing young children to literature. It is a three-year project, which consists of setting up branch libraries in kindergartens. The libraries involved reach out to more families than those who already know about and make use of library services. In this way, family access to children's books is no longer restricted by pressures of time, distance to the nearest library or opening hours. The libraries use the kindergarten as an arena for the active promotion of literature, thereby helping to develop children's language and social skills.

Municipalities in **Finland** organise multi-professional prenatal training for parents expecting their first child that incorporates peer group activities. The goal is to support expecting parents during pregnancy and in their care and upbringing tasks (during the child's first year). Prenatal training focuses on available ECEC services but also parenthood, intimate partner relationships, pregnancy and childbirth, child care and breastfeeding, family benefits and the postnatal period.

NOTES

1 www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/

2 www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/grownups/

3 www.familyinformationservices.org.uk/index.php?option=com_comprofiler&task=userslist&listid=2&Itemid=73

4 www.commissioningtoolkit.org/

5 www.udir.no/Upload/Brosjyrer/5/Barn_i_flerspraklige_familier_engelsk.pdf

6 www.state.ia.us/earlychildhood/Parents/

7 www.iowaccrr.org/

8 www.parent-child.org/about-us-what-we-do.html

9 www.splq.info/issues/vol40_3/10.htm

ANNEX A. DEFINITIONS AND METHODOLOGY

Parental and community engagement

Parental and community engagement refers to the formal and informal relations between parents or community members with ECEC services. The scope of community includes, for example, neighbourhoods, NGOs, faith organisations, private foundations and services focusing on child development, such as social and health services.

Structural quality

Structural quality consists of "inputs to process-characteristics which create the framework for the processes that children experience". These characteristics are not only part of the ECEC location in which children participate, but they are part of the environment that surrounds the ECEC setting, *e.g.*, the community. They are often aspects of ECEC that can be regulated, though they may contain variables which cannot be regulated (Litjens and Taguma, 2010).

Process quality

Process quality consists of what children actually experience in their programmes – that which happens within a setting. These experiences are thought to have an influence on children's well-being and development (Litjens and Taguma, 2010).

Methodology

Data and information has been collected through the OECD Network on ECEC's "Survey for the Quality Toolbox and ECEC Portal" (2011) and the OECD's desk-based research. All sources used for data and information are listed below each figure or table, and a full list of used references can be found at the end of the document.

ANNEX B. FIGURES FOR SPIDER WEB ON POLICY OUTCOMES[1]

Ten indicators have been selected to compare England's child outcomes with other OECD countries based on the available data for international comparison.

1. Enrolment in formal child care for children under age three
2. Enrolment in formal early education (preschool) at age three
3. Enrolment in formal early education (preschool) at age five
4. PIRLS Reading performance in grade four
5. PISA Reading performance at age 15
6. PISA Mathematics performance at age 15
7. PISA Science performance at age 15
8. Staying in school/education
9. Maternal employment rates, age of youngest child under three years
10. Maternal employment rates, age of youngest child three to five years

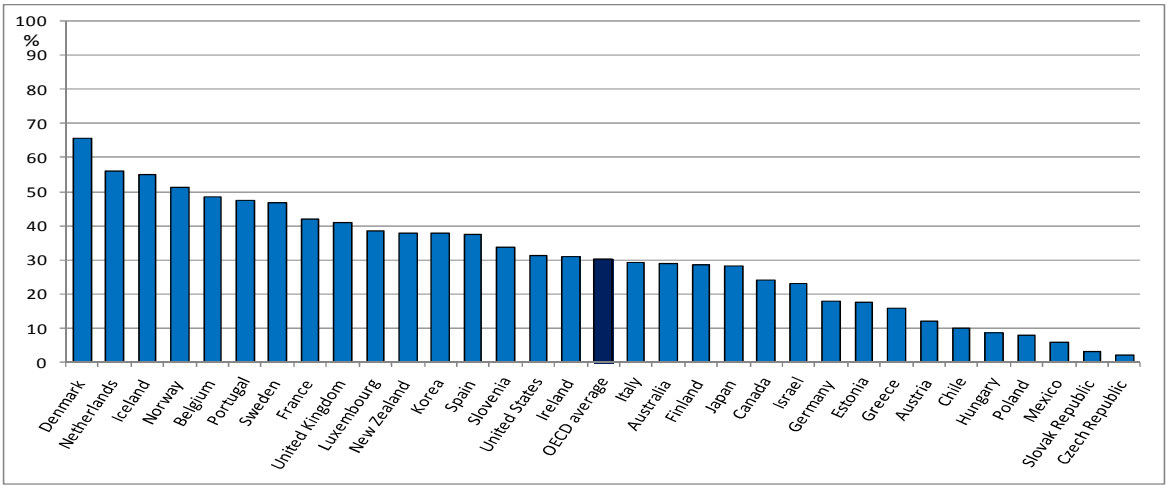
England has selected Finland or other Nordic countries, New Zealand and the United States as its reference countries, where data are available.

1. Enrolment rates in formal child care of children under age three

- On average, around 30% of all children under the age of three are enrolled in formal child care facilities although enrolment rates vary considerably across countries.
- The United Kingdom has higher enrolment rates (40.8%) than New Zealand (37.9%), the United States (31.4%) and Finland (28.6%). Denmark has the highest child care enrolment rate among children under the age of three.
- In many OECD countries, children under the age of three are often taken care of in informal child care services, such as family or domestic care services. When enrolment rates in informal care services would be taken into account, enrolment rates for children under the age of three are expected to be higher. However, data on enrolment in informal services is currently unavailable.

Figure B.1. Enrolment rates of children under age three in formal care

As a percentage in 2008



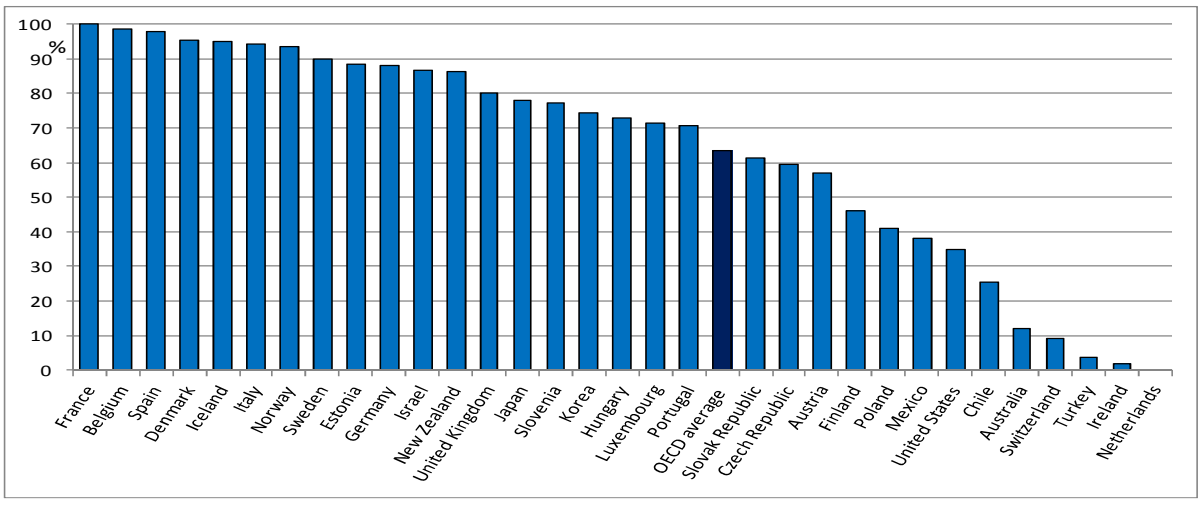
Source: OECD Family Database, November, 2011.

2. Enrolment rates in formal early education (preschool) at age three

- On average, around 63% of children aged three are participating in some form of formal early childhood education.
- Like the enrolment rates for children under age three, the rates for children at age three vary considerably across countries: it is close to 100% in France and Belgium, where free early education starts around the age of three. On the contrary, it is less than 5% in the Netherlands, Ireland and Turkey, where most children still attend child care instead of preschool.
- The enrolment rate for three-year-olds in early education in the United Kingdom (80%) is above the OECD average along with New Zealand (86.2%), while Finland (46.1%) and the United States (34.9%) have below-average enrolment rates.

Figure B.2. Enrolment rates in formal early education at age three

Children attending full-time and part-time service in 2009



Note: OECD average does not include Greece and Canada. Data for Korea come from National Sources.

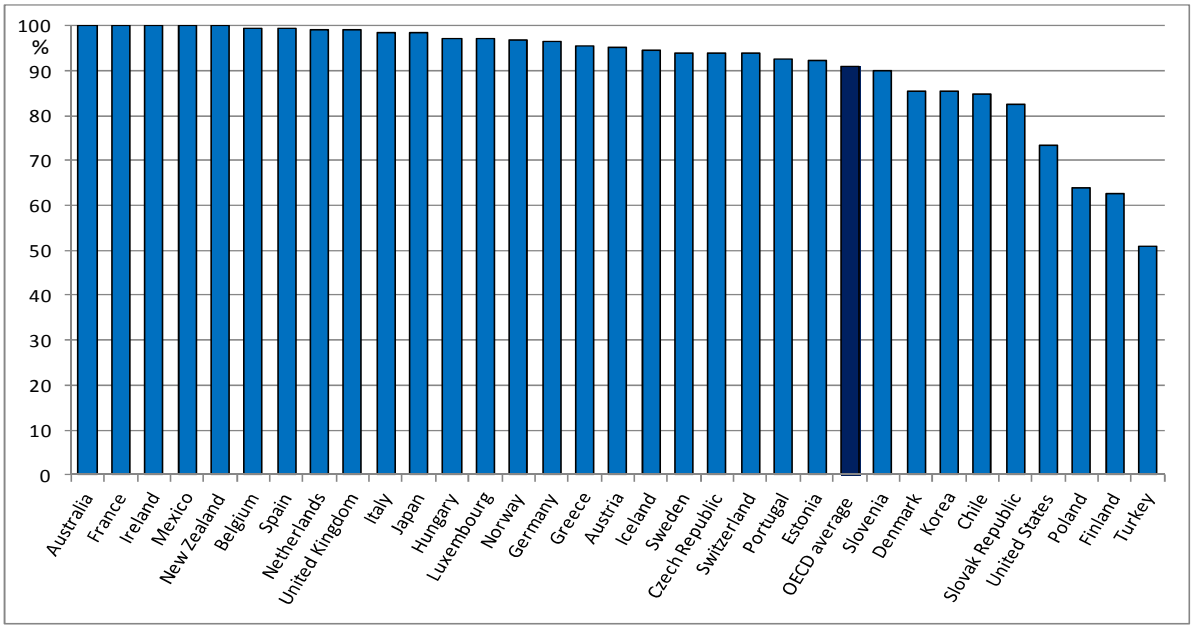
Source: OECD Education Database, November 2011.

3. Enrolment rates in formal early education (preschool) at age five

- In the majority of the OECD countries, enrolment rates at age five in early childhood education exceed 90%.
- The United Kingdom achieves almost full enrolment (98.8%), along with Australia, France, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Belgium, Spain and the Netherlands, where early education for five-year-olds is free of parental costs and/or compulsory.
- In Finland and the United States, only about 60-70% of children are enrolled in formal early education facilities. Compulsory schooling age in Finland starts at the age of seven, which is later than in the United Kingdom and New Zealand where compulsory schooling starts at the age of five. In the United States, in most states compulsory schooling starts at the age of six.

Figure B.3. Enrolment rates in early education (preschool) at age five

Children attending full-time and part-time service in 2009



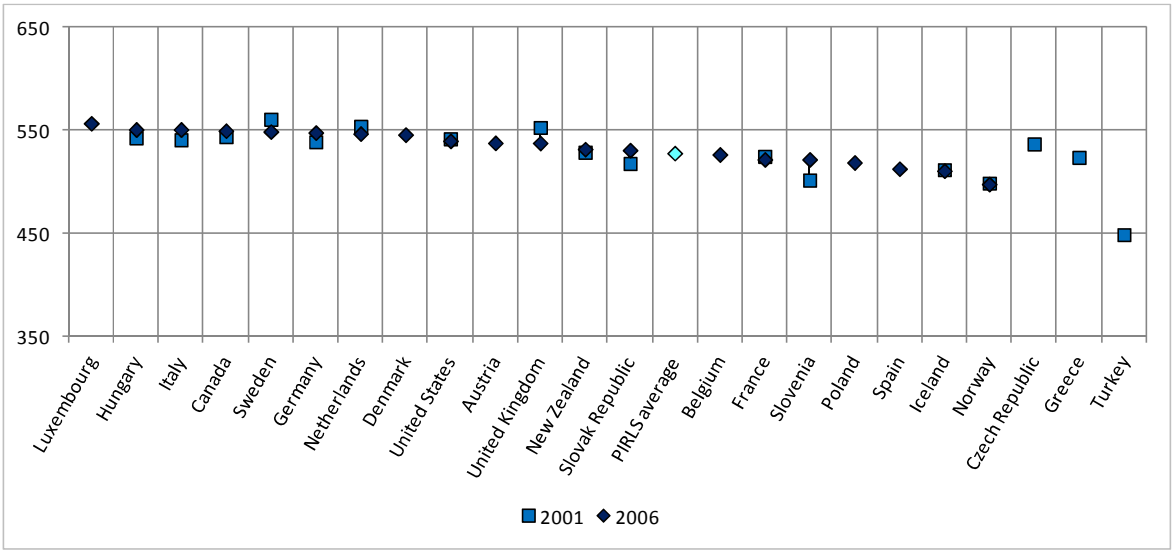
Notes: At age five, Canada is not included in the OECD average. Data for Korea come from National Sources.

Source: OECD Education Database, November 2011.

4. Reading performance in grade four (PIRLS)

- Children in grade four (around age 10 or 11) in the United Kingdom perform better than the international average on the PIRLS reading assessment[2]: children in the United Kingdom score 538 points on PIRLS, while the average is 528 points. The United States and New Zealand have scores similar to children in the United Kingdom.
- However, the reading performance of children in grade four in the United Kingdom decreased with 15 points between 2001 and 2006, indicating that the reading skills of young children in the United Kingdom deteriorated. The score in reference countries New Zealand and the United States remained almost unchanged. Sweden's performance, although still very high, also decreased over this timeframe.

Figure B.4. PIRLS Reading achievement in 2001 and 2006



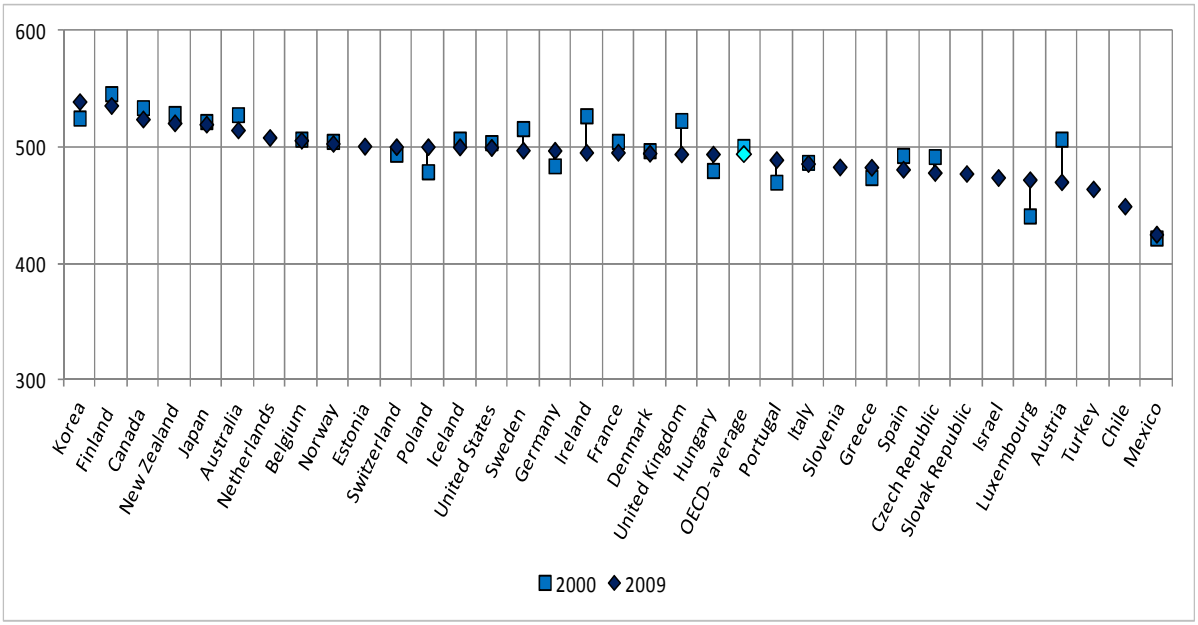
Note: The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) examines the reading achievements of children in grade four, who are around 10 or 11 years old. Data for Canada is based on five provinces (Alberta, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Ontario and Québec), while results for the United Kingdom are based on data for England and Scotland. Data for Belgium was collected separately for the Flemish- and French-speaking communities. For these three countries, overall scores were estimated using a weighted average according to the population of each province/country/community. For the United Kingdom, data for 2001 are related to England only.

Source: Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2001 and 2006.

5. PISA 2009 reading performance

- The reading performance of older children (15-year-olds) in the United Kingdom, measured through the OECD PISA reading assessment, is equal to the OECD average (494 score points). The United Kingdom experienced a significant decrease of 29 score points in their PISA reading assessment score between 2000 and 2009, indicating that in addition to the reading skills of 10- and 11-year-olds, the reading skills of 15-year-olds deteriorated over time.
- Although British children have an average PISA reading performance, children in Finland, New Zealand and the United States all perform better than students in the United Kingdom.
- A closer look at the performance distribution by proficiency level can provide further insights.
- The United Kingdom has a performance distribution similar to the OECD average and the United States, but has fewer students than Finland and New Zealand at high proficiency levels (proficiency level four or above). The United Kingdom has more students than Finland and New Zealand in proficiency level two or below.

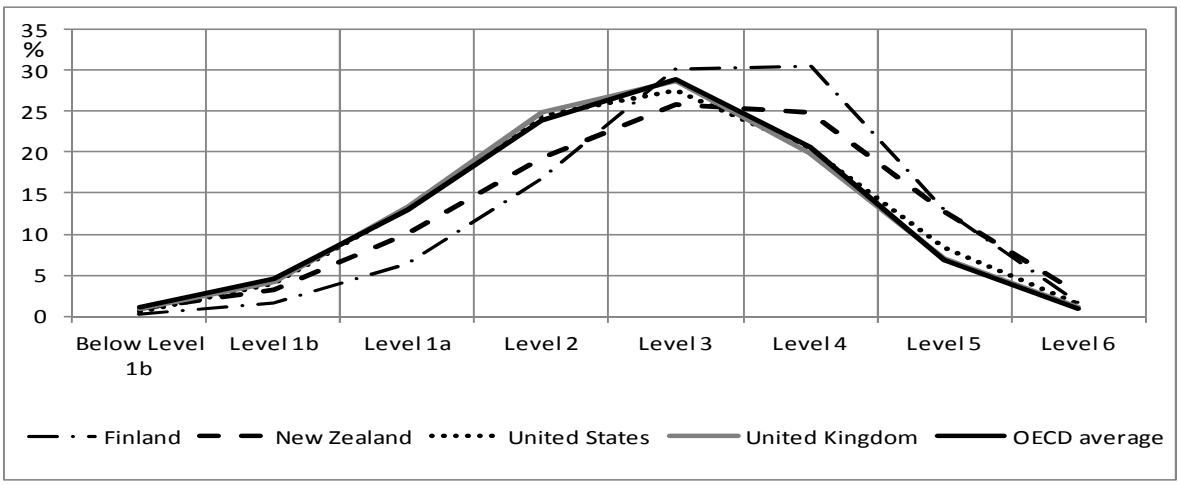
Figure B.5. PISA Reading performance in 2000 and 2009



Source: OECD PISA Databases 2000 and 2009.

Figure B.6. Reading performance dispersion

Percentage of students at different levels of proficiency in 2009



Note: The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) assesses students' reading performance, and knowledge about mathematics and science, when children are in secondary education at the age of 15. For PISA scores corresponding to each level of proficiency, see PISA Database.

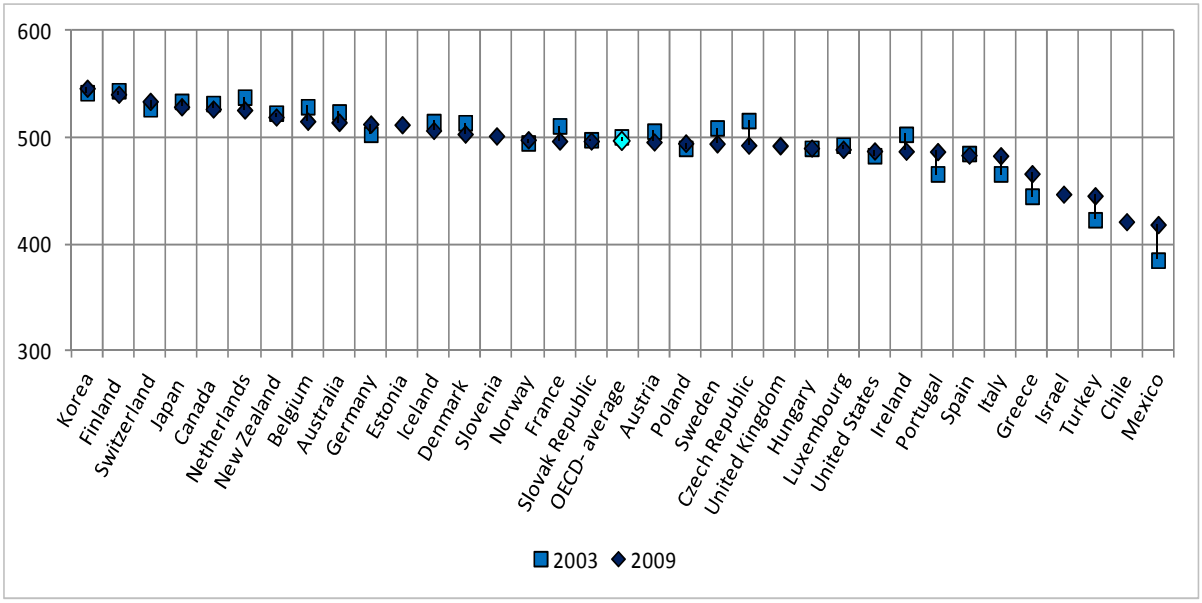
Source: OECD, PISA 2009 Database, Table I.2.1.

6. PISA 2009 mathematics performance

- 15-year-olds in the United Kingdom scored slightly below the OECD average (496 score points) for the PISA mathematics assessment in 2009 with 492 score points, although they outperformed their peers in the United States (487 score points). Students in Finland are among the top performers. New Zealand students also perform high on the OECD PISA assessment.

- On the performance distribution scale, the United Kingdom and the United States have a smaller proportion of students than Finland and New Zealand performing at the higher proficiency levels. The United Kingdom, as well as the United States, has a higher proportion of students at level three or below than the reference countries, which indicates that British students have lower math proficiencies compared to students in Finland and New Zealand.

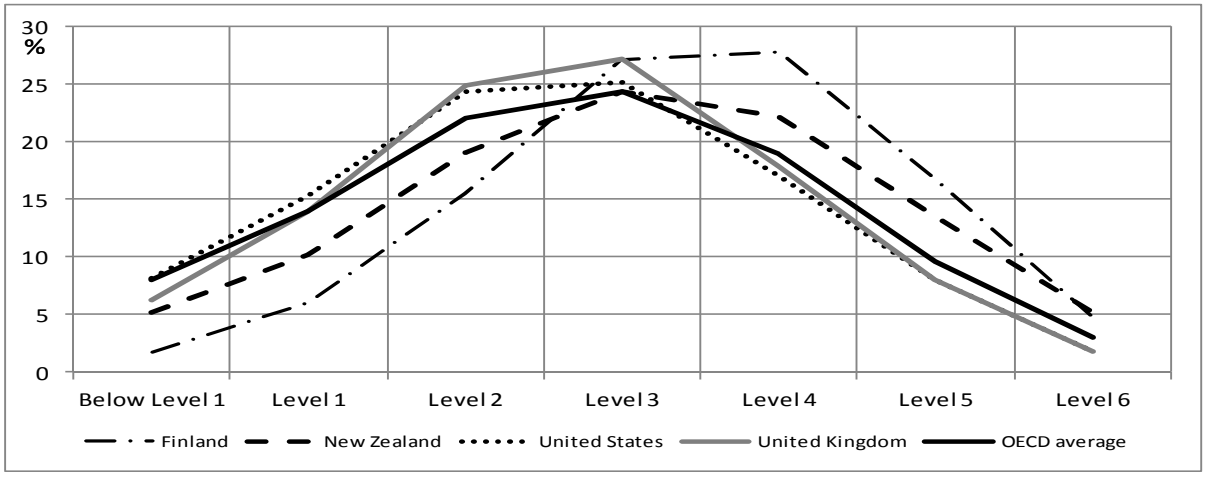
Figure B.7. PISA Mathematics performance in 2003 and 2009



Source: OECD PISA Databases 2003 and 2009.

Figure B.8. Mathematics performance dispersion

Percentage of students at different levels of proficiency in 2009



Note: For PISA scores corresponding to each level of proficiency, see PISA Database.

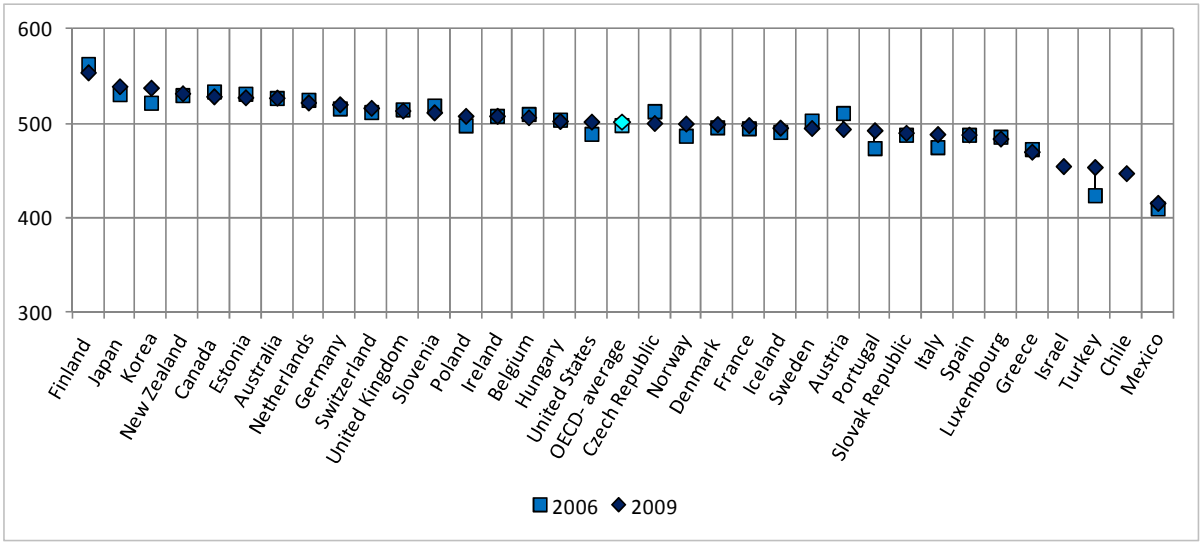
Source: OECD, PISA 2009 Database, Table I.3.1.

7. PISA 2009 science performance

- 15-year-olds in the United Kingdom performed above the OECD average in PISA's science assessment, although they scored lower than their peers in Finland and New Zealand.

- The average test score in the United Kingdom remained unchanged between 2006 and 2009, indicating that the performance remained stable over time. Several countries experienced a significant increase in children's science performance, including Turkey, Portugal, Korea, Italy, Norway and Poland.
- On the performance distribution scale, the United Kingdom has a similar distribution to the United States – having an above average proportion of students at proficiency level four or higher – which means that British children have, in general, good scientific proficiencies.
- Although the United Kingdom has a good science proficiency distribution, Finland and New Zealand have a higher proportion of students than the United Kingdom performing at the highest levels. At proficiency level two or below, the United Kingdom has a higher share of students than New Zealand and Finland.

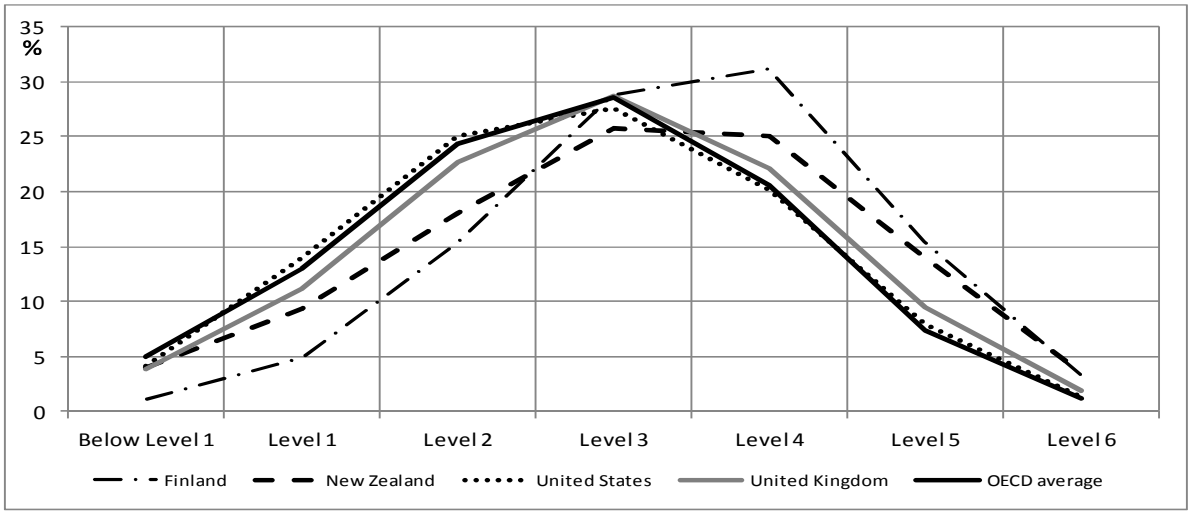
Figure B.9. PISA Science performance in 2006 and 2009



Source: OECD PISA Databases 2006 and 2009.

Figure B.10. Science performance dispersion

Percentage of students at different levels of proficiency in 2009



Note: For PISA scores corresponding to each level of proficiency, see PISA Database.

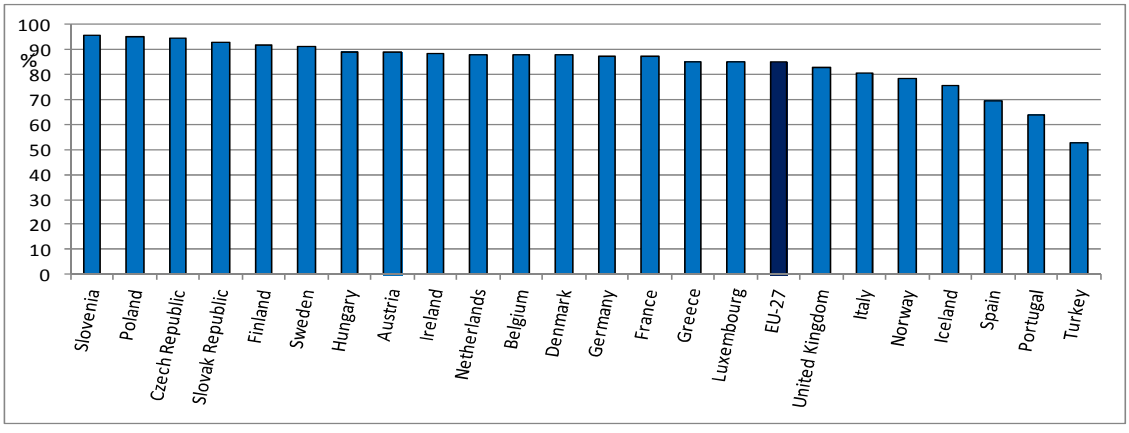
Source: OECD, PISA 2009 Database, Table I.3.4.

8. Staying in school/education (school continuing survival)

- In the 27 European Union (EU) countries, on average, 84.8% of the people aged 18 to 24 continue to participate in secondary education or further training after they turn 18.
- The United Kingdom has a school survival rate of 83%, slightly below the EU average. This indicates that 17% of 18-to-24-year-olds in the United Kingdom decide not to stay in school or education. These people either start working, or are not in work or school/education, facing the challenge of not being schooled and not having a stable income.
- Finland has a high proportion of young people (92%) participating in education, while Norway has a relatively low school survival rate (78.6%).

Figure B.11. Staying in school/education

Share of the total population aged 18-24 participating in secondary education or further education/training in 2007



Note: Staying in school/education (school continuing survival) indicator is the inverse of the early school leavers' indicator. Students living abroad for one year or more and conscripts on compulsory military service are not covered by the EU Labour Force Survey, which may imply higher rates than those available at national level. The indicator covers non-nationals who have stayed or intend to stay in the country for one year or more. Data for the Czech Republic are from 2006, and data for France do not cover the overseas departments (DOM).

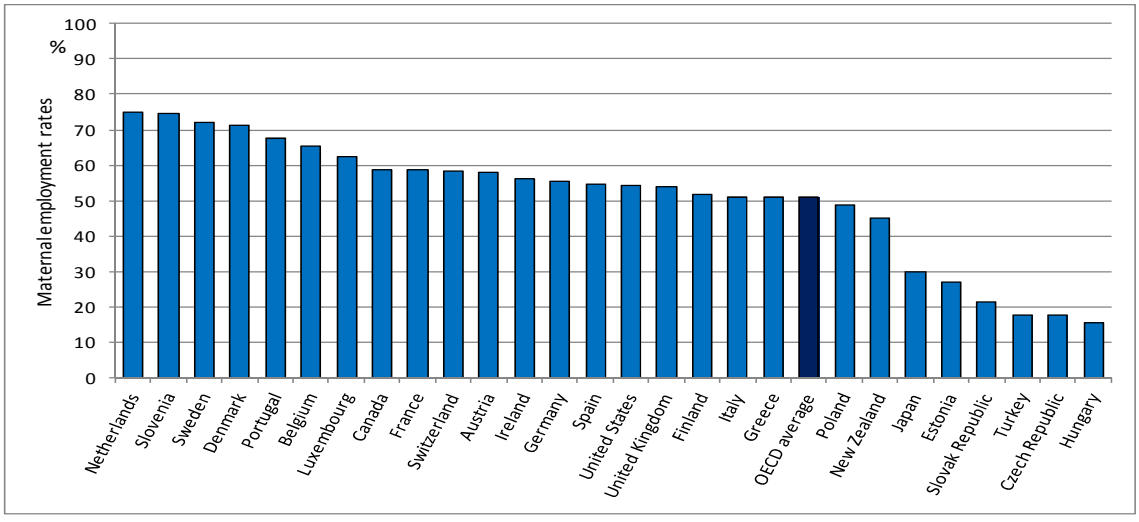
Source: Eurostat database (data extracted September 2009) from Eurydice & European Commission, Gender differences in Educational Outcomes: study on the measures taken and the current situation in Europe, EC, December 2009.

9. Maternal employment rates, age of youngest child under three years

- On average, almost half of all mothers in OECD countries with their youngest child under three years old are in employment.
- Employment rates among mothers in the United Kingdom with their youngest child under three years are slightly above the OECD average with 54%, while employment rates of mothers of under-3-year-olds are much higher in Sweden with 71.9% and Denmark with 71.4%.
- The United States has employment rates similar to the United Kingdom (54.2%). New Zealand has a lower-than-average proportion of employed mothers with their youngest child under age three (45.1%).

Figure B.12. Maternal employment rates, age of youngest child under three years

In 2008 or latest available year



Note: 2007 for Sweden; 2006 for Mexico and Switzerland; 2005 for Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the United States; 2002 for Iceland; 2001 for Canada; 1999 for Denmark.

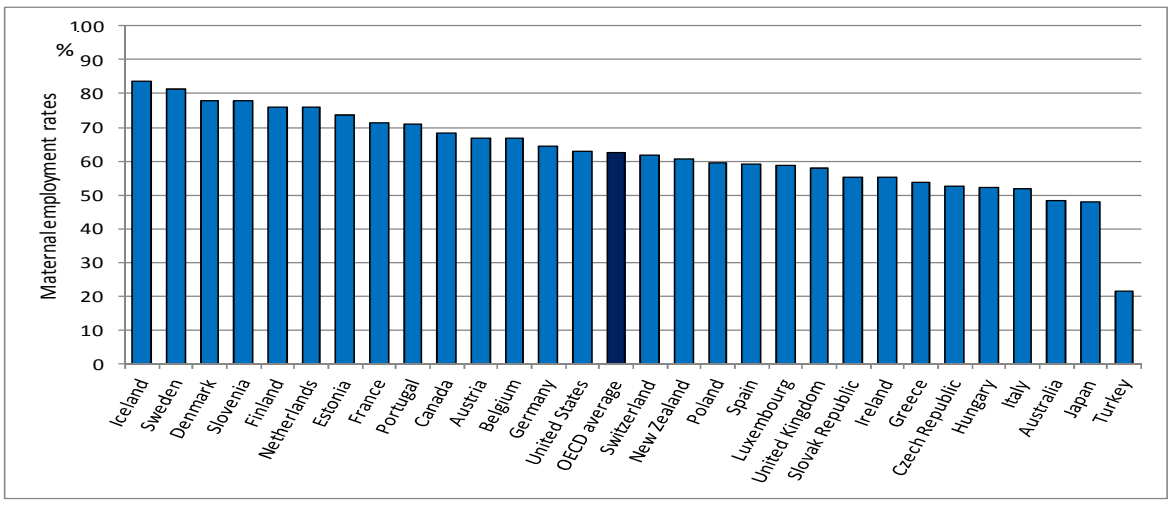
Source: OECD Family Database, May 2011.

10. Maternal employment rates, age of youngest child three to five years

- On average, around 60% of all mothers with their youngest child aged three to five are employed in OECD countries.
- Employment rates for mothers in United Kingdom, whose youngest child is aged between three and five years, are lower than the OECD average at 58.1%. On the contrary, Nordic countries like Sweden (81.3%) and Denmark (77.8%) have high maternal employment rates. Maternal employment rates in New Zealand are around the OECD average (60.6%).

Figure B.13. Maternal employment rates, age of youngest child three to five years

In 2008 or latest available year



Note: For ages three to five, data for Australia and Iceland refer to mothers with a youngest child aged less than five. Year 2007 for Sweden; 2006 for Mexico and Switzerland; 2005 for Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the United States; 2002 for Iceland; 2001 for Canada; 1999 for Denmark

Source: OECD Family Database, May 2011.

NOTES

1 The data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

2 The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) examines the reading achievements of children in grade four, who are around 10 or 11 years old.

ANNEX C. FIGURES FOR SPIDER WEB ON POLICY INPUTS[1]

Nine indicators have been selected to compare England's policy inputs[2] with other OECD countries based on the available data for international comparison.

1. Public child care and education expenditure at age three
2. Public child care and education expenditure at age five
3. Public spending on family cash benefits and tax measures
4. Paid maternity leave
5. Unpaid maternity leave
6. Paid paternity leave
7. Unpaid paternity leave
8. Staff-to-child ratio in child care, zero-to-three-year-olds for integrated system
9. Staff-to-child ratio in preschool or kindergarten, three years to compulsory schooling age for integrated system

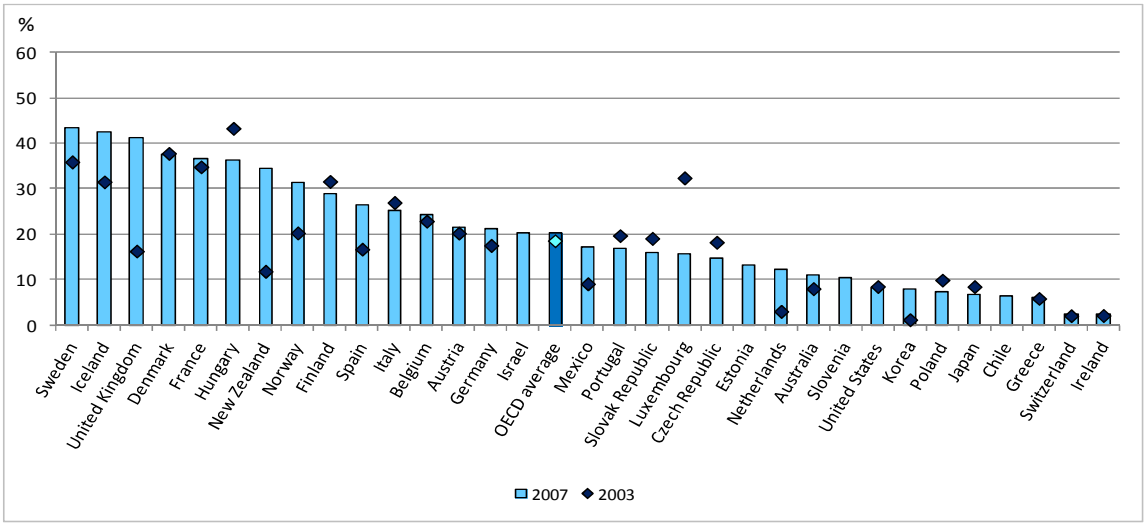
England has selected Finland or other Nordic countries, New Zealand and the United States as its reference countries, where data are available.

1. Public child care and education expenditure at age three

- Lower public spending on child care and education at the early stage might lead to an increase in informal or private ECEC provision. In countries with low public ECEC expenditures, child care fees can become a barrier for parents to enrol their children in formal or public services.
- The United Kingdom has the largest public expenditure level on ECEC for three-year-olds among OECD countries, along with Sweden and Iceland. From 2003 to 2007, a significant increase in public spending on ECEC for three-year-olds took place in the United Kingdom.

Figure C.1. Public spending on early education and child care per child at age three

% of median working-age household income in 2003 and 2007



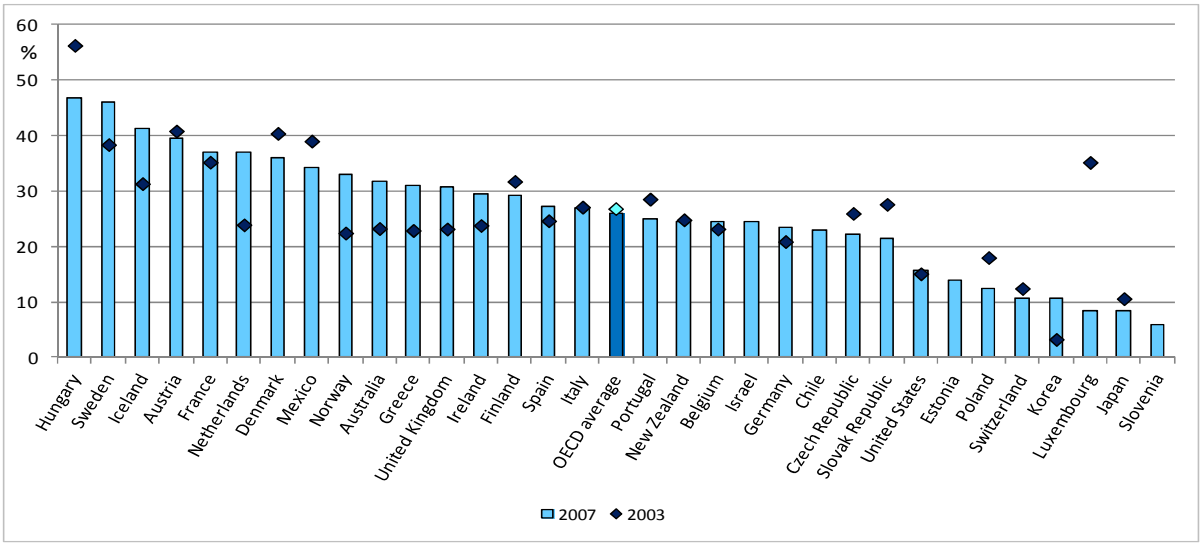
Source: OECD (2009), *Doing Better for Children*, OECD Publishing; OECD (2011), *Doing Better for Families*, OECD Publishing.

2. Public child care and education expenditure at age five

- The United Kingdom has an above-average level of public expenditure regarding ECEC for five-year-olds. Since 2003, the United Kingdom experienced an increase in child care and education expenditures on ECEC for children aged five.
- Sweden, Denmark and Norway have higher public expenditure levels than the United Kingdom. On the contrary, Finland, New Zealand and the United States have a lower public expenditure levels than the United Kingdom with the expenditure level of the United States and New Zealand below the OECD average.

Figure C.2. Public spending on early education and child care per child at age five

% of median working-age household income in 2003 and 2007



Source: OECD (2009), *Doing Better for Children*, OECD Publishing; OECD (2011), *Doing Better for Families*, OECD Publishing.

3. Public spending on family cash benefits and tax measures

- OECD countries implement measures to financially support families in covering for ECEC and child-rearing costs by distributing cash benefits and tax credits to families. These can contribute to lower private (parental) costs of child care and/or preschool.
- Public spending on such measures is, on average, 1.5% of GDP. The United Kingdom spends a relatively high proportion of GDP on cash benefits and tax credits with 2.4% of its GDP.

Net child care costs

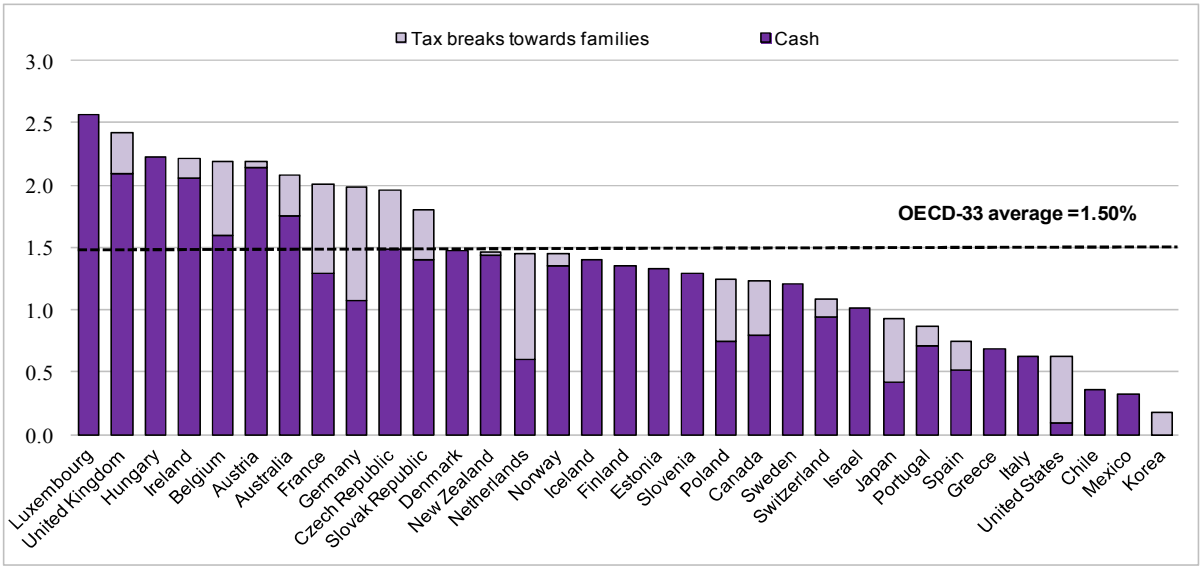
- Net child care costs vary across OECD countries. Policy measures to support families financially in covering the costs of ECEC and child-raising also vary widely. Broadly, four approaches can be indentified:
    1. The costs are set high, and the net costs remain high even after counting child-related benefits and tax credits;
    2. The costs are set high, but the net costs are lower after counting the benefits;
    3. The costs are set low or at the margin of the affordable level, and no effects by the benefits are observed; and

4. The costs are set low or at the margin of the affordable level, and further, the net costs are made lower.

- The United Kingdom implements the first approach for couple families but implements the second approach for single parent families.
- The child care costs for double-earning families with different levels of income are far above the OECD average, indicating that formal child care services are relatively expensive for British parents. However, net child care costs fall below the OECD average for sole earning families.
- For dual earning families, the average child care costs in OECD countries are equal to 27% of the average wage, and the net child care costs are 18.4% of the average wage. In the United Kingdom, the child care costs are 46% of the average wage, much higher than the OECD average. Even after accounting for child-related benefits and tax breaks, the net child care costs are 41% of the average wage. The latter indicates that dual earning parents in the United Kingdom do not receive high child-related benefits or large tax breaks, which could contribute to lower child care costs (Figure C.4).
- For single earning families, the child care fees are equal to those for couple families, but after distribution of child-related benefits and tax breaks, the net child care cost drop below the OECD average. Single earning families receive much larger child-related benefits and tax breaks than dual earning families to cover for the relatively high child care costs in the United Kingdom (Figure C.5).

Figure C.3. Public spending on family benefits in cash and tax measures

As a percentage of GDP in 2007

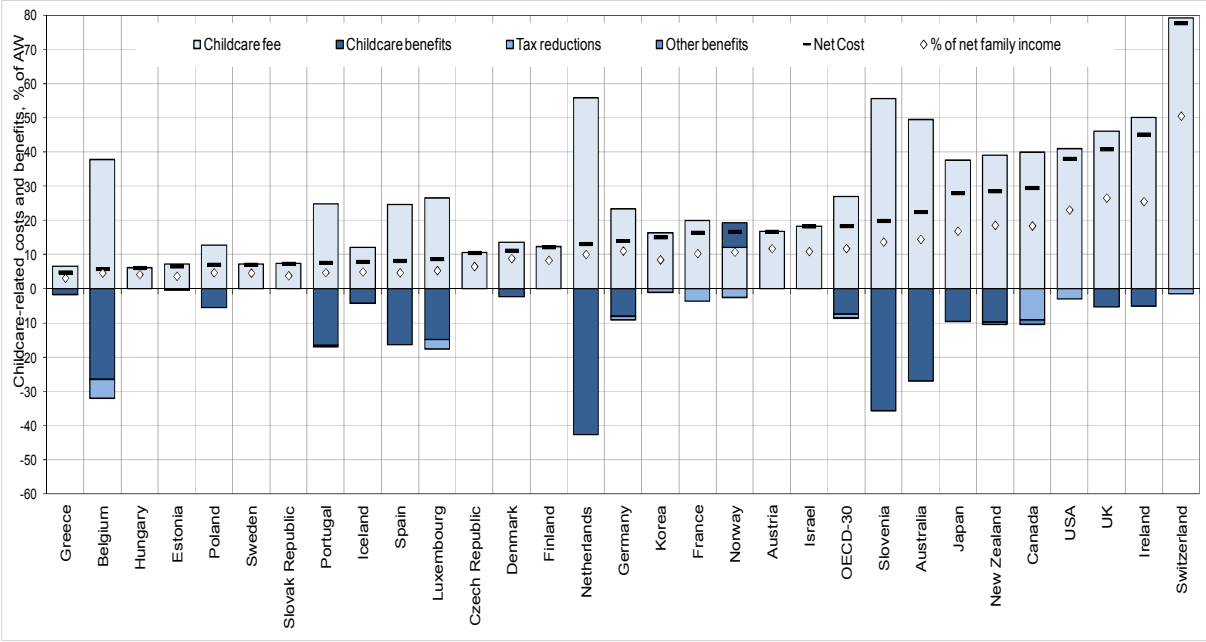


Note: Public support accounted here only concerns public support that is exclusively for families (*e.g.*, child payments and allowances, parental leave benefits and child care support). Spending recorded in other social policy areas, such as health and housing support, also assists families, though not exclusively, and is not included here. Data on tax breaks towards families is not available for Chile, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Israel and Slovenia.

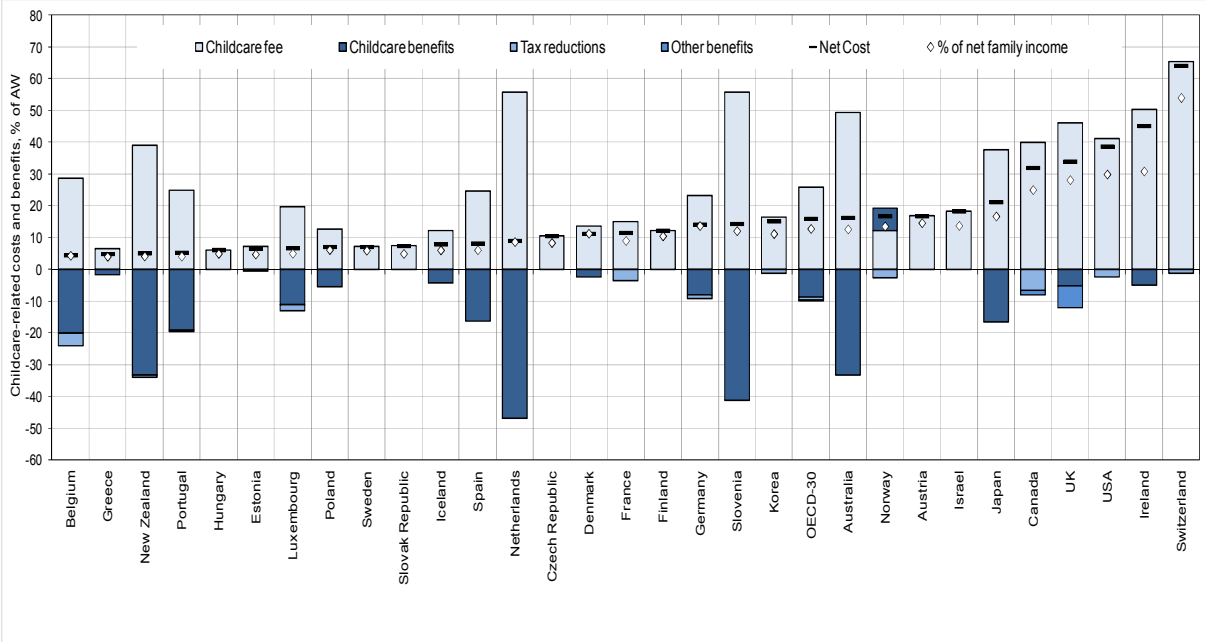
Source: OECD Social Expenditure Database (www.oecd.org/els/social/expenditure), 2010; ESSPROS, 2010.

Figure C.4. Components of net child care costs for couple families in 2008

Panel A. Both earn 100% of average wage



Panel B. Male earns 100% and female earns 50% of average wage

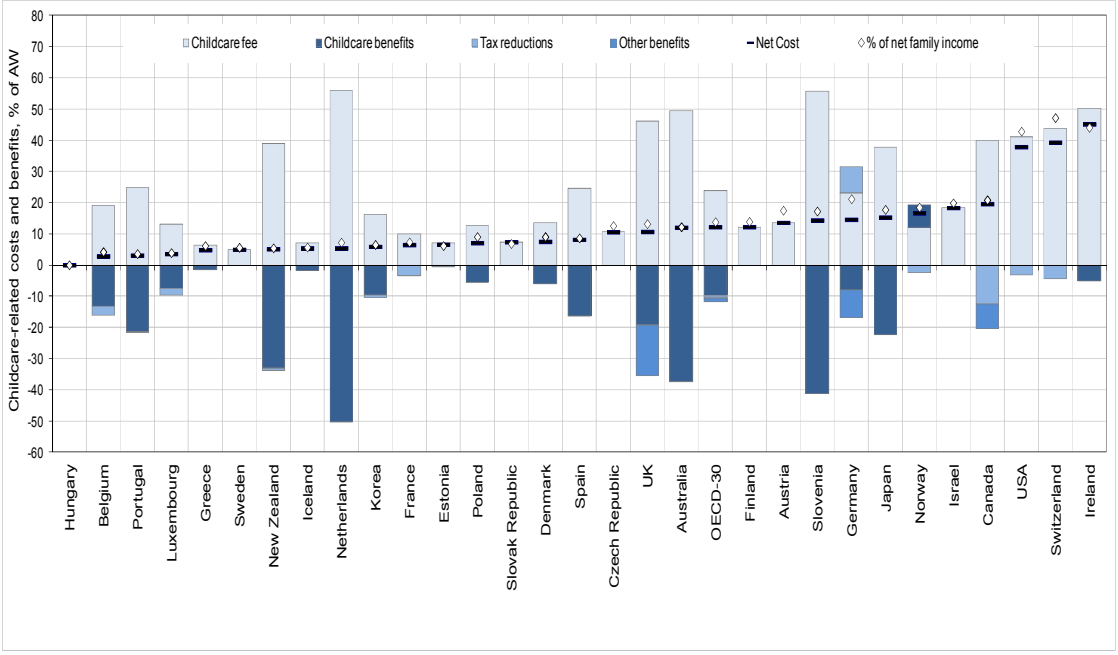


Note: The child care cost calculations for Austria reflect the situation in Vienna; for Belgium, the French community; Canada, the province of Ontario; the Czech Republic in villages and towns with more than 2 000 inhabitants; for Germany, Hamburg; for Iceland, Reykjavík; for Switzerland, Zürich; for the United Kingdom, England; and for the United States, Michigan. These results do not represent the situation in the rest of the country. For example, net child care costs in the Canadian provinces of Alberta or Québec will be different from Ontario. Information on data for Israel: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602.

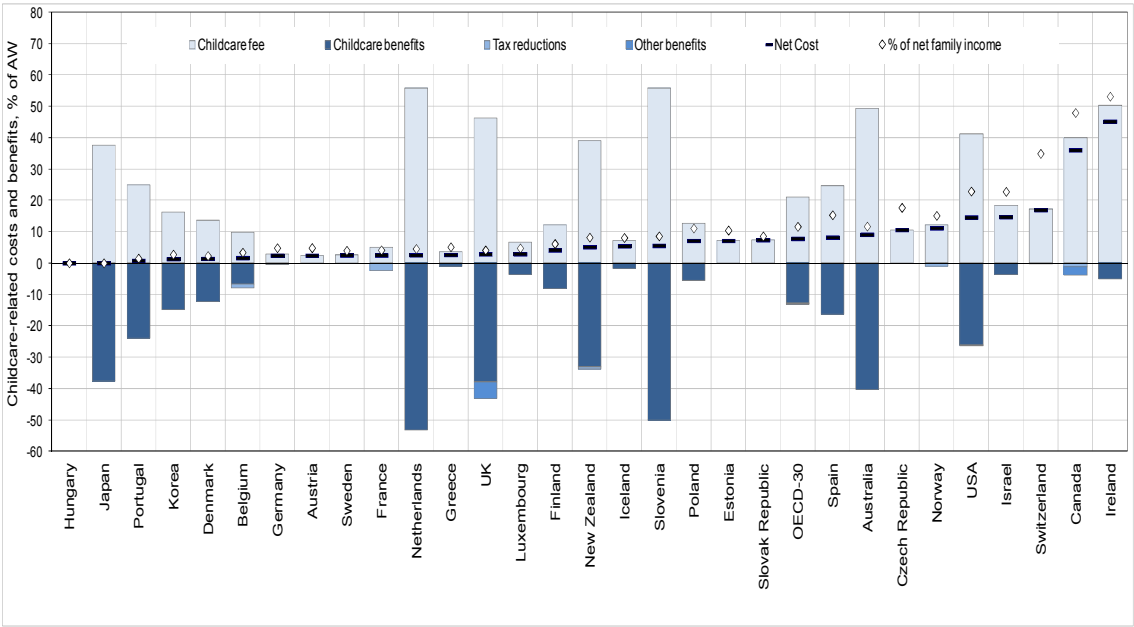
Source: OECD Tax/Benefit models, 2008 from OECD (2011), *Doing Better for Families*, OECD Publishing.

Figure C.5. Components of net child care costs for single parent families in 2008

Panel A. Single parent earns 100% of the average wage



Panel B. Single parent earns 50% of the average wage



Note: Results are for 2008. Two children aged two and three. "Family net income" is the sum of gross earnings plus cash benefits minus taxes and social contributions. All fee reductions, including free preschool of child care for certain age groups, are shown as rebates where possible. The child care cost calculations for Austria reflect the situation in Vienna; for Belgium, the French community; Canada, the province of Ontario; the Czech Republic in villages and towns with more than 2 000 inhabitants; for Germany, Hamburg; for Iceland, Reykjavík; for Switzerland, Zürich; for the United Kingdom, England; and for the United States, Michigan. Child care fees used are those determined by government, at either the national or local level, in Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia. Child care fees for Greece are calculated according to national guidelines. Information on data for Israel: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602

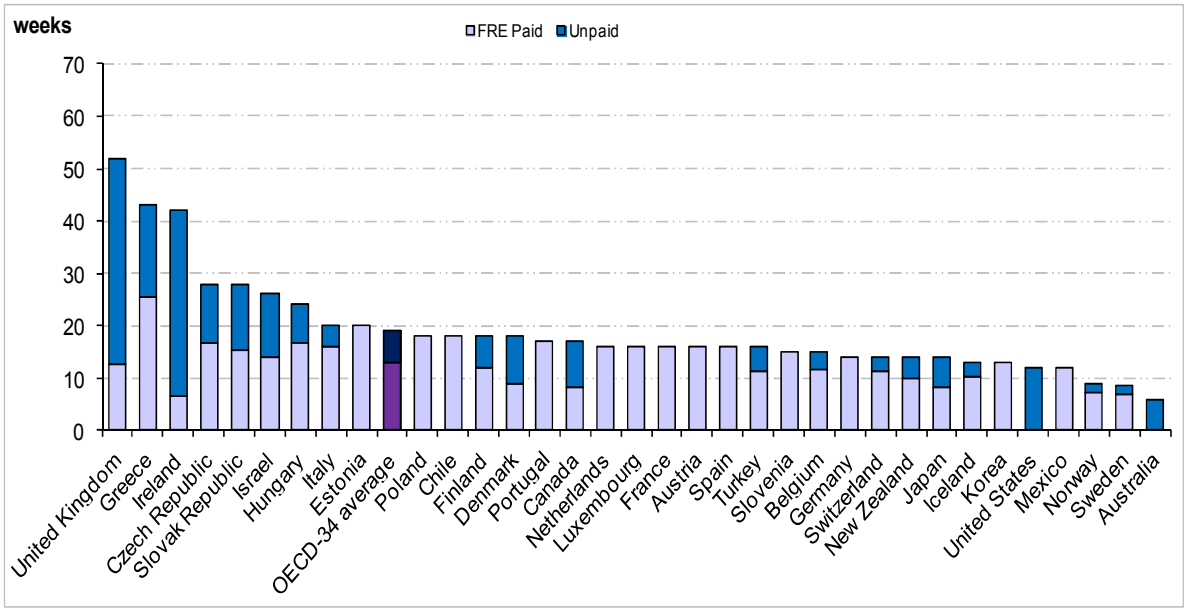
Source: OECD (2008b) Tax/Benefit models from OECD (2011), *Doing Better for Families*, OECD Publishing.

4 – 5. Paid and unpaid maternity leave

- On average, mothers in OECD countries have a total of 19 weeks of maternity leave with a significant variation in length and combination of types of leave (paid versus unpaid).
- The United Kingdom has the longest length of maternity leave entitlement among the OECD countries with an entitlement to over 50 weeks of maternity leave (paid and unpaid). This is more than twice the OECD average. However, only one-fourth of the British maternity leave consists of paid leave.
- Total maternity leave entitlements (paid and unpaid) in Finland, New Zealand and the United States are below the OECD average. Regarding the proportion of paid versus unpaid leave, possibilities for paid leave are greater than possibilities for unpaid leave in Finland and New Zealand, while only unpaid leave exists in the United States.

Figure C.6. Child-related leave periods: Maternity leave in weeks

Entitled and expressed as a % of maternity leave at FRE pay in 2007/08



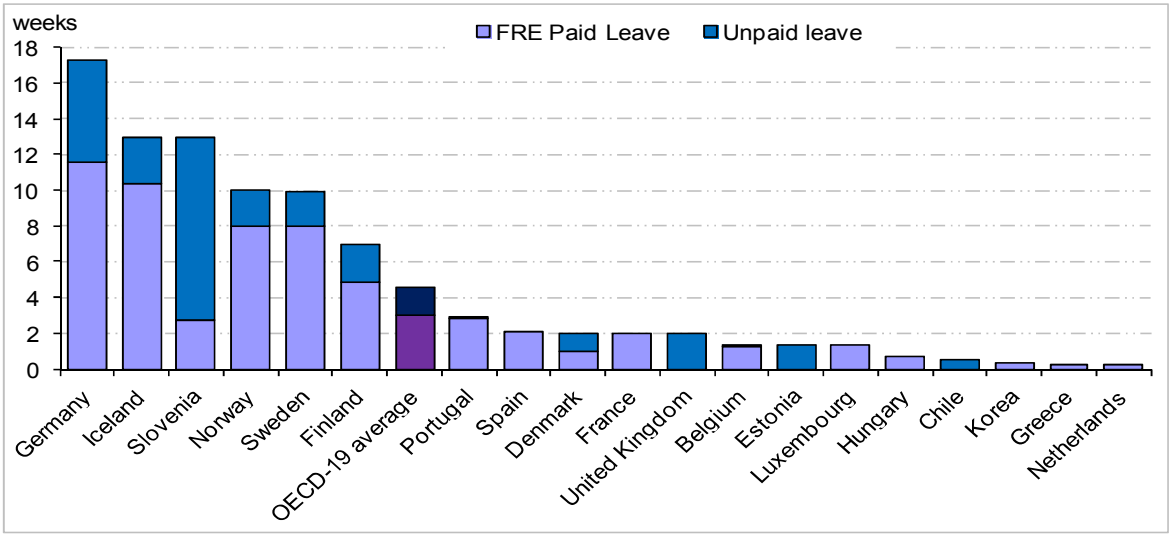
Source: OECD Family database, May 2011.

6 – 7. Paid and unpaid paternity leave

- On average, fathers have a total of 4.6 weeks of paternity leave in 19 OECD countries, with a significant variation in length and considerably shorter periods than maternity leave.
- The United Kingdom and Norway provides about the same period of *unpaid* paternity leave (two weeks); however, the former provides far shorter *paid* paternity leave periods (0.1 weeks) than the latter (eight weeks).

Figure C.7. Child-related leave periods: Paternity leave in weeks

Entitled and expressed as a % of paternity leave at FRE pay in 2007/08



Source: OECD Family database, May 2011.

8. Staff-to-child ratio in child care, zero-to-three-year-olds for integrated system

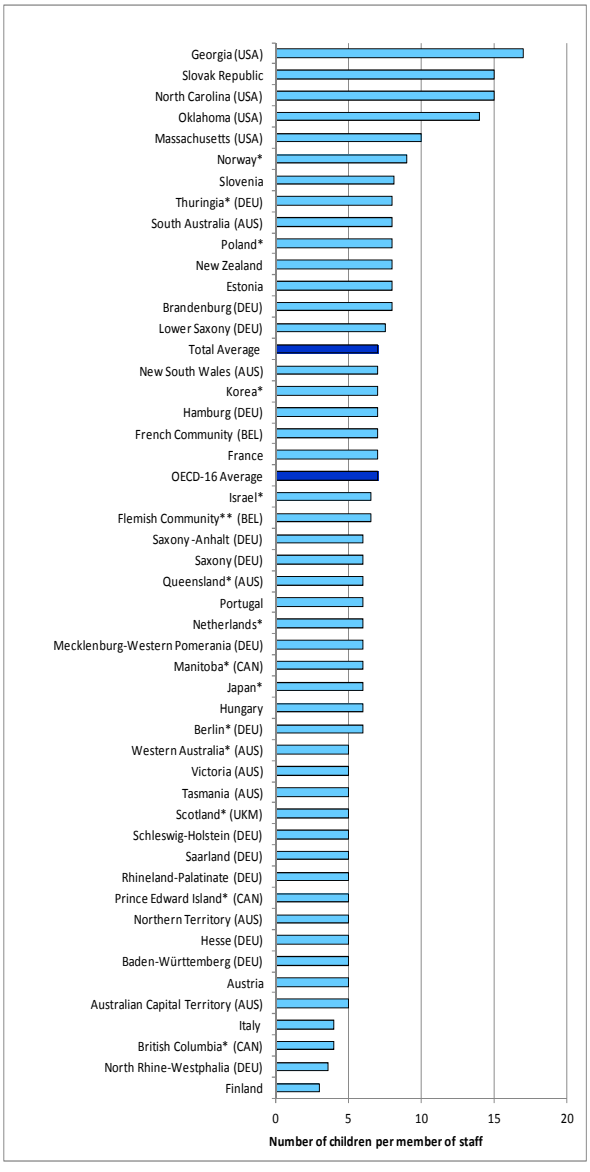
- According to research, infants and toddlers most often need more intensive care than other young children. Therefore countries set different minimum standards for young children in the age category from birth to three-year-olds.
- The average staff-to-child ratio for the zero-to-three-year-old age group is that one caregiver looks after seven children in formal child care services. In England, a caregiver looks after slightly more children than the average (eight children per staff member).
- Several states in the United States (Georgia, North Carolina, Oklahoma and Massachusetts) have a larger ratio, ranging from 10 to 17, while a child carer in Finland looks after the lowest number of children (three children per staff member) among OECD countries (Figure C.8).

9. Staff-to-child ratio in preschool or kindergarten, three years to compulsory schooling age for integrated system

- Countries also often set less strict minimum standards regarding staff-to-child ratios for children aged three to six. The actual ratio can be better than the regulated ratio.
- On average, one kindergarten/preschool teacher is assigned to 15 children in kindergarten or preschool services, with a significant variation between countries.
- England has a similar number of children per staff member (15 children per staff member) as the average in kindergarten or preschool services, although their ratio is larger than the regulated ratio in Finland (1:7), New Zealand (1:8) and the United States (1:9 or 1:10). A lower ratio allows more time for staff to interact with each young child and can contribute to better child development.

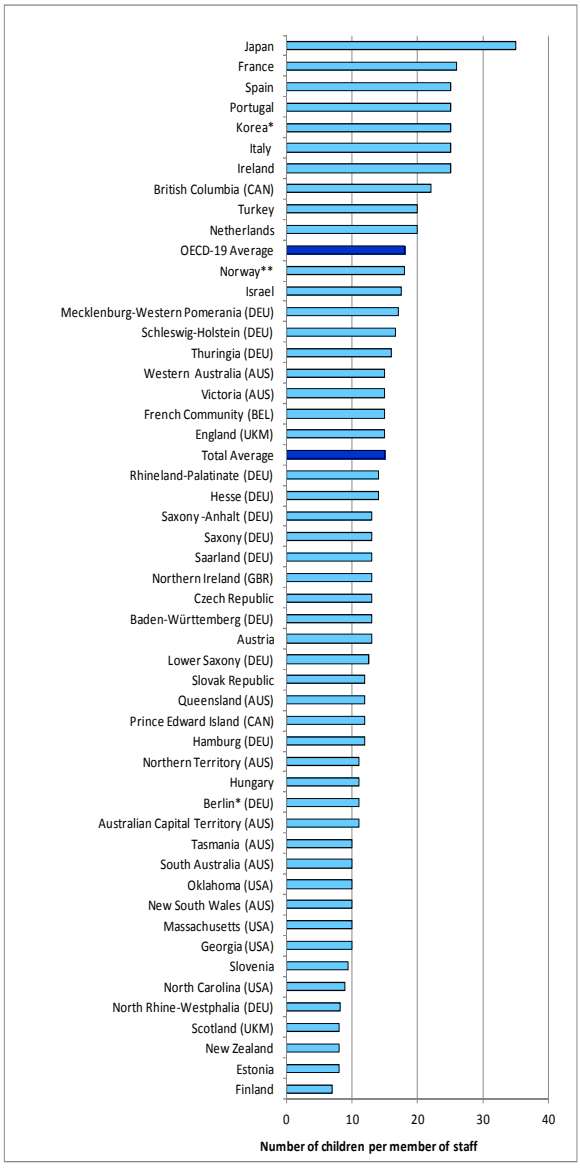
Figure C.8. Staff-child ratio in formal ECEC services

Panel A. In child care (0- to-3-year-olds for countries with an integrated ECEC system)



* Jurisdictions with separate regulations for different age groups, the data given is based on: Berlin (DEU), 2-3-year-olds (attending 5-7 hours per day); British Columbia (CAN), 0-3-year-olds; Israel, 2-3-year-olds; Japan, 1-2-year-olds (while the country has different ratios in place for different ages: the ratio for age 0 is 1:3; age 1-2, 1:6; age 3, 1:20; and age 4, 1:30 – only data regarding 1-2-year-olds is included in the figure); Korea, 2-year-olds; Manitoba (CAN), 2-3-year-olds; Netherlands, 2-3-year-olds; Norway, 0-3-year-olds; Prince Edward Island (CAN), 2-3-year-olds; Queensland (AUS) 2-3-year-olds; Scotland (UKM), 2-3-year-olds; Thuringia (DEU), 2-3-year-olds; Western Australia (AUS), 2-3-year-olds. For Poland, when there is a disabled child in the playroom, the ratio is set at 1:5.

Panel B. In kindergarten or preschool (3 years to compulsory schooling age for countries with an integrated ECEC system)



* Jurisdictions with separate regulations for staff-child ratio for different age groups, the data given is based on: 3-6-year-olds attending for 5-7 hours per day regarding Berlin; and 4-year-olds regarding Korea.

** The figure for Norway applies only to qualified kindergarten teachers, whereas regulation stipulates that if other staff will also be present in the kindergarten setting, the number of children per member of staff is effectively lower. The figure for Norway is based on regulation for 3-6-year-olds.

**Subsidised facilities only

Note: The Total Average is based on data for all countries and jurisdictions included in the respective figures. For Panel A, OECD-19 Average is only based on data reported for OECD countries, excluding regions and territories, and is calculated based on data from: Austria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey. For Panel B, OECD-16 Average is only based on data reported for OECD countries, excluding regions and territories, and is calculated based on data from: Austria, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic and Slovenia.

Source: OECD Network on Early Childhood Education and Care's "Survey for the Quality Toolbox and ECEC Portal", June 2011.

NOTES

1 The data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

2 Data refers to the United Kingdom unless noted otherwise. This because data separately for England regarding the included indicators is not available.

ANNEX D. NOTES TO THE SPIDER WEBS

Table D.1. Overview of available indicators per country: Policy outcomes

Country	Enrolment in formal care for under 3s	Enrolment rates at age 3	Enrolment rates at age 5	PIRLS Reading	PISA Reading	PISA Maths	PISA Science	Staying in school/ education	Maternal employment rates, age of youngest child under 3 years	Maternal employment rates, age of youngest child 3-5 years
Australia	X	X	X	m	X	X	X	m	m	X
Austria	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Belgium	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Canada	X	m	m	X	X	X	X	m	X	X
Chile	X	X	X	m	X	X	X	m	m	m
Czech Republic	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Denmark	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Estonia	X	X	X	m	X	X	X	m	X	X
Finland	X	X	X	m	X	X	X	X	X	X
France	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Germany	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Greece	X	m	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hungary	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Iceland	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	m	X
Ireland	X	X	X	m	X	X	X	X	X	X
Israel	X	X	X	m	X	X	X	m	m	m
Italy	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Japan	X	X	X	m	X	X	X	m	X	X
Korea	X	X	X	m	X	X	X	m	m	m
Luxembourg	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mexico	X	X	X	m	X	X	X	m	m	m
Netherlands	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
New Zealand	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	m	X	X
Norway	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	m	m
Poland	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Portugal	X	X	X	m	X	X	X	X	X	X
Slovak Republic	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Slovenia	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Spain	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sweden	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Switzerland	m	X	X	m	X	X	X	m	X	X
Turkey	m	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
United Kingdom	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
United States	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	m	X	X

Note: The tables show the availability of the indicators for each country; “m” is for missing and “X” for available.

Table D.2. Overview of available indicators per country: Policy inputs

Country	Public child care and education expenditure at age 3	Public child care and education expenditure at age 5	Public spending on family benefits in cash and tax measures	FTE paid maternity leave	FTE unpaid maternity leave	FTE paid paternity leave	FTE unpaid paternity leave	Staff-to-child ratio in child care for 0-to-3-year-olds	Staff-to-child ratio in kindergarten/ preschool services for 3-to-6-year-olds
Australia	X	X	X	X	X	m	m	X	X
Austria	X	X	X	X	X	X	m	X	X
Belgium	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Canada	m	m	X	X	X	m	m	X	X
Chile	X	X	X	m	X	X	X	m	m
Czech Republic	X	X	X	X	X	m	m	m	X
Denmark	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	m	m
Estonia	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Finland	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
France	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Germany	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Greece	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	m	m
Hungary	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Iceland	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	m	m
Ireland	X	X	X	X	X	X	m	m	X
Israel	X	X	X	X	X	m	m	X	X
Italy	X	X	X	X	X	m	m	X	X
Japan	X	X	X	X	X	m	m	X	X
Korea	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Luxembourg	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	m	m
Mexico	X	X	X	X	X	m	m	m	m
Netherlands	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
New Zealand	X	X	X	X	X	m	m	X	X
Norway	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Poland	X	X	X	X	X	X	m	X	m
Portugal	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Slovak Republic	X	X	X	X	X	m	m	X	X
Slovenia	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Spain	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	m	X
Sweden	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	m	m
Switzerland	X	X	X	X	X	m	m	m	m
Turkey	m	m	m	X	X	m	m	m	X
United Kingdom	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
United States	X	X	X	X	X	m	m	X	X

Note: The tables show the availability of the indicators for each country; “m” is for missing and “X” for available.

ANNEX E. METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES FOR THE SPIDER WEBS

Table E.1. Spider web methodological notes and data sources: Policy outcomes

Indicator	Notes	Source
Infant survival	Year 2008 or latest available year. 2007 instead of 2008 for Canada and Ireland; 2006 for Korea and the United States. Infant survival rates are calculated as the inverse of the infant mortality rates (deaths per 1000 live births).	OECD Health Data 2010, June 2010. (OECD Family database, 2011).
Enrolment in formal care for the under 3s	Year 2008.	For children 0-2: Australia, ABS Childcare service (2008); Canada, National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (2008); Japan, Statistical Report on Social Welfare Administration and Services (2008); New Zealand, Education Counts' statistics (2008); the US, Early Childhood Program Participation Survey (2005); European countries, EU-SILC (2008) except Germany: administrative data; Nordic countries: NOSOSCO (2007-08); Other: National Authorities. For children 3-5: OECD Education database; Canada, National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (2008); Korea, Ministry of Health and Welfare, and Eurostat (2008) for non-OECD countries.
Enrolment rates in formal early education at age 3	Year 2009.. At age 3, Canada and Greece are not included in the OECD.	OECD Education Database, November 2011. Data for Korea come from National Sources.
Enrolment rates in formal early education at age 5	Year 2009. At age 5, Canada is not included in the OECD.	OECD Education Database, November 2011. Data for Korea come from National Sources.
PIRLS Reading (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study)	PIRLS data correspond to 2006 except for the Czech Republic, Greece and Turkey (2001). Data for Canada is based on five provinces (Alberta, British Columbia, Nova Scotia (not in TIMSS), Ontario and Québec), while results for the United Kingdom are based on data for England and Scotland. Data for Belgium was collected separately for the Flemish- and French-speaking communities. For these three countries, overall scores were estimated using a weighted average according to the population of each province /country/ community.	PIRLS 2006. (OECD Family database, 2011).
PISA Reading, Mathematics and Science	Year 2009. PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment.	OECD, PISA 2009 Database.

Table E.1. Spider web methodological notes and data sources: Policy outcomes (continued)

Indicator	Notes	Source
Staying in school/education (school continuing survival)	Year 2007. Staying in school/education (school continuing survival) represents the inverse of the early school leaver indicator. Students living abroad for one year or more and conscripts on compulsory military service are not covered by the EU Labour Force Survey, which may imply higher rates than those available at national level. The indicator covers non-nationals who have stayed or intend to stay in the country for one year or more. Czech Republic; data from 2006; France: overseas departments (DOM) are not covered.	Eurostat database (data extracted September 2009) from Eurydice & European Commission, Gender differences in Educational Outcomes: study on the measures taken and the current situation in Europe, EC, December 2009.
Maternal employment rates, age of youngest child under 3 years	Year 2008 or latest available year. 2007 for Sweden; 2006 for Mexico and Switzerland; 2005 for Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the United States; 2002 for Iceland; 2001 for Canada; 1999 for Denmark.	European Labour Force Surveys (2007-08) for EU countries; Australia: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2005); Canada: Statistics Canada (2001); Denmark: Statistics Denmark (1999); Iceland: Statistics Iceland (2002 for women age 25-54); Japan: Japanese national census (2005); Mexico: Encuesta Nacional de la Dinamica Demografica 2006; Switzerland: Swiss LFS (2006); United States: US Current population survey (2005). (OECD Family Database, 2011).
Maternal employment rates, age of youngest child 3-5 years	Year 2008 or latest available year. 2007 for Sweden; 2006 for Mexico and Switzerland; 2005 for Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the United States; 2002 for Iceland; 2001 for Canada; 1999 for Denmark. For 3-5 years, data for Australia and Iceland refer to mothers with a youngest child aged less than 5.	European Labour Force Surveys (2007-08) for EU countries; Australia: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2005); Canada: Statistics Canada (2001); Denmark: Statistics Denmark (1999); Iceland: Statistics Iceland (2002 for women age 25-54); Japan: Japanese national census (2005); Mexico: Encuesta Nacional de la Dinamica Demografica 2006; Switzerland: Swiss LFS (2006); United States: US Current population survey (2005). (OECD Family Database, 2011).

Table E.2. Spider web methodological notes and data sources: Policy inputs

Indicator	Notes	Source
Public child care and education expenditure at age 3 (% of median working-age household income)	Year 2007.	OECD (2011), *Doing Better for Families*, OECD Publishing.
Public child care and education expenditure at age 5 (% of median working-age household income)	Year 2007.	OECD (2011), *Doing Better for Families*, OECD Publishing.
Public spending on family benefits in cash and tax measures	Year 2007. Public support accounted here only concerns public support that is exclusively for families (*e.g.*, child payments and allowances, parental leave benefits and child care support). Spending recorded in other social policy areas as health and housing support). Spending recorded in other social policy areas as health and housing support also assists families, but not exclusively, and is not included here. Tax breaks towards families not available for Chile, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Israel and Slovenia.	Social Expenditure Database (www.oecd.org/els/social/expenditure), 2010, and ESSPROS, 2010. (OECD Family database, 2011).
FTE (Full Time Equivalent) paid maternity leave	Year 2007/08.	Moss, P. and M. Korintus (2008), International Review of leave Policies and related research, DTI Employment Relations Research Series, No. 100; Missoc tables: Social Protection in EU Member States; OECD Babies and Bosses (various issues) or information provided by National authorities in non EU countries. (OECD Family database, 2011).
FTE unpaid maternity leave	Year 2007/08.	Moss, P. and M. Korintus (2008), International Review of leave Policies and related research, DTI Employment Relations Research Series, No. 100; Missoc tables: Social Protection in EU Member States; OECD Babies and Bosses (various issues) or information provided by National authorities in non EU countries. (OECD Family database, 2011).
FTE paid paternity leave	Year 2007/08. Information refers to the entitlement for paternity leave in a strict sense and the father quota included in some parental leave regulations (for example, Finland and Iceland). In Finland, the 7 weeks include 3 weeks of standard paternity leave, plus 2 weeks of parental leave that give rights to additional 2 weeks of paternity leave. The individual is assumed to take 26 weeks of parental leave and a remaining period of 130 weeks of child care leave over which home care allowance can be received.	Moss, P. and M. Korintus (2008), International Review of leave Policies and related research, DTI Employment Relations Research Series, No. 100; Missoc tables: Social Protection in EU Member States; OECD Babies and Bosses (various issues) or information provided by National authorities in non EU countries. (OECD Family database, 2011).

Table E.2. Spider web methodological notes and data sources: Policy inputs (continued)

Indicator	Notes	Source
FTE unpaid paternity leave	Year 2007/08.	Moss, P. and M. Korintus (2008), International Review of leave Policies and related research, DTI Employment Relations Research Series, No. 100; Missoc tables: Social Protection in EU Member States; OECD Babies and Bosses (various issues) or information provided by National authorities in non EU countries. (OECD Family database, 2011).
Staff-to-child ratio in child care for 0-to-3-year-olds / in kindergarten/ preschool services average for 3-to-6-year-olds	Countries who reported averages for staff-child ratio instead of a minimum requirement in the Survey have not been included in the graphs, as averages do not constitute a regulated minimum requirement. When regulated ratios were indicated as maximum number per children per multiple staff members (*e.g.*, 2:15), the number included in the figure has been calculated based on the maximum number of children for one member of staff (*e.g.*, 2:15 has been re-calculated into 1:7.5). The Total Average is based on data for all countries and jurisdictions included in the respective figures.	Source: OECD Network on Early Childhood Education and Care's "Survey for the Quality Toolbox and ECEC Portal", June 2011.

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Quality Matters in Early Childhood Education and Care

UNITED KINGDOM (ENGLAND)

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) can bring a wide range of benefits – for children, parents and society at large. However, these benefits are conditional on "quality". Expanding access to services without attention to quality will not deliver good outcomes for children or long-term productivity benefits for society.

This series of country reports focuses on quality issues. Each report tackles a specific theme that was selected by the country reviewed. These reports suggest strengths and point to areas for further reflection on current policy initiatives.

Contents

Chapter 1. Where does the United Kingdom (England) stand regarding policy outcomes and inputs?

Chapter 2. What does research say?

Chapter 3. Where does the United Kingdom (England) stand compared to other countries?

Chapter 4. What are the challenges and strategies?

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