



Centre for Research in Early Childhood
University College Worcester

THE OECD THEMATIC REVIEW OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE:

BACKGROUND REPORT FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM

TONY BERTRAM
CHRISTINE PASCAL

The United Kingdom has granted the OECD permission to include this document on the OECD Internet Home Page. The views expressed in the document are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the United Kingdom, the OECD or its Member countries. The copyright conditions governing access to information on the OECD Home Page are provided at <http://www.oecd.org/copyr.htm/>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page Number	
Introduction	6	
Section 1: Context		
1.1 Themes from the Historical Roots of the UK ECEC Services.....	7	
1.1.1 The State Sector.....	7	
1.1.2 The Voluntary and Private Sector.....	11	
1.2 Social Constructs of Childhood	14	
1.3 Contextual Facts and Figures	15	
1.3.1 Demographics	15	
1.3.2 Employment.....	17	
1.3.3 The Family: Income and Poverty	18	
1.3.4 Health	19	
1.3.5 Government Spending on Education	20	
Section 2: Current ECEC Provision		21
2.1 Organisational Structure of ECEC Services.....	21	
2.2 Current Forms of ECEC Services	22	
2.2.1 Provision for Birth - 3's	26	
2.2.2 Provision for 3 - 5's.....	29	
2.3 Current Staffing of Early Childhood Services	38	
2.3.1 Early Years Workers.....	38	
2.3.2 Salaries and Conditions of Work.....	40	
Section 3: Policy Concerns 30		
3.1 Government Priorities and the Case for Investment	42	
3.2 Current Themes in Government Policy.....	43	
3.2.1 Child Poverty	43	
3.2.2 The World of Work	43	
3.2.3 The Health of the Nation	44	
3.2.4 Social Exclusion	44	

3.2.5	Raising Standards	44
3.2.6	Underachievement.....	45
3.2.7	Life Long Learning.....	46
3.2.8	'Joined Up Thinking' and Integration of Services	46
3.3	Expansion, Integration and Reconfiguration.....	46
3.4	Access	47
3.4.1	Improved Access to Information	47
3.4.2	Equality of Access for Children from Ethnic Minorities.....	47
3.4.3	Equality of Access for Children With Special Needs.....	48
3.4.4	Equality of Access for Rural Areas	48
3.4.5	Affordability	49
3.5	Quality.....	50
3.5.1	The Need for Quality Improvement.....	50
3.5.2	Enhancing the Quality of Early Years Staff	50
3.5.3	Developing Regulation and Inspection Systems	51
3.5.4	Developing Curriculum Frameworks	51
3.6	Parental Partnership and Parental Choice	51
3.7	Decentralisation and Modernisation of Local Government	52
3.8	Cost Effectiveness and Value for Money.....	52
Section 4: Policy Approaches.....		53
4.1	Developing an Integrated Approach	53
4.2	Working in Partnership: The Development of Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships	54
4.3	Approach to Expansion	55
4.3.1	The Early Education System	55
4.3.2	The National Childcare Strategy	56
4.4	An Integrated Approach to Service Delivery.....	58
4.4.1	The Sure Start Programme.....	58
4.4.2	The Early Excellence Centres Programme	59
4.4.3	Out of School Childcare	60
4.4.4	Education Action Zones	61
4.4.5	Health Action Zones	61
4.4.6	Regeneration Programmes.....	62
4.4.7	Prevention of, and Support for, Teenage Pregnancy	62
4.5	Approaches to Quality Assurance, Improvement and Accountability	62
4.5.1	Developments in National Regulation including the Inspection Framework	63
4.5.2	Local Implementation of Quality Assurance, Improvement and Accountability Framework.....	65

4.6	Approaches to Staffing, Qualifications and Training.....	67
4.6.1	Changes in Staffing Requirements	67
4.6.2	The Encouragement of Lifelong Learning.....	68
4.6.3	Developments in Early Childhood Qualifications and Training (excluding teacher training)	70
4.6.4	Developments in Teacher Education and Employment.....	71
4.6.5	Anti-Racist Training	73
4.6.6	Developments in Terms and Conditions.....	73
4.6.7	Enhancing Practitioner Recruitment and Retention.....	73
4.7	Approaches to the Early Childhood Curriculum.....	74
4.7.1	The Early Learning Goals and Foundation Stage Curriculum.....	74
4.7.2	National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy.....	76
4.8	Approaches to Family Oriented Policy	76
4.8.1	Family Friendly Employment.....	76
4.8.2	Family Literacy Strategy	77
4.8.3	Parental Involvement and Choice in Education and Childcare.....	77
4.9	Funding and Financing ECEC Services	78
4.9.1	Early Education Funding Mechanisms for Four Year Olds.....	78
4.9.2	Early Education Funding Mechanisms for Three Year Olds.....	80
4.9.3	Childcare Funding	80
4.9.4	Funding for Training.....	81
4.9.5	The Introduction of the Working Families Tax Credit.....	81
Section 5: Research and Evaluation		83
5.1	Priorities in Research and Evaluation	83
5.1.1	Debate on Applications of Educational Research.....	83
5.1.2	Government Funded Research and Evaluation.....	84
5.1.3	Review Systems for Research	85
5.1.4	Government Statistics as Sources of Information.....	86
5.1.5	Use of Inspection Evidence	87
5.1.6	Use of Audit Commission Evidence.....	88
5.1.7	Local Childcare Audits	88
5.1.8	Practitioner Research	88
5.1.9	Current Priorities for ECEC Research	89
5.2	Funding of Research and Evaluation	89
5.2.1	Funding Sources	89
5.2.2	Funding Levels	90
5.3	Innovative Approaches to Research and Evaluation.....	91
5.4	Significant Research and Evaluation Projects.....	91
5.4.1	Exemplar Past Research and Development Projects	92

5.4.2	Exemplar Current Research and Evaluation Projects	92
Section 6: Concluding Comments		95
6.1	Integrated Services for Children and Families	95
6.2	Development of Services for Birth - 3s.....	95
6.3	Development of Quality	96
6.4	Staffing.....	96
6.5	Increasing Equality of Access	97
6.6	Articulation of Preschool and School	97
6.7	Research and Coordination of Research	97
References		99

INTRODUCTION

This document, commissioned by the DfEE for the OECD Thematic Review, looks at early childhood education and care (ECEC) in the United Kingdom at a time when significant developments in those services are occurring. Current policy emphasises the coordination of action across Government departments, a process referred to as 'joined up thinking'. New Government initiatives in ECEC are attempting to redress an historically divided system and move towards more integrated service delivery and partnership between providers.

There has been UK Government legislation related to provision for young children since the middle of the last century, but until recently this legislation has been spasmodic. Over time, the absence of a nationally coordinated ECEC policy had created a wide range of different systems of provision under different authorities and regulations. This diversity and complexity has made concise explanations to an international audience not familiar with the UK ECEC system challenging for the authors.

But it is not only the description of an historically complex system which has been difficult to outline. In the last two years the UK Government has sought to remedy the inherited situation with a substantial and unprecedented range of policy initiatives. In the midst of these new and rapid changes, the compilers of this review have attempted to capture their width, significance and impact.

There is one other complexity in describing current UK provision. The component elements of the United Kingdom - England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland - are each developing slightly different systems for ECEC, a process which will gain greater impetus from the recent measures devolving greater political autonomy. In this document, the authors have focused primarily on the English system and have attempted to show where and how there are differences in the other countries and province which make up the UK including evidence on Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland where appropriate.

Section 1 of this report gives a contextual overview of the historical evolution of UK ECEC services, the social constructs of childhood and relevant demographic, economic and social data. Section 2 describes the current range of UK ECEC provision. Sections 3 and 4 focus on current Government policy concerns and new policy approaches and initiatives. The role and status of research and evaluation in the development of ECEC is outlined in Section 5. Finally, in Section 6, some concluding assessments are offered.

Within this structure the themes suggested by the OECD secretariat are followed, but sometimes a particular theme may be embedded in several different sections of the document. The authors have tried to make the general themes explicit and the issues raised in the conclusions underline this.

We would like to acknowledge all who have contributed to the compilation of this document, in particular, Professor Peter Moss of the Thomas Coram Research Unit and our colleague Michael Gasper.

SECTION 1: CONTEXT

1.1 Themes from the Historical Roots of UK ECEC Services

Describing, for the purposes of this review, the historical emergence of UK ECEC has been very challenging, characterised as it is by diversity and fragmentation over a long period. To put a coherent and easily accessible framework on what has been a very complex, evolutionary process presents issues of accuracy and representation. This section therefore attempts to show how each of the major providers of ECEC in the UK (the State, the Voluntary or Community and the Private Sectors) expanded over time to meet the changing needs of families and children. At the end of this historical narrative, emerging themes, which continue to inform the debate today, will be highlighted.

1.1.1 The State Sector

Beginnings

The first UK Government grant ever made for free education provision was by the republican puritans who, in 1649, set up 60 primary schools in Wales ‘for better propagation and preaching of the Gospel’. The restoration of the monarchy put an end to such attempts at public provision and until 1833 all these kinds of educational establishment were maintained wholly by voluntary effort.

Traditionally, most early childhood services in the United Kingdom were divided into ‘care-focused’ or ‘education-focused’ settings. This conceptualisation has, until very recently, underpinned the development of quite differing and separate systems of funding, provider responsibilities, setting type, admission, programmes, regulation, inspection, staffing and training. Yet, surprisingly, historical overviews in the literature of both the childcare and early childhood education systems trace their origins to the same point, ‘The Institution for the Formation of Character’ established in New Lanark in Scotland in 1816 by a Welshman called Robert Owen. As a starting point to discuss themes which emerge from the past and which still have relevance today, Owen provides a useful base.

Owen represented not only the beginnings of the UK infant and nursery school movement, but also, as a paternalistic industrialist, he recognised the need to support families in order that he, and they, might benefit from their ability to focus on their work knowing their children were receiving high quality care and education. He was also conscious of the wider implications of what he sought to achieve within his community and, as founder of the Cooperative Movement, clearly saw the importance of ECEC as an essential element in developing an interventionist, compensatory and inclusionary strategy for society.

"The Institution has been devised to afford the means of receiving your children at an early age, as soon almost as they can walk. By this means many of you, mothers of families, will be able to earn a better maintenance or support for your children; you will have less care and anxiety about them;

while the children will be prevented from acquiring any bad habits, and gradually prepared to learn the best"

Owen, 1927, p. 98

His relevance to some of themes in the current UK debate is seen in Scarr (1998), who speaks of the dilemma of ECEC as being rooted in three, sometimes conflicting, purposes. Firstly, she suggests, it aims to support maternal employment; secondly, it aims to enhance children's development; and thirdly, it aims to intervene with the economically disadvantaged and ethnic minority children to socialise them into mainstream.

Owen's ideas, as interpreted by Samuel Wilderspin, were promoted through the 'Infant School Society' spreading infant schools throughout the UK. In 1836 John Reynolds founded with Charles Mayo, the 'Home and Colonial Infant School Society'. Owen had strong views on what he considered to be an appropriate curriculum for young children. The principles of Pestalozzi, Froebel, Steiner and Montessori, later, were also influential providing a widening base of UK professional knowledge. But at the same time, the industrialisation of education, begun through Lancaster's method of instruction to tiered ranks of pupils within a monitorial system, began to undermine the focus on the development of the individual child by developing strategies for the mass transmission of knowledge. The continuing debate on what form the curriculum for young children should take is a key theme in an historical perspective of UK ECEC. It was present long before the Plowden Report (1964) attempted to interpret Piaget's research by championing child-centred methods. One of the most recent Government policy initiatives (QCA, 1999) has attempted to address this long standing issue by defining a 'Foundation Stage' for children aged three through to the end of their reception year.

Admission to free and compulsory state education was set at 5 years of age in 1870 when Forster's Bill (Education Act, 1870) was adopted as law. The decision to admit children into school at the age of five impacted on the way other forms of ECEC provision developed. Thereafter, children over five were compulsorily educated, initially at minimal cost to parents, into full time provision within the public school system administered by the local authorities. Almost immediately, children under five and as young as 2 years of age, began to be admitted to state schools, especially where the employment of women was essential to the local economy. For example, in the glove factories and market gardens of Worcester, the lace manufacturers of Nottingham or the cotton mills of Lancashire. From the beginning, local authorities had the right to temporarily waive implementation of the statutory admissions policy where it suited local need and to try other forms of provision. This gave rise wide variations in admission and to local innovations in provision for under fives, many of which were interventionist.

In 1873, the first free kindergarten, following the ideas of Froebel, was established by a local authority in Salford and, as well as nursery education, it offered baths, meals, rest, play and parental training, a targeted intervention strategy by concerned aldermen in an industrial slum. Others local authorities followed in the industrial cities of the Midlands and Northern Britain, Birmingham establishing a kindergarten in 1904. But the dominant form of provision was still the state primary school. By 1901, school registers show that

43% of three year olds in England and Wales were on roll (Cohen & Fraser, 1991). In 1905, the Inspectorate (HMI begun in the 1840's but by the 1900's commissioning women for the first time) expressed concern at the rigidity of the curriculum being offered to these very young children in primary school, many of whom were subject to Lancaster's 'industrialised', school system operating mainly in large economic units through a passive, instructional, peer-monitorial organisation. On their recommendation, children under five were specifically excluded from school and by 1919 the numbers of three year olds within the primary school system were reduced to 17%. The 1905, HMI report brought about change in admission policies but did not eradicate early admission to formal schooling. The historical theme of what type of setting best provides for young children and the concern over 'too early admission to formal schooling' is still debated in the UK.

The Impact of the War Years

The First World War (1914-18) gave considerable impetus to the development of public involvement in day care provision adding over 100 day care centres outside the formal schooling system across the country. At the end of the War, local health authorities were given legal powers to make provision for day nurseries or to assist voluntarily established nurseries. This initiative effectively marks the beginning of the separate development of care, health and education in preschool services which still affects the integration of services in the UK today. The 1918 Education Act allowed local authorities to establish nursery schools but these powers were not extensively used by either of the two existing providers, health and education departments within local authorities. By 1930, across the country, there were only 4000 places in public day nurseries and 9500 in educational nurseries, and much larger numbers in the primary school system despite the 1919 recommendations. In the years between the Wars, the McMillan sisters in Yorkshire and Deptford, the psychologist Susan Isaacs and her husband in the Maltings, and other notable 'Grande Dames' of UK ECEC, all championed the concept of nursery education as separate and distinct from schooling.

The Second World War (1939-45) gave another huge impetus to the creation of provision for young children through women being recruited to work on the land and in industry to replace men drawn into the Armed Services. The Ministry of Labour proposed more extensive childcare and family friendly policies such as shopping leave, canteens in factories, an expanded school meals service and part time job sharing. Northern Ireland and Scotland had similar schemes.

The Post War Years

By the end of the War there were 62,000 nursery places in England and Wales, more than double the number, in fact, that were to be available forty years later (Cohen, 1989). Even before the War ended, nurseries began to close as the Government encouraged women to return to the 'hearth and home'. Free state provision for preschool ECEC fell away sharply. Where funding was retained, its administrative allocation to Education or Health departments was decided locally, further extending the multiplicity and variety of type of provision, conditions of service for employees, their level of training and such like. Social Service Departments, created in local authorities in the early 1970's, offered another form of

provision, usually catering for children deemed to be 'at risk' in some way. The Health Service tended to focus on those who were in need of special education, especially disability. Education had what was left. By 1960, only a third of the number of nurseries existing at the end of the War, still remained open. Bowlby's conceptualisation of maternal attachment added reinforcement to the traditionalist view that a women's place was in the home. The Plowden Report (1964), a report on primary and nursery education, stated that nursery provision should not be made available to women who simply wanted to go out to work but should be reserved for those who were most in need of interventionist support and the children of teachers, (there was a crisis in teacher recruitment at the time). The State began to support the direct costs of child rearing after the War through the introduction of a tax-financed system of family allowances. This in turn was replaced in 1975 by a Child Benefit paid mostly to children's mothers. Female employment began to rise in the late 1950's, although as late as 1968 a Ministry of Health circular recommended that the priority for public places in their nurseries should be given to children either with one parent, 'who has no option but to go out to work', or those with health and social welfare needs but not for those mothers who simply wished to work. In line with Bowlby's attachment theory, the Plowden Report recommended that provision of nursery should be part time rather than full time because of the 'dangers of allowing children to attend a nursery school or class at too early an age for too long a period each day'. Yet as Cohen et al. (1991) comment,

"Ironically, until 1980 there were more three and four year olds within infant classes of primary schools (in general in large classes and with less appropriate curriculum than in nursery education) than there were in nursery education"

Cohen and Fraser, 1991, p. 3

Part time provision, either morning or afternoon, became the predominant form of state preschool settings and increased the debate about whether provision should meet the child's needs or those of the child's parents and carers and their employers, where these needs were seen to be in conflict.

By 1972 UK Governments were becoming more aware of ECEC issues. The Minister of Education promised a huge expansion of free, state nursery provision, but the reality of the mid-seventies oil crisis and the subsequent climate of economic rationalism mitigated against it. In 1980, the Government removed the duty on local authorities to provide for nursery education making it discretionary, a measure which had little practical effect on the expansion of provision for the under fives as by this time most local authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland were admitting some four year olds, full time, into reception classes in schools and gaps in the provision for younger children were increasingly being met by the voluntary and private sector. In some areas, local authority day nurseries began to decline as 'family centres' combining education, care and health began to emerge during the eighties. But as late as 1988, a memorandum submitted by the Department of Health and Social Security to the House of Commons Education, Science and Arts Committee, 29th June said,

"The Government believe that in the first instance it is the responsibility of the parents to make arrangements, including financial arrangements, for the day care of preschool children".

1.1.2 The Voluntary and Private Sector

Private Sector Provision

Before Owen's free nursery school there existed endowed charity elementary schools and some benevolent foundations for certain groups, for example, the sons of the clergy, of Guild workers or of the military, and for some favoured poor parishes. Many of these private or parochial foundations were exclusively for boys and many were endowed with a strong religious element. Others, such as the Thomas Coram Foundation (1739), were of an interventionist nature supporting 'poor children of the parish', 'foundlings' and hospitals. The Reports of the Charity Commissioners (1818-43) list at least 460 such establishments as existing before 1698.

As late as the 1950's there was very little voluntary or private sector ECEC provision. Children who were not old enough to be in the state school system and whose parents went out to work and were unable to afford a 'pre-preparatory' school attached to a private sector Junior school, a nanny or an au pair were looked after by minders, friends or relatives. This situation changed rapidly as mothers throughout the 1960's and 1970's moved into the work force. In the private sector expansion of day nurseries was very rapid in the 1980's, increasing by 203% over period 1985 to 1991, when it provided 76,000 places. Private Day Nurseries offer parents and carers who can pay, full day care and education for children from birth to age five, although predominately for the under three year olds.

The Voluntary and Community Sector

Because no cheap alternatives existed, parents, especially women, developed local voluntary and community provision to meet their needs. Over time these locally based solutions began to organise and eventually became formalised national charities recognised and supported, in part, by Government grants. The largest of these 'voluntary' and community sector umbrella groups are the Preschool Learning Alliance (PLA), formerly called the Preschool Playgroup Association (PPA), and the National Childminders Association (NCMA). These umbrella organisations do not represent every provider within this sector and most of their members are no longer voluntary providers.

Preschool Learning Alliance

The PPA/PLA began as a self help organisation for women in the late 1950's in England. It originated 'as a stopgap measure - until adequate nursery schooling was provided' but increasingly began to view itself as 'a permanent part of the preschool scene' (Brophy et al., 1992), 'not as a cheap substitute for nursery education but a valid alternative in their own right' (PPA 1989, p. 60). In 1987, two thirds of PPA settings were managed by community or church groups and about a third were privately run. Most playgroups are described as 'sessional' (offering half day or less) and 'occasional' (not operating for all the days in the week or in school holidays) but many, especially the commercial organisations, offer full extended day and holiday provision. The original conception of 'play' as the central part of the curriculum has also developed. 'Some of the learning which goes on in playgroups forms the essential basis for later studies in school and beyond.. and are closely related to the subjects of the National Curriculum', (PPA 1991, p. 5).

The PPA's change of name to Preschool Learning Alliance (PLA) suggests a development in curriculum priorities.

By 1972 in the English PPA, there were 263,000 places (mostly for three and four year olds) in 10,600 sessional playgroups. Between 1972 and 1980 there was a further 38% growth in numbers. During the 1980's the numbers increased by a further 12% but during the 1990's the numbers of four year olds in Preschool/Playgroup settings began to slowly decline. A falling birth rate, an increase in alternative provision both public and private, and increasingly through the 1980's and 1990's, the early admission of non-statutory aged children into schools accounted for much of this decline. A further contributory factor was the introduction of the 1996 Nursery Voucher Scheme (now replaced by local planning of provision) which gave all parents and carers the right to purchase part time 'nursery' provision for their four year olds through the distribution to parents of a nursery voucher. The intention was to bring a market economy to the sector and to support parental choice. However, following the vouchers' introduction, more 4 year old children were admitted to state primary schools. The Preschool Learning Alliance (PLA) suggest that as more four year olds were removed from their registers, the greater adult/child ratios for the remaining younger children made financial viability for some of their settings more insecure. A recent survey of preschool playgroups by the DfEE (1999) suggests preschool playgroup numbers (as opposed to places) have fallen from a peak of 18,000 in 1991 to 15,000 in 1999. The PLA is still the largest provider of places for 3 year olds and most playgroups now employ paid workers and offer staff a structured training programme and have lost their voluntary status.

As a provider of accessible and cheap places especially for three year olds, the voluntary sector and private sector make a large contribution to UK services for preschool children, although PLA geographical distribution is not even and it is under represented in the inner cities and urban areas, particularly in the north of England. Moss' survey suggested that in 1987 more than half of all UK three year olds were in PLA settings and about a fifth of two year olds (Moss et al, 1987). But this is changing. In England in 1999 Prior et al estimated about 59% of provision for three year and four year olds was within the State maintained sector, about 30% was within the private sector (including some for-profit PLA) and only about 9% of registered places was in the voluntary community sector, mostly non-profit voluntary preschools and playgroups (some of whom will not be within the PLA). The PLA was instrumental in developing other forms of provision for under threes. A small number of PLA settings also began to take children from birth. As an umbrella group, the Scottish PPA is not as strong as its English equivalent and numbers of Scottish voluntary providers within the SPPA are falling.

A recent Government appointed review panel (DfEE, 1999) recognised the importance of the voluntary preschool/playgroup sector in its overall future strategy and advised on how provision by this sector might be further developed.

Childminding

Centre based services for the under threes remain scarce in UK ECEC. The largest provider for this age are the home based Childminders, although recent figures suggest this is declining. Parental demand for some form of affordable preschool provision from the early eighties onwards was matched by the growth of childminders. The 1948 Childminders and Nurseries Regulation Act (subsequently amended by the Health Services and Public Health Act, 1968) attempted to meet concerns expressed publicly following some high profile cases of neglect of children by women who were being recruited to work in the post-War export drive and recovery boom. Low safety standards, conditions and practices were also matters of concern. The Act required childminders and other forms of Nursery provision (anyone with paid responsibility for caring for young children for more than two hours a day) to register with local authorities usually with a LA Health Visitor. In the early 1970's the new Social Service departments in local authorities took over the role of registering childminders and some LAs began to employ specialists who not only registered childminders but organised some training support. A survey of childminders by Brian Jackson was seminal (NCMA, 1998). Jackson recognised that Registered Childminders at their best provided a cost effective, community run service for low paid families and many offered high standards of care but he also showed that for every registered childminder there were 16 unregistered ones, many operating in very poor circumstances. This bad publicity impacted very detrimentally on the public's perception of the emerging movement and the National Childminders Association (NCMA) would claim this remains an issue (NCMA, 1998). In 1977, the BBC ran a series of 19 programmes (Other People's Children) specifically designed to offer training to childminders. The series was accompanied by a booklet from the Health Education Council. The programme encouraged local childminders to network and this led to the formation of the National Childminders Association (NCMA) with support from the BBC, the Equal Opportunities Commission and the van Leer Foundation. The NCMA membership was open to parents, local authority officials and childminders and its membership grew from 10,000 in 1984 to 23,000 in 1987 and over 50,000 in 1994. Similar associations were begun in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The NCMA now receives Government grants (about 15% of their total income), offers training and publications and undertakes annual surveys to produce data on provision for the under threes. It has 12 regional officers, offers cheap insurance rates and financial advice.

Childminding grew to accommodate a need for home based care as a supplement to other services and as the main provider for the under threes. Registered childminding places increased from 1,700 in 1949 to 47,000 in 1968, when the Government gave local authorities powers to provide support for childminders. Between 1985 and 1991, the numbers of registered childminders expanded by a further 81%. Since 1991 the number of childminders has dropped back considerably. It should be noted that there are still an unsurveyed group of unregistered minders. A range of steps, including the Working Families Tax Credit scheme for those who use registered places, should encourage more childminders to register.

Thematic Issues which Emerge from the Historical Development of ECEC

Several ongoing themes emerge from this necessarily quick review of the history of ECEC services in the UK which will be important guides to understanding the new developments in UK policy:

1. The interrelationship between the child, the family and the world of work.
2. The quality of services.
3. The integration of services.
4. The articulation of preschool and school services.
5. The funding of early childhood services.
6. The roles of the state and the private market.

UK ECEC history reveals a system which has emerged as diverse and uncoordinated, expanding rapidly when attempting to meet periods of chronic national need and crisis and waning in other times, and with little cohesive integration of services.

The present Government was elected in May 1997 and brought in a whole range of reforms addressing early childhood, the family and the world of work, and also substantiated investment in ECEC services. This political commitment marks the UK's first fully coordinated attempt to bring all the elements of a disparate and diverse system together for the benefit of children, families, employers and communities.

1.2 Social Constructs of Childhood

Some sociologists suggest that the conceptual frameworks through which we construct our view of our environment are dominated by the discourse in our society at a particular time. If this is accepted we may identify multiple social constructions of childhood in the UK, which change over time. Examination of these constructs indicates that there is no,

"universal child, an essential child, a child objectively knowable irrespective of time or place, context or perspective".

Moss, 1999, p. 235

It is not hard to see that societal constructs of 'childhood' impact significantly and that particular policies and systems flow from adopting a particular perspective. Focused, as it is, on uncovering societal values, attitudes and beliefs, social constructions of childhood are difficult to summarise in a short document. It maybe helpful to list some possible, but not exhaustive, ways in which childhood is, and has been, defined in the UK.

In the short history outlined in Section 1.1, childhood can be seen to be viewed, for example:

- as developing psychologically through a Piagetian preordained sequence: a *developmental perspective*;
- as an investment in a nation's future human capital resources in order to compete against other nations: a *utilitarian perspective*;
- as the focal point for State intervention to develop society in particular ways: a *compensatory perspective*;
- as an immature biological being to be protected in an enriched environment: a *Romantic perspective*;
- as born with original sin which will grow if not disciplined, corrected and controlled: a *Calvanist or Catholic perspective*;
- as an economic handicap either directly because they need upkeep, or because they limit other's opportunities to work: an *economic perspective*;
- as an empty vessel waiting to be filled: a *Jesuit perspective*;
- as the bearer of genes: a *eugenics perspective*;
- as a co-constructor of knowledge and culture: a *social constructivist perspective*;
- as, optimally, maternally attached: a *Bowlbian perspective*;
- as solely the responsibility of parents: *neo liberal perspective*; and
- as a gift from God: a *theological perspective*.

It would not be difficult to find examples of these or other social constructions underpinning many of the actions of policy makers, practitioners, parents and researchers working with young children in the UK. These cultural, social, political, educational, spiritual and economic agendas embrace important issues which are beginning to be debated in the UK as the growing field of the sociology of childhood gains momentum and visibility.

1.3 Contextual Facts and Figures

1.3.1 Demographics

Population Statistics

The 1991 Census Report for Great Britain estimated 54,880,844 people resident in Britain comprising 26,574,954 males and 28,313,890 females.

There were 3,625,382 children under 4 years of age and 3,440,272 children between the ages of 5 and 9 years.

The UK is an ageing society. The birth rate has fallen from 13.5 per thousand population in 1987 to 12.3 in 1997, but people are living longer. Women in the UK have a life expectancy of 78.9 years and men 73.4 years.

Ethnicity

Since the economic immigration of the early sixties, the ethnic mix in UK has changed dramatically. Most of the immigrants came from former parts of the Commonwealth, India (15%), the Caribbean (9.1%), Pakistan (8.7%), Africa (3.8%), Bangladesh (2.9%), Hong Kong (2.8%), or from Mediterranean countries, Italy, Greece, Spain, Greece, Malta, Cyprus and Turkey, and especially from Ireland (15%). Some 6% of Britain's population belong to ethnic minorities. One in fifteen British people is a Muslim. The proportion of ethnic groups is highest (apart from some areas in London) in the West Midlands, where they represent some 15% of the population. There is also a high and increasing percentage of 'mixed' relationships and children who are multi-heritage. Many of the UK's ethnic minorities are localised within particular areas of urban Britain where the work that they sought as economic immigrants was originally located. The demographic patterns of Britain's ethnic minorities is different to that of the base population. The large post-War born, 40-50 year old group of the base population, are not mirrored by the UK's ethnic minorities, who generally have a younger age profile. Thus all ethnic groups in the UK have, at present, a disproportionately larger group of young children than the base population. Three million British people in England and Wales are of ethnic minority origin. Infants of mothers born in Pakistan, the Caribbean or Africa show excess mortality in infancy. Between 1989 and 1991 the perinatal mortality for infants of mothers born in Pakistan was double the rate of mothers born in England and Wales. There is a higher proportion of deaths due to congenital abnormalities in Asian born mothers compared to mothers born in the UK.

Family Patterns

Trends in UK family patterns are similar to other Western nations but there are some patterns which seem more exaggerated in the UK. The 1997, Social Focus on Families Study showed that the majority of children in the UK still grow up in a family with two parents. In 1995/6, this amounted to four out of every five children compared to 1972/3 when nine out of every ten lived in a 'couple' family. Most children are also brought up in a family with other children, but the number of siblings has declined, except in Northern Ireland where children continue to live in larger families. It is now much more common for children to be brought up in lone parent families: in 1972, there were 7% in lone families; in 1996, 20%, the highest figure in Europe.

The average age of partners at their first marriage is getting older:

1987	27.8 years of age
1991	29.1
1996	31.1

The average age of mother at birth of first born is also increasing:

1987	27.1 years
1991	27.7
1996	28.6
1997	28.8

The UK divorce rate is also increasing, often leading to a reduction in income and an increase in dependence on State welfare for the female lone parent. The number of persons divorcing per thousand married population rose from 12.9 in 1986 to 13.8 in 1996. Family dissolution and lone parenthood have increased but so has family 'reconstitution', resulting from a corresponding increase in remarriage. The mean duration of lone parenthood in the UK is now five years. Women's fertility is declining and fewer are marrying. Marriage as a social institution is coming under pressure. The total number of first marriages of both partners fell from 220,372 in 1986 to 160,680 in 1996. The number of children born outside marriage increased from 1987 31.8 per thousand mothers to 40.7 per thousand in 1997.

Contraception and Teenage Pregnancy

From the 1960's onwards access to contraceptives increased for all ages of women. The 1986 General Household Survey showed 25% of 16-17 year old women used contraceptives and the 1989 GHS showed 50% of 16-17 year olds taking advantage of contraceptives. Although the Pill is still the most common method, the use of condoms has increased with the advent of aids and scares about the side effects of the Pill. In 1989, less than 3% of 16-19 year olds had unwanted pregnancies. This level has increased significantly in recent years and England now has the unenviable record in the EU both for unwanted pregnancy amongst teenaged women and for this to occur at an increasingly younger age. In the summer of 1999, two cases of mothers aged twelve highlighted this issue.

1.3.2 Employment

Employment Patterns

The Labour Market Trends for March 1999, reveal that the employment rates for women increase as they get older and that the employment rates for men decrease as they get older. Women with children under five had the highest unemployment rate (9% in work) and those with children aged 11 to 15 had the lowest unemployment rate (47%). Among young women with children the unemployment rate raises to 24%, more than double the rate for those without children. But women remain unemployed for shorter periods than men and they tend not to register as unemployed when looking after children. Of women with dependent children, 59% were looking for work. Of mothers with school age children about 62% are now in some form of paid employment. In the last decade, those mothers whose children were under five and who worked outside the home increased from 32% to 51%. More women have been acquiring qualifications than men and there is a steady movement towards equal pay in full time work. Women are predicted to account for 0.9 million of the projected 1.2 million rise in the labour force over the next 7 years. But only 40% of lone parents work. The Government intends that its new initiatives will push this up to 80%. The expansion of ECEC services is a necessary condition for this to happen. Four out of five non-working mothers say they would work if they had childcare of their choice. Currently, many working mothers depend for part of their working day on unregulated, informal care provided by their partner or by elder siblings (predominantly elder sisters).

Fathers in the UK have less access to their children compared to their EU equivalents. British men work longer hours, have less holidays and do more overtime than others within the EU. Males with children under 10 years of age work 47 hours per week, high in compared with the EU average.

Shift workers

A reducing number of UK employees work a 'standard' 9am-5pm, 40 hour week and formal childcare provision must therefore expand to meet the needs of shift and long hours workers. Shift work is a particular feature of the UK labour market which for parents of dependent children, demands new solutions. Many parents, especially mothers, have jobs with non-standard hours. Currently many employees working evenings, early mornings or weekends and who have children, have to look to informal or unregulated childcare arrangements. The proportion of women in full time work has changed relatively little in the UK during the 20th Century. The major change has been the increase in part time work. This increase has been almost entirely amongst married women with dependent children, who have returned to paid part time work between and after child bearing. Male employment shows no such patterns. Many married women prefer to work part time.

Susan Harkness has data on length of hours worked in her forthcoming 'The State of Working Britain'. She reports that in 1998 some 84% of men and 45% of women worked more than 40 hours per week and that 30% of men and 10% of women worked more than 50 hours, compared with 24% for men and 4% for women in 1988. The impact on young families is even greater, one third of all men with families worked for more than 50 hours compared with a quarter ten years ago. Mothers worked 27 hours a week in 1988 and now work 33 hour per week. The number of mothers working more than 50 hours per week has risen from 3% to 7 % over the same ten year period. One in five mothers now works in the evening.

1.3.3 The Family: Income and Poverty

Income Levels

1997-98 figures for disposable income indicate the lowest average is in north east England at £285 per week and Wales at £295 per week, and the highest is in south east England at £409 per week and in London at £394.

These figures demonstrate that although the UK economy is strengthening, this is not benefiting equally across the UK. The expression 'two speed economy' refers to the differential rate of growth in the different regions of the country and also between socioeconomic strata. The eight southern counties of England from Kent to Oxfordshire have very low unemployment, rapidly rising house values, have economic and population growth and many new jobs, especially in the service industries such as supermarkets and call centres. For the south west and northern regions, however, wages remain low, their manufacturing industry continues to decline, there is high unemployment and the population is falling as people move to other more economically viable regions. However, this 'North/South Divide' whilst generally true and increasing, is too simplistic. There are islands of prosperity in the north and islands of recession in the south. For example, Greater London (with a population of nearly 9 million) has some of the country's most

deprived boroughs). It is worth remembering that the regions of the UK are not insignificant in size. The West Midlands area, once the heartland of the UK's manufacturing strength has a population (over 7 million) greater than Scotland, or Wales or Northern Ireland. Birmingham LEA, based in the UK's second largest city, has responsibility for the largest number of children of any LEA in the country.

Scotland presents a different picture. Since 1970's, income per head in Scotland has risen from being well below to being level with the British average. The north east, for example, used to have a similar income per head as Scotland but is now below Scotland's average. It may be that the newly designated regeneration areas, the Regional Development Agencies, will address these issues, looking at such matters as coordinating investment and improving transport. They will also be able to access EU regional grants.

The Family Credit Support Quarterly Statistical Tables reveal a continuing growth in family benefit take up because of the continuing increase in lone parent families. In contrast, the number of family couples receiving benefit has fallen over the same period. However, in 1998 there was a record number of lone parents in work with family credit and it is possible that this increase in productivity may help offset child care costs especially when the new child care tax credit becomes established.

A distinguishing feature of UK society is its division by disparity in income. The Treasury Inquiry of 1998 revealed that as many as one in three children (4.3 million) are living in households with less than half the average income in the UK compared with one in ten in 1968. Incomes in the top bracket have double and those in the lowest 20% of the population have risen by only 15%. Families with children in the UK make up a disproportionate share of the lowest income quartiles. Children are more likely to be found at the bottom of the income distribution in 1995/6 than in 1997, mainly because the proportion of children to be found living in one parent families has increased and these tend to have lower income and because children are increasingly found in workless families. In 1979, 9% of children lived without a working parent but in 1995 that had risen to 23%. As Chancellor Gordon Brown said,

"The major determining factor in child poverty has been, for the last 20 years, unemployment and the lack of job opportunities. The two great difficulties have been the lack of work and low paying work."

Following the Treasury Inquiry, the Prime Minister, Tony Blair pledged to eradicate child poverty within twenty years. The programmes for this change include 'welfare to work', increasing child benefit and the introduction of the Working Families Tax Credit.

1.3.4 Health

Infant Mortality Rates

The 1970's and 1980's saw a decline in still births and infant mortality fell by 58% in England and Wales. There was also a decline in child mortality for 1-14 year olds by 14%. The rates varied according to social class, geographical area and socio-economic status. Boys were more likely to die than girls at all ages.

There were similar declines in infant mortality and still births in Scotland and Northern Ireland paralleling all EU countries. A child in the unskilled manual labour social class is twice as likely to die before the age of 19 compared with a child in the highest social class. A child in the lowest social class is five times more likely to die from an accident as a child in the highest social class.

Birth Weight

Birth Weight is a marker of growth in utero and is associated with subsequent growth and adult height. It is the most powerful predictor of infant survival and is strongly related to morbidity. It is an indicator of children's likely physical development and long term health. It is therefore one of the most valuable indicators of a nation's health currently available. The proportion of live births over 3,500 grams in England is 39.4% and in Wales is 40.7%. Between 1975 and 1983 levels of birth weight rose steadily in England and Wales. Between 1983 and 1991, the proportion of low birth weight babies increased from 0.84% of all live births in 1983 to 0.93% in 1991 (Power, 1992). Some of this increase in low weight babies may be explained by more multiple births and better survival of low weight babies but it also correlates with the social class of the mother. Overall, increases in mean birth weight are evident in all social classes in the UK but British African Caribbean children show no mean gain.

Child Abuse and Neglect

National data from the LEA's Child Protection Registers in England shows an increase in those who are abused: 1989, 41,200; 1990, 43,600; 1991 45,300 (although this increase may be due to better records of abused cases). Children under five were more likely to be included than any other age group, indicating that early identification was effective. Neglect, physical, sexual and emotional abuse declined over the period and the expansion of numbers came from the category 'giving rise to grave concern'. This 'grave concern' category includes those children whose carers are suspected of abuse or neglect. In 1991 four in every thousand children under 18 were on the Child Protection Register. Government policy in this area is beginning to have an impact and recent figures demonstrate a decline in these numbers.

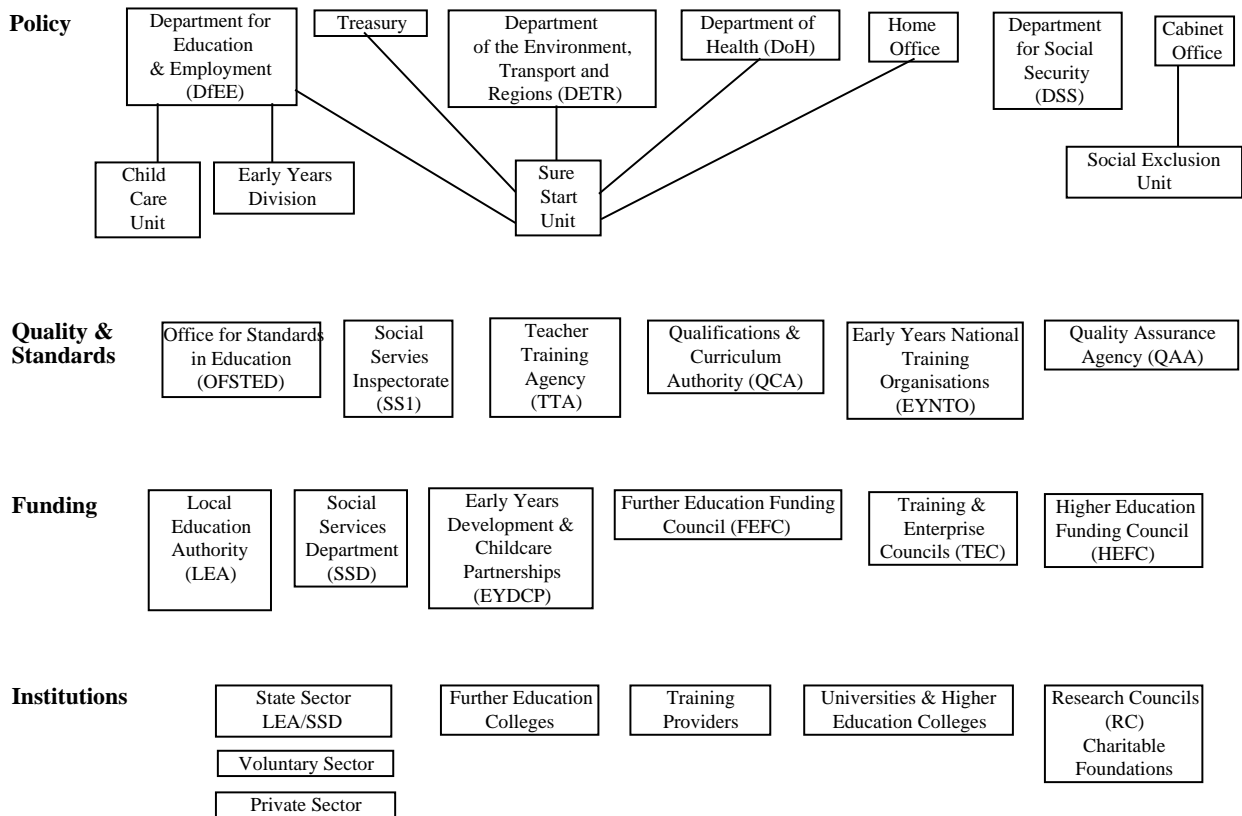
1.3.5 Government Spending on Education

The summary of 'DfEE Cash Plans: 1997-98 to 2001-02' shows that spending on education, training and employment (DfEE and OFSTED) will increase in total from £14,533 million in 1997-98 to £18,916 million in 2001-2002. Within that budget, total central government spending will increase from £12,169 million to £16,617 million and local government spending from £18,367 million to £22,940 million. The DfEE Departmental Report indicates that spending on Under Fives will increase from £1,312 million in 1993-94 to £1,692 million in 1998-9 in local authorities. Supporting provision for three year olds will be begun from a zero base with £40 million in 1999. Sure Start received £3 million in 1998 and a further £81 million in 1999. Class sizes will be reduced in primary schools at a cost of £160 million in 1999. Early years and schools are to receive £2,044 million in 1999-2000 compared to £926 million in 1995-6. These large increases in expenditure underline the current UK Government's commitment to education and early childhood education and care.

SECTION 2: CURRENT ECEC PROVISION

2.1 Organisational Structure of ECEC Services

Figure 1: Organisational Structure of ECEC (England)



2.2 Current Forms of ECEC Services

This section will outline the various forms of early childhood education and care for young children which currently operate in the UK. The overarching characteristic of UK ECEC is its diversity and complexity. As explained in section 1.1, this diversity is the result of the historical evolution of the services, which have developed over time with no overall national or comprehensive strategy. This description of current ECEC services details provision for the age phase from birth to 5 years of age, the age of compulsory entrance to school, but a brief overview of provision following compulsory entrance to the school system is also provided to give information about the articulation between the preschool and school systems.

The dividing line of 5 years, adopted in this report, reflects the age of compulsory schooling in England and Wales, which is earlier than in most other European countries. From the term following their fifth birthday, a child would normally be catered for in full time, state or private, primary education, which would usually provide a nine to four, all day session during the academic school year. Approximately 90% of children in England and Wales go to publicly funded primary schools, known as state maintained schools, and 6% are educated in private schools. The admission of children to school varies between local authorities and schools, with some schools offering a single annual admission, to others who have three termly intakes a year. The arrangements in Scotland for school starting age are slightly different, with only one intake per year at the beginning of the winter term. Children born between March and August must start school in the year in which they become five. Children born between September and February start school at age four but can defer entry into primary school by one year. In Northern Ireland the age of compulsory schooling is four, and schools tend to have a single annual intake.

The Primary School System (4+ to 11 years)

A child of compulsory school age must enter the primary school system. Within the primary school system in England and Wales there is a wide range of provision. At present there are a number of different categories of schools:

- **county schools** are wholly owned and maintained by local education authorities (LEAs).
- **voluntary schools** (voluntary aided schools, voluntary controlled schools and special agreement schools) are provided by voluntary bodies, the majority of which are churches or bodies associated with churches. They too are financed and maintained by LEAs but the assets of the schools are held and administered by trustees.
- **foundation schools** are funded by central government but run independently from the LEA.
- **special schools** are provided by LEAs for certain children with special educational needs, though the great majority are educated in ordinary schools.
- **private and independent schools** are not funded by the state and obtain most of their finances from fees paid by parents and income from investments. Some of the larger independent schools are

known as public schools. They look after their own day to day affairs but all are subject to inspection to ensure they maintain acceptable standards of premises, accommodation and instruction.

All state primary schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland must conform to the National Curriculum once the children have reached the end of their Reception year (q.v. Section 4). This sets out what subjects pupils must study and what standards they should achieve. The National Curriculum ensures that pupils cover a broad and balanced range of subjects that help them to develop the qualities and skills needed in adult and working life. The period of primary education is divided into two key stages, depending on pupil age:

Key Stage 1: pupils aged 5 to 7 years;

Key Stage 2: pupils aged 7 to 11 years.

Pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2 study English, mathematics, science, design and technology, history, geography, art, music and physical education. For each subject, at each key stage, Programmes of Study set out what pupils should be taught, with Attainment Targets setting out the expected standards of pupils' performance. From September 1998, the primary curriculum in England and Wales was modified to concentrate on the teaching of literacy and numeracy. The other key stage subjects continue to be taught.

In Wales, the teaching of Welsh is part of the curriculum. In Northern Ireland the curriculum is made up of religious education and six broad areas of study: English, mathematics, science and technology, environment, society and creative studies. It also includes six compulsory cross-curricular themes: education for mutual understanding, cultural heritage, health education, information technology, economic awareness and careers education. In Scotland the curriculum in state schools is not prescribed by statute. Instead, the Secretary of State issues national advice and guidance to schools and Scottish local authorities. Religious education in England and Wales is not prescribed nationally as part of the curriculum but is decided locally.

All pupils in state schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland have regular assessments to check their progress under the National Curriculum. Towards the end of each of the key stages children are assessed in English, mathematics and science against the attainment targets through teacher assessments and nationally designed tests. In Scotland, there is provision for teachers to undertake regular assessment of pupils in schools to confirm their progression through the five levels (A-E) of the Scottish 5 - 14 Development Programme, and identify any weaknesses. In English and mathematics pupils sit national tests when teachers consider that they have achieved each of the five levels of the Programme.

Responsibility for out of school care and holiday care for the over 5s across the UK has, until recently, been left to parents. Thus, education and care services for 5 - 8 year olds are comparatively more straightforward than education and care services for the under 5s. Education for the majority of children from the age of 5 years is catered for in the primary school system, with a range of differing childcare arrangements that 'wrap around' their school based education. This can be provided for by an out of school or holiday club, childminders, parents and relatives, friends or older siblings.

Pre-Primary Provision (birth to 4+ years)

The following brief description of existing early childhood services will focus on children from birth to 4+ years, and inevitably reflects the historical split between education and care which has characterised UK early childhood services until recently. It will be divided into two parts: services for the birth - 3 year olds and services for the 3 - 5 year olds, as these differ in nature and take up. Within this discussion the existing divisions of responsibilities for different forms of provision will be explained. The systems across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are broadly similar, although there are differences in detail. For example, in Scotland there are no Reception classes in publicly funded primary schools, with children under the age of statutory schooling being educated in separate classes or schools in the state sector.

It should also be noted that defining the terminology attached to the various forms of early education and care provision in the UK is very difficult. One term may embrace a variety of different types of provision, one provider may embrace a range of types of provision and all providers are currently going through an evolution of the services they provide. We therefore provide a broad definition of the most common forms of ECEC provision in the UK, and an indication of the terminology generally attached to such provision, but we acknowledge that this conceals the complexity and diversity of reality. Figure 2 illustrates the main types of provision currently available and the responsible providing bodies.

Accurate levels of participation in the various forms of early years education and care services over the last decade are difficult to ascertain. The different bodies responsible for the services e.g. DfEE, DoH, DSS, PLA have used different ways of calculating take up of places e.g. the DfEE uses pupil numbers and the DSS uses childcare places, and until recently, there has not been any comprehensive data for all childcare and education services collected. This makes the presentation of any definitive table of participation rates over time very difficult. Recent developments in the collection of early years statistics by the DfEE and DoH will create a more accurate data base from 1998 onwards (see Section 5) which will provide a detailed portrait of service participation and availability for the future. However, the DfEE commissioned annual survey of parents use of services for 3 and 4 year olds in 1997 and 1998, and the 1999 survey of parents use of day care services for birth - 3's, provide good early evidence of recent take up and availability of places, and give a good indication of the pattern of participation.

These data indicate that participation rates in ECEC services, as a whole, increases with age, and the type of service used changes as the child grows older. Broadly, from birth to 3 years, the private sector and childminders predominate; at 3 years the preschool/playgroup is the most common provider; older 3s tend to be in state nursery schools or classes; 4 year olds tend to be in state primary and infant school Reception classes with a smaller number in nursery classes; and most 5 year olds will be in state primary or infant school year 1 classes. A more detailed breakdown of services and participation is provided below.

Provider	Local Education Authority	Local Authority Social Services	Voluntary Sector	Private Sector	Joint LEA/ Social Services Department
TYPES OF SETTING	<p>Nursery School</p> <p>Nursery Class in Primary School</p> <p>Early Years Units in Primary School (not Scotland)</p> <p>Reception Class in First, Infant, Primary School (not Scotland)</p> <p>Special School</p> <p>Opportunity Groups</p> <p>Before/After School Club</p> <p>Holiday Club</p>	State Day Nursery	<p>Voluntary Preschools or Playgroups</p> <p>Parent & Toddlers</p> <p>Friends, neighbours, relatives</p> <p>Community Nursery</p>	<p>Centre Based:</p> <p>Private Day Nursery</p> <p>Nursery School</p> <p>Pre-Preparatory School</p> <p>Preschool or Playgroup</p> <p>Workplace Nursery</p> <p>Independent Schools</p> <p>Family Based:</p> <p>Childminder</p> <p>Au Pair / Nanny</p>	<p>Combined Centre</p> <p>Family Centre</p> <p>Early Excellence Centre</p>

2.2.1 Provision for Birth - 3's

Current provision of education and care for the under 3's in the UK is uneven, of mixed quality and in short supply. The shortage of provision for under 3s is well recognised and it is now the fastest growing sector of early childhood services. There are no state provided education places for under 3's, unless the child has been identified as having special needs or developmental delay. Very few children under the age of 3 years have access to a state funded childcare place unless deemed 'in need', (as defined by The Children Act, 1989) and there is a great shortage of affordable, high quality, private or voluntary childcare places for them. Yet, more than two thirds of mothers now return to work after their maternity leave, and more than half of mothers of under 3's work. This coincides with parent's increased inability to rely on 'informal' family childcare. Thus, demand for more 'formal' childcare services for the under 3s is increasing rapidly. Childminders are a key resource for the care of young children. Parents report a shortage of childcare services for children under 3. This shortage is because centre based provision is more expensive to provide due to higher staff ratios, and more stringent environmental requirements, than for children of 3 - 5 years. There is therefore a tendency for under 3's to experience a greater number of different childcare places during this period in their young lives than later. These issues are recognised by the Governments' National Childcare Strategy which aims to encourage growth of quality provision for under 3s.

Education

As stated, there is virtually no state provided early education provision for under 3s unless a child has been identified through Health Service monitoring as having developmental delay or special needs. A small number of local authorities have introduced a system of Opportunity Groups designed to provide children with an education boost before they enter preschool education. The voluntary preschools or playgroups are also making a contribution to provision for this age group.

Opportunity Groups: These groups are offered by Local Educational Authorities (LEAs) or Social Services Department (SSD's) and/or Health, and offered on a free, sessional basis for children who have been identified with special needs to provide an added support to facilitate their entry into mainstream schooling. They are staffed by teachers and trained assistants, with an adult: child ratio of approx. 1:4, depending on the needs of the child. Funding often provides specific assistance for individual children.

Pre-Schools/Playgroups: These are occasional, sessional or all day preschools or playgroups who may offer places for children from 2 - 5 years, and may be run by a community or volunteer group, by the parents themselves or by a private, for profit business. In England and Wales they may be affiliated to the Preschool Learning Alliance (PLA) or Playgroup Network; in Northern Ireland, to the Northern Ireland Preschool Learning Alliance (NIPLA); and in Scotland to the Scottish Preschool Playgroup Association (SPPA); but not all are. Fees are usually charged, with sessions of up to four hours, though some offer all day provision. They are registered and inspected by local Social Services Departments. They are staffed by a range of differently qualified staff, some staff may have no qualifications or training and some may be

graduate trained. They are required to operate with an adult:child ratio of 1:8, with at least half the staff members qualified. Local authorities can set more stringent ratios in their guidance. Some will have a voluntary management group but most will pay their staff, who may be supplemented with volunteers.

Childcare

Childcare with few exceptions, is paid for totally by the parents who now can access the Working Families Tax Credit if eligible. Access is therefore currently limited significantly by cost and the shortage of quality childcare places available, particularly for babies. Most childcare is provided for by the private sector and the local Social Service Departments. It may be family or centre based. The types of childcare provision currently available for birth - 3's include:

Private Day Nursery: These may be run by employers (workplace nurseries) or private companies. They provide part time or full day childcare sessions to children from birth to 5 years, and usually offer an extended day, running from 8.00 am - 6.00 pm (or later). Most operate all year round. They are registered and inspected by local authority Social Service Departments. The adult:child ratio depends on the age of the child, and varies from 1:2 to 1:6.

Local Authority Day Nursery: These are usually run by local Social Services Departments. They provide full or part time day care for children from birth to school age and sometimes also provide care for older children which wraps around school hours. They may prioritise children who are assessed as 'in need' because of family circumstances, disability or abuse. They are expected to meet the requirements of independent sector providers and are normally registered and inspected to the same standards. They usually offer an extended day, running from 8.00 am - 6.00 pm and most operate throughout the year. They come under local authority Social Service regulations. The adult:child ratio depends on the age and needs of the child, and varies from 1:1 to 1:6.

Childminder: Childminders offer childcare sessions, for up to 3 children under 5 years old, including the childminder's own children, within a home based setting, for children from birth on. Parents are usually charged on an hourly basis for the amount of childcare they need. They may offer the service throughout the day and over the whole year. They are staffed by differently qualified staff and the adult:child ratio varies according to the age of child and the number of children. They are registered and inspected by local Social Service Departments. They should all be registered but not all are. It is a criminal offence to act as a childminder for children under 8 unless the provider is registered.

Nanny/Au Pair: Nannies or au pairs work within a family's home offering full or part time childcare for the children within the family . They may 'live in' or come in on a daily basis. The hours worked and the salary paid are negotiated individually with the child's parents. Some are qualified nursery nurses and some are unqualified. Regulations are currently being developed to cover this form of childcare service.

Friends / Neighbours/Relatives: These provide childcare on an informal, unregulated basis within their own home or within the child's home. They should be registered as childminders if they provide more than 2 hours care for reward (which may be reward in kind).

Parent and Toddler Group: This is an informal group which may be offered within a community centre, a school or a day nursery for children from birth to 5 years. It is staffed by a range of differently qualified childcare workers or volunteers and the parent remains present throughout the session.

Combined Education and Childcare

A small, but increasing, number of integrated early education and childcare centres are developing which offer both childcare and early education within one location. They are often jointly funded and regulated by local Education and Social Service Departments. These integrated services have a range of names, usually reflecting the genesis of the services.

Combined Nursery/Family Centre: These are centre based services offering both early education and daycare facilities for children from birth to 5 years. In some cases provision may be offered for the whole day, including extended hours. The day care offered to birth - 3's within these centres usually continues year round. They may also offer other services for families and carers, such as, drop in facilities; adult education and training; advice/counselling; family support.

Early Excellence Centres: These are designated by the Government as models of good practice in integrated early education and day care for children from birth and their families. A range of provision may be found within the Centres, and the day care offered for birth - 3's is usually all year round and extended day. They also offer services for families and carers, such as drop in facilities, outreach work, family support, health care, adult education and training and practitioner training. They would have qualified staff working within the provision for young children.

Participation rates of under 3s in day care services are difficult at present to ascertain accurately. More reliable data will be available in the future with the introduction of the Day Care Census in 1999. However, some indication of the general pattern of participation may be drawn from a recent OFSTED survey of registration and inspection activity in local authorities (OFSTED, 1999). This survey, which included responses from 84% of 150 local authorities, revealed the following pattern of registered day care places in England in August 1998.

Number of Registered Day Care Providers and Places

Type of Provision	Number of Providers	Number of Places
Childminders	76,061	276,476
Sessional Care U5s	10,665	249,471
Sessional Care Over 5s	3,025	88,922
Full Day Care	9,157	217,239

Source: OFSTED, 1999.

These data reveal that childminders offering family day care currently provide the greatest number of individual childcare places in England, followed by sessional care places for the under fives in a range of different types of provision, and then full day care, which is usually provided by private day nurseries.

2.2.2 Provision for 3 - 5s

Education

Until recently pre-compulsory education for the 3 - 5s has been provided at the discretion of the Local Education Authorities (LEA), and so provision was uneven across the UK. In some areas, virtually all 3 and 4 year olds have had a state funded early education place, in others 4 year olds were provided for, and in others few 3 or 4 year olds had access to a state funded place. In 1994, the then Government committed itself to providing over time a free, part time, early education place for all 4 year olds whose parents wished to take it up. Since September 1998, for the first time, all EYDCP through their local plans, have been required to provide universal early education for all 4 year olds, and have also been given targets to ensure increasing part time, early education provision for all 3 year olds whose parents want it, so that by 2003 66% of 3 year olds will have a publicly funded, part time, early education place.

In Scotland, a similar development of early education has occurred. By winter 1998 universal early education provision for all 4 year olds in Scotland had been achieved. At the beginning of 1999 - 00 academic year, 36% of 3 year olds were in an early education place. This is expected to rise to 60% by the end of the academic year 2000.

Early education for 3 - 5 year olds may be provided for in a wide range of places in the UK. Most of these come under the responsibility of Education Departments, but some come under Social Service Departments, some under the private sector and some are provided by the voluntary sector. In addition, some provision of early education is the joint responsibility of Departments. By far the largest provider of early education for 3 and 4 year olds are the Local Education Authorities, who currently contribute 59% of all current provision for 3 and 4 year olds, mainly through nursery schools and classes, and for 4 year olds, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, reception classes. The other major provider of early education for 3 and 4 year olds are the private, independent, fee charging schools which account for 23% of services. Private sector provision includes all day Private Nursery Schools and Day Nurseries, Pre-preparatory Schools and 'for profit' Preschools or Playgroups. The community and voluntary sector account for 9% of early education provision, mainly through 'non profit' voluntary Preschools and Playgroups (Prior et al, 1999). It is notable that employers do not yet provide significant amounts of early education, in spite of the relationship that exists between early education provision and the ability of women to enter the labour market. Employers are responsible for less than 2% of day nurseries (Prior et al, 1999).

The types of early education provision currently available include:

Nursery School: This is a state funded school in its own right, provided by the Local Education Authority, providing early education for children aged 3 - 4 years. Usually, sessions are offered for 2 to 2.5 hours morning and afternoon during school term times only. Places are provided free to children and are usually on a part time basis, although some offer all day sessions. They are staffed by trained nursery teachers and nursery nurses, with an adult:child ratio of 1:10. In Scotland the ratio is 2:20 with one member of staff a qualified teacher and the other a qualified nursery nurse.

Nursery Class: This is a state funded nursery class which operates as part of a state funded primary or infant school, provided by the Local Education Authority and offering early education for children aged 3 - 4 years. Usually sessions are available for 2 to 2.5 hours morning and afternoon during school term times only. Places are provided free to children and are usually on a part time basis. They are staffed by trained nursery teachers and nursery nurses, with an adult:child ration of 1:13. In Scotland the adult:child ratio is as for nursery schools.

Early Years Unit: This is a state funded early years unit, provided by the Local Education Authority, which operates as part of a state funded primary or infant school, providing early education for children aged 3 - 5 years during school term times only. Sessions may be offered on a full or part time basis and are free. They are staffed by trained nursery teachers and nursery nurses, with an adult:child ratio of 1:13.

Reception Class or Class R: This is a state funded Reception class which operates as the first class of a state funded primary, first or infant school which is provided by a Local Education Authority in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (Scotland does not have such classes). It offers early education for children aged 4 - 5+ years during the term times only. Full time education places (usually 9 am - 3.30 pm) are

provided free to children, running during the three school term times. They are normally staffed by trained teachers and qualified classroom assistants, and with the intention to put in place adult:child ratios of 1:15.

Special School: This is a state funded school, provided by the Local Education Authority, which caters for children who have been identified with special needs from 3 - 5+. It is non fee paying and may be a day school or offer boarding, and runs during school term times only. They would normally be staffed by trained teachers and qualified classroom assistants, with an adult:child ratio of approx. 1:4, depending on the level of need of the child.

Opportunity Groups: These groups are offered by Local Educational Authorities Social Services Departments and/or Health and offered on free, sessional basis for children who have been identified with special needs, to provide an added support to facilitate their entry into mainstream schooling. They are staffed by teachers and trained assistants, with an adult: child ratio of approx. 1:4, depending on the needs of the child. Funding often provides specific assistance for individual children.

Preschools/Playgroups: These are sessional or all day preschools or playgroups for children from 3 - 5 years, and may be run by a community or volunteer group, by the parents themselves on a non-profit basis or by a private, for profit business. In England and Wales they may be affiliated to the Preschool Learning Alliance (PLA) or Playgroup Networks; in Northern Ireland, to the Northern Ireland Preschool Learning Alliance (NIPLA); and in Scotland to the Scottish Preschool Playgroup Association (SPPA); but not all are. Fees are usually charged with sessions of up to four hours, though some offer all day provision. They are registered and inspected by local Social Services Departments. They are staffed by a range of differently qualified staff, some staff may have no qualifications or training and some may be graduate trained. They are required to operate with an adult child ratio of 1:8, with at least half the staff members qualified. Local authorities can set more stringent ratios in their guidance. Some will have a voluntary management group but most will pay their staff, who may be supplemented by volunteers.

Private Nursery Schools, Pre-preparatory Schools: These are run by private companies or trusts and are financed through fee income and investments. They provide part time or full day educational sessions to children from 3 - 5+ years, during school term times only. They are regulated and inspected by Social Services Departments to ensure standards. They are required to operate with an adult:child ratio of 1:8.

Independent Schools: These are run by private companies or trusts and are financed through fee income and investments. They provide part time or full day educational sessions to children from 3 - 5+ years, during school term times only. They are regulated and inspected to ensure standards. If they admit more than 5 children over the age of 5 years they must register with the DfEE and are regulated and inspected by OFSTED, otherwise they are monitored by local Social Services Departments.

Private Day Nurseries: These may be run by employers (workplace nurseries) or private companies. They provide part time or full day educational sessions to children from 3 - 5+ years, and usually offer an

extended day, running from 8.00 am - 6.00 pm (or later). They also operate all year round. They are registered and inspected by local Social Service Departments. They are required to operate with an adult:child ratio of 1:8, with at least half the staff members qualified.

Participation rates of 3 and 4 year olds outside the maintained sector, in the different forms of early education provision over recent years are difficult to ascertain. However, the DfEE sponsored survey in 1997 and 1998 of parents' use of early years services for three and four year olds (Prior et al, 1999) looked at participation rates of 3 and 4 year olds in early education in England prior to, and following, the abolition of the Nursery Education Voucher Scheme (introduced by the previous Government to stimulate the provision of educational places for all four year olds). This survey revealed that participation in publicly funded early education for 3 - 4 year olds is high and increasing in England. In 1998, 98% of 4 year olds and 93% of 3 year olds participated in some form of early education provision (although not all of this was state funded). This demonstrated a 3% increase in early education participation for 3 year olds since 1997. Participation rates appeared to increase with age, from 83% of younger 3 year olds to 98% of older 4 year olds. The survey also found participation was higher in Social Classes I and II, in higher income families where parents were in employment, and in white ethnic groups. They found no significant difference in participation in early education between urban and rural areas. The survey also found that as the child got older the most common form of early education provision used changed from preschool playgroups for 3 year olds, to state funded nursery classes for younger 4 year olds, to primary school reception classes for older 4 year olds (see Table 1).

Table 1: Types of early education provider used in 1998 by age cohort

	Younger 3s %	Older 3s %	Rising 4s %	Younger 4s %	Older 4s %	Rising 5s %	Younger 5s %	Older 5s %
None	13	3	4	1	1	1	1	1
Nursery School	13	20	21	21	20	20	22	3
Nursery Class	16	35	40	45	39	43	37	16
Reception Class	1	2	3	6	63	72	62	69
Special School	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
Private Nursery	15	15	15	12	7	10	10	1
Preschool/Playgroup	53	54	47	47	30	27	25	2
Combined/Family Centre	1	1	2	1	1	*	1	*
Other	4	4	4	5	4	3	3	2

n = 4272

Source: Prior et al, 1999, p. 19

[N.B. Reception classes are officially discouraged from admitting 3 year old children]

Most parents (82%) are required to make some form of fee payment or financial contribution for these early education services (Prior et al, 1999), although it should, be noted that in state provided services there are no fee charges for places. Payments usually are required to cover meals or snacks (45%), fees (30%) or trips and outings (23%). The requirement to make a financial contribution varied with the type of early education provider. For example, 97% of Preschool Playgroups and Private Nurseries, 77% of nursery classes, 68% of special schools and 67% of reception classes required some financial contribution or fee payment. It is evident that early education is significantly more expensive for parents of 3 year olds than for 4 and 5 year olds. This reflects the entry of older children into state funded nursery and reception classes in state primary schools. As a whole 25% of all parents paid fees for their child's early education place (Prior et al, 1999). One in four parents paid less than £25 a term; one in ten paid more than £250 a term. There is some evidence from the 1998 survey that access to early education of different types continues to be considerably affected by cost for many parents. The funding for free early education places

for all four year olds and increasing numbers of three year olds will substantially address the affordability issue for many parents.

Childcare

Although many 3 and 4 year olds have access to an early education place, this place is normally part time and only operates during school academic terms. Where parents of 3 - 5 year olds are working or in training, they therefore need additional access to a 'wrap around' childcare place. This has partly explained the flow of 4 year olds into primary school reception classes, which generally provide a free, full time place, although again this is only available during school terms, and, in many cases, does not cater for before and after school hours, although this is changing.

Childcare for 3 - 5 year olds may also be provided in a wide range of places and by a range of different providing bodies with various lines of responsibility. Most childcare is provided for by the private sector and is registered and inspected by local Social Service Departments, but some provision is jointly provided by Social Services and Education Departments. Childcare would normally be charged to the parents, it is rarely free. The types of childcare provision for 3 and 4 year olds currently available include:

Private Day Nursery: These may be run by employers (workplace nurseries) or private companies. They provide part time or full day childcare sessions to children from birth - 5+, and usually offer an extended day, running from 8.00 am - 6.00 pm (or later). They also operate all year round. They are registered and inspected by local Social Service Departments. They are required to operate with an adult:child ratio of 1:8.

Local Authority Day Nurseries: These are usually run by local Social Services Departments. They provide part time or full day sessions to children from birth - 5+ years and sometimes also provide care for older children which wraps around school hours. They may prioritise children who are assessed as 'in need' because of family circumstances, disability or abuse. They are expected to meet the requirements of independent sector providers and inspected to the same standards. They usually offer an extended day, running from 8.00 am - 6.00 pm and operate all year round. They come under the responsibility of local Social Service Departments, which regulate and inspect them. The adult:child ratios depend on the age and needs of the child. They are staffed by qualified nursery nurses and childcare workers.

Childminder: Childminders offer childcare sessions, for up to 3 children under 5 years old, including the childminder's own children, within a home based setting. Parents are usually charged on an hourly basis for the amount of childcare they need. They may offer the service throughout the day and over the whole year. They are staffed by differently qualified staff and the adult child ratio varies according to the age of child and number of children. They are registered and inspected by the local Social Service Department. They should all be registered but not all are. It is a criminal offence to act as a childminder to children under 8 unless the provider is registered.

Nanny/Au Pair: Nannies or au pairs work within a family's home offering full or part time childcare for the children within the family. They may 'live in' or come in on a daily basis. The hours worked and the salary paid are negotiated individually with the child's parents. They are staffed by differently qualified staff and the adult child ratio varies according to the age of child and number of children. They now come under the responsibility of the local Social Service Department and regulations are currently being developed to cover them.

Friends / Neighbours/Relatives: These provide childcare on an informal, unregulated basis within their own home or within the child's home. They should be registered as childminders if they provide more than 2 hours care for reward (which may be reward in kind.)

Parent and Toddler Group: This is an informal group which may be offered within a community centre, a school or a day nursery for children from birth - 5 years. It is staffed by a range of differently qualified childcare workers or volunteers and the parent remains present throughout the session.

Before/After School Club: These clubs provide care for children from 3+ years on school premises or on the premises of a privately run day care centre, but outside school hours. They can be run by schools, private or voluntary organisations. Fees are usually charged on an hourly or sessional basis. They are staffed by a range of differently qualified childcare workers.

Holiday Club: This provides care for children from 3+ years on school premises or in a community or day care centre during school holidays. Fees are usually charged and they are staffed by differently qualified childcare workers. They may be run by schools, private or voluntary organisations.

Combined Education and Childcare

A small, but increasing, number of integrated early education and childcare centres are developing which offer both childcare and early education within one location. They are often jointly funded and regulated by local Education and Social Service Departments. These integrated services have a range of names, usually reflecting the genesis of the services.

Combined Nursery/Family Centre: These are centre based services offering both early education and daycare facilities for children from birth to 5 years. In some cases provision may be offered for the whole day, including extended hours. The early education generally operates only during school term times, but the day care continues year round. They may also offer other services for families such as, drop in facilities; adult education and training; advice/counselling; family support.

Early Excellence Centres: These offer integrated centre based or networked education and care services for children from birth and their families. A range of provision may be found within the Centres. They would generally provide early education places for 3 - 5s during school terms, with extended day care usually available for children from birth to 5+ years all year round. They also offer services for families

and carers, such as drop in facilities, outreach work, family support, health care, adult education and training and practitioner training. They would have qualified staff working within the range of services provided.

Participation rates for 3 and 4 year olds in childcare services appear to be relatively low: 18% and 13% respectively (Prior et al, 1999). The highest rates were in those families where both parents were in employment or training. However, the authors note that these figures underestimate the use made of childcare for children of this age as the survey only covers the use of childcare services during term time and during schools hours (8.30 am - 4.30 pm). Out of hours care and holiday care are not included in these figures. It appears that most parents of 3 and 4 year olds use just a single early education provider and make do with 'informal', home based childcare to wraparound this.

The 1998 survey also reported that use of childcare increased during the summer holidays to about 22% of all parents of 3 and 4 year olds. The most commonly used provision during this time was 'relatives' and 'childminders'. Older children, rather than younger children were more likely to have used a 'holiday club'; (30% of older 5s, compared with 3% of younger 3s). They found some evidence of unmet demand for summer holiday provision, as around half the parents (48%) in the survey indicated that they would like more childcare provision during this time.

The 1998 survey (Prior et al, 1999) revealed that of those families who did access childcare during term time, nearly all used only one childcare provider, only 2% used two providers and virtually none used more than this. Older age cohorts tended to use fewer childcare providers than younger cohorts. Most parents used just one or two childcare sessions a week (6%); 3% used three or four sessions; 3% used five sessions. Only 5% used more than this. The kinds of childcare used by parents of 3 and 4 year olds in school term time is mainly 'informal' family or home based childcare. Half of all working mothers rely on the care provided by their partners for part of their working day or week. The most common type of childcare provision used by parents of 3 and 4 year olds during term time, when early education places were operating, were 'relatives' (8%), 'childminders' (7%) and 'mother and toddler groups' (6%). (see Table 2).

Table 2: Types of childcare provider used in 1998 by age cohort

	Younger 3s %	Older 3s %	Rising 4s %	Younger 4s %	Older 4s %	Rising 5s %	Younger 5s %	Older 5s %
None	65	72	72	76	81	78	85	91
Mother & Toddler	18	9	9	7	4	2	1	*
Out of School	*	*	*	*	*	2	1	1
Childminder	9	8	9	7	8	9	5	4
Nanny/ Au Pair	3	2	2	1	2	1	2	1
Friends/Neighbours	2	2	2	2	1	3	1	1
Relatives	10	10	10	9	7	9	6	3
Other	1	1	1	1	1	*	1	*

n = 4272

Source: Prior et al, 1999, p. 27.

Accessing affordable childcare is an acknowledged problem for many parents of 3 and 4 year olds.

To Summarise

In short, due to recent developments in early education provision, the existing situation in the UK reveals relatively high levels of publicly funded early education for 3 - 5 year olds. However, there is little educational support for children under 3 years, unless the child has been identified as having special needs. The shortfall, or 'Childcare Gap' (Daycare Trust, 1999), in quality childcare for children under the age of 8 remains large. There are currently over 5 million children under the age of 8 in the UK. In 1998, there was only one registered childcare place for every 7.5 children under the age of 8 years. This 'Gap' is shrinking as new Government policy begins to take effect. For example, in 1997 the 'Gap' was one place for every 9 children, so progress is being made, but there is still a long way to go. The availability of childcare is poorest in rural areas and disadvantaged areas, where private and voluntary sector provision finds it difficult to survive. There is also a demand for more provision for 1 - 2 year olds as mothers are going back to work sooner, and there is more generous parental leave for children from birth to 12 months. (Daycare Trust, 1999). It is for this age group that expansion must occur if the 'Childcare Gap' is to lessen. It should

also be noted that the UK is currently going through a period of significant change in relation to the provision of ECEC services (see Section 4). This change is characterised by a large growth in private day nurseries and a fall in the number of childminders and preschools.

The typical cost of full time childcare for a family with two children, one in preschool and one of school age, is estimated to be £6,000 per year (Daycare Trust, 1999). Only 1 in 10 employers offer any help with childcare, yet there is an acknowledgement from business that a case exists for them to provide more support for employee's childcare costs (Daycare Trust, 1999). In total it is estimated that parents currently spend £2.6 billion a year on childcare (Daycare Trust, 1999). The average childcare fees in England are set out below, although fees will be higher in the London area and lower in the north:

Age	Childcare Fee per Week
0 - 1	£125.00
1 - 2	£120.00
2 - 3	£110.00
3 - 5	£108.00

2.3 Current Staffing of Early Childhood Services

2.3.1 Early Years Workers

The staff who work in early education and childcare services in the UK constitute a diverse and varied group, working in a wide variety of centre based and home based services (HERA 2 Report, 1999). They range from graduate and post graduate qualified teachers and childcare workers, to unqualified workers, who have had no specialist training for the job. At least half of all UK childcare staff are working without the benefit of specialist training. Only 1 in 5 have a graduate level qualification. Childcare staff who do not have to be trained include childminders, some childcare staff in nurseries, some play workers and nannies. New childminders are asked to undertake between 5 and 15 hours of training by some local authorities before they are registered. Regular access to in-service training is limited for many childcare workers.

Childcare workers tend to be young, female and from the majority white population in the UK. The median age for childminders is between 35 and 44 but 33% of nursery nurses are aged 25 or under. 99% of childcare workers are female. People from black and ethnic groups are under represented in the childcare work force although their children have disproportionately high needs for childcare. Working with young children has been a low status and low visibility occupation until very recently, and the poor training, salaries and working conditions reflect this (HERA Report 2, 1999).

Staff who work in early education and childcare in the UK have a range of training and job titles. These include:

Teachers: Teachers have to undertake the equivalent of 3 - 4 years graduate training, post 18, before they can attain Qualified Teacher Status. In Scotland, they are then admitted to the register of teachers, maintained by the General Teaching Council for Scotland. They are employed by Local Education Authorities to work within the school system, and have access to sick pay and holiday leave. They also have access to regular in service training. They are paid according to nationally agreed pay scales, applicable to all teachers in the state school system.

Childminders: There are currently 97,100 registered childminders in England. They are self employed and based in their own homes. They must be registered and inspected by their local authority, under the terms of the 1989 Children Act. They do not have to be trained or qualified.

Nannies: Nannies look after children in the family home and are employed by the family. There are about 100,000 nannies working in England: at least half of these are not qualified. The family is responsible for making tax and National Insurance contributions on their behalf. Nannies are not included in the Children Act and there is no legal limit on the number of children they can be asked to look after, unless they work for more than two families. They do not have to be trained or qualified.

Nursery Nurses: Nursery nurses undertake 2 years, post 16 specialist training to qualify as a nursery nurse. They work in nurseries and nursery classes and alongside teachers in Reception classes. In England, there are about 7,000 full time equivalent jobs for nursery nurses in education settings for preschool children. There are around 7,500 full time equivalent jobs for nursery nurses in social services nurseries. There are at least 25,000 full time equivalent jobs for nursery nurses in private nurseries. There is evidence that numbers of nursery nurse staff in the private sector have risen by over 50% since 1991. State funded settings provide pay based on the national pay scale, paid annual leave and sick pay. Private nurseries set their own rates of pay and make their own arrangements for staff.

Voluntary Preschool Workers: Voluntary preschool and playgroup staff work alongside parents and volunteers to provide short sessions of play and education for children from 2 - 5 years. There are currently 131,250 staff and 56,250 volunteers in 15,000 Preschools in England. Preschools are regulated by the terms of the Children Act. Half of the staff in a Preschool or voluntary playgroup are required to be appropriately qualified.

Play workers: Play workers provide services to children in before and after school clubs and holiday play schemes. They are often employed on a sessional basis. Services which are provided for children under the age of 8 are registered and inspected under the terms of the Children Act. Half of the staff in a play scheme are required to have childcare training.

In addition to the above types of childcare workers, the HERA Report 2 (1999) identified a wide range of additional job titles in ECEC services in England. These included:

- After School Supervisor, Assistant and Helper;
- Creche Supervisor, Assistant and Helper;
- Daycare Supervisor, Assistant and Helper;
- Preschool/Playgroup Supervisor, Assistant and Helper;
- Classroom Assistant.

In the past in England and Wales there has been no coherent framework of early years courses and qualifications for early childhood workers, and a wide range of different courses and qualifications available for the above job titles. A review of qualifications available for childcare workers by HERA (1999) identified a total of 329 specific recognised qualifications. About half were national programmes, such as BTEC Certificate and Diploma courses, CACHE courses and NVQ2s and NVQ3s. The other half were locally available courses. These included pre-registration courses, mostly for childminders. There are also a large number of less specific courses identified, such as childcare, nursing, Montessori. This report identified the wide range of job descriptions, training and qualifications which currently characterises the early childhood work force. It is acknowledged that there have been real difficulties for many early years workers to access training opportunities due to their own family commitments, the cost of the training and flexibility in their working hours (HERA, 1999).

2.3.2 Salaries and Conditions of Work

It is recognised that early years staff in the UK, (other than teachers) are poorly paid compared with other workers in the caring professions (Daycare Trust, 1999). Average wages for nursery nurses in British nurseries are an estimated £5 per hour compared with the wage of a nursery teacher in the same classroom at £17 per hour, and £8.62 for the average national earnings. Outside state funded nurseries, most childcare staff do not get paid holiday or sick leave. An estimated 30% of staff working in childcare leave their jobs every year, yet high staff turnover has been identified as a major factor in poor quality childcare and education. As the Daycare Trust points out,

“Childcare staff are overwhelmingly women and are strikingly badly paid compared with other caring professionals despite the commitment and professionalism which exists within the industry. Staff have poor conditions of work and do long hours with little access to training or support. Morale can be low and the best often leave for better prospects elsewhere.”

Daycare Trust 1999.

Recent pay estimates for childcare workers, as compared to others in the caring professions and also the national average earnings, reveal the relatively low pay given to most childcare workers.

Pay Estimates for 1997 (gross per hour)

Childminder	£1.00 - £3.00 per child
Nanny	£3.00
Nursery Nurse: Education	£5.50
Nursery Nurse: Social Services	£3.95 - £10.28
Nursery Nurse: Private Nursery	£2.10 - £10.00
Voluntary Preschool and Playgroup Workers	£2.69
Play workers	£3.00 - £5.00
Nursery teachers	£17.00
Nurses (Health)	£7.45
Average National Earnings (full time)	£8.62

Source: Daycare Trust, 1999

The low pay of early years staff is being addressed by national professional organisations, who are campaigning for higher national pay rates for the work force. The introduction of the national minimum wage in 1999 has also raised the salary levels of the most poorly paid childcare workers.

Good conditions of work also encourage a well motivated work force with high morale and resilience, and a more enduring commitment which will raise the quality of the service provided. Again, it is striking that many childcare workers do not currently have:

- paid sick leave;
- paid holidays;
- ongoing training opportunities;
- membership of a professional organisation or a trade union.

It is anticipated that the newly created Early Years National Training Organisation (NTO) will help to address salaries and condition of work for early years workers at a national level. This has become an increasingly crucial issue as the demand for more qualified early years staff increases and the move towards integrated education and childcare services puts more complex demands on those who work within the services.

SECTION 3: POLICY CONCERNS

This section of the report will provide an introduction to the major priorities and policy concerns of the UK Government in relation to ECEC. It will explore key themes in policy which derive from the wider social, economic and educational concerns of the Government and identify how these are influencing the course of ECEC development in the UK. These themes will be further explored in section 4 of the Report, which will focus on how the UK Government, and the early childhood profession, has responded to these concerns in their approaches to ECEC and the policy initiatives which are currently being implemented.

3.1 Government Priorities and the Case for Investment

There is a growing awareness in the UK, as elsewhere in the developed and developing world, that the consequences of globalisation and economic rationalist policies have been a growing inequity in the distribution of wealth and economic benefits within society. It is acknowledged by Government that the increasing benefits for the wealthier strata of people have been to the disadvantage of other groups who are excluded from participation (DSS, 1999). Current UK Government policies, particularly in relation to early childhood education and care, and family and work policies, reflect an awareness of these issues and indicate a significant desire to ensure that the inequities which have increased over the last two decades are addressed in current educational, social, economic, health and welfare initiatives in a comprehensive and integrated manner. There is also an acknowledgement that the early years of a child's life are formative in determining subsequent development and achievement, and a desire to ensure that all children have equal access to high quality early education and care.

Given this context it is significant that over the last eighteen months there has been unprecedented activity and investment in early education, child care and family support systems within the UK: in short, since 1997 a 'quiet revolution' (Margaret Hodge, DfEE Press Notice, 15th October 1999) has been occurring in the development and financing of early childhood services. The wide range of policy initiatives currently underway demonstrate that the Government has put the development of enhanced early years services at the heart of its agenda of change for children, families and the community.

The international evidence emerging from economic, social and educational sources have provided the Government with an irrefutable case for significantly increased investment in services for young children and their families. In addition, emerging UK evidence on the increasing disaffection and exclusion of certain groups in society (Social Exclusion Unit, 1988, 1999a, 1999b; McKie, 1999; Mental Health Organisation, 1999) and the continued rise in child poverty and ill health (DSS, 1999; British Medical Association, 1999) have added impetus to the Government's commitment to invest in social, health and educational policy.

This section of the report will lay out briefly what the current policy priorities are in the development of early childhood services within the UK.

3.2 Current Themes in Government Policy

3.2.1 Child Poverty

In Britain it is now acknowledged by Government that a disproportionate number of families with young children live in poverty, (defined as families with an income of less than half of the national average income: DSS, 1999). Current figures estimate that two in five children in Britain are born poor, and one in six couples are pushed into poverty by the birth of their first child. In July 1999 the Prime Minister set out a clear intention by April 2000 to lift 1 million children out of poverty, and to develop an ongoing strategy to lift the remaining 3 million out of poverty over time. This ambitious target is being tackled through a range of substantial initiatives aimed at supporting families with young children. These include increasing investment in early years, increasing access to early education and childcare, providing work and training opportunities that may lift the poor out of the poverty trap, providing extra help for families through the tax and benefit system, reducing teenage pregnancy and introducing the Quality Protects programme to improve the health and education of children being looked after by Social Services (DSS, 1999).

In October 1999, the Government published its first report on poverty which identified dated future policy milestones and indicators of Government success in the eradication of child poverty (DSS, 1999). This report provides a baseline from which the success of the cross departmental solutions to the problems of poverty and social exclusion may be evaluated over time.

3.2.2 The World of Work

The current lack of affordable good quality childcare in the UK presents a major problem for parents wanting to take up work or training. This situation has been exacerbated by the drift of families away from their extended family support networks and is particularly the case for lone parents. Childcare is therefore increasingly being viewed by Government as an essential part of the infrastructure of communities to support employment and enterprise. There is a clear intention to remove disincentives to getting a job, including the availability of affordable, accessible childcare, to ensure that,

“for the first time ever, work will always pay more than benefits.”

Gordon Brown, Chancellor of Exchequer, Times, 16th September 1999.

A key thrust of current policy therefore is to remove the obstacles to lone parents who wish to work, so that the proportion of lone parents who work is increased from the relatively low current level of 40% to a level of 80%, bringing us more in line with other European countries. There is also a recognition that at present

there are barriers preventing employers, including large and small companies, from developing family friendly employment practices, including help with childcare. These barriers include the assumed costs of such family friendly practices, the lack of understanding and awareness, and the lack of incentives in areas of high unemployment. More information and awareness raising through publicity, a national accreditation scheme and tax incentives for employers are part of an arena of strategies being considered to tackle these issues.

3.2.3 The Health of the Nation

Recent national reports (British Medical Association, 1999; Mental Health Organisation, 1999) have highlighted the poor state of health of many communities in the UK, and in particular that of parents and young children in many disadvantaged areas. The link of poor health to long term social and health problems and costs have been well acknowledged in recent Government statements. The setting of health targets for children and adults aimed at improving the health of the nation is a priority within recent Government initiatives, particularly those linked with early education, childcare and family support.

3.2.4 Social Exclusion

It has been demonstrated unequivocally that access to childcare and early education improves the life chances of disadvantaged children. Social exclusion is a key theme in the Government's policy agenda and a Social Exclusion Unit has been established at Cabinet level with representation from all public policy departments. This Unit oversees all interlinking aspects of social exclusion policy within the Government. The overarching aim of this Unit is to reduce levels of social exclusion and to work at developing more effective and comprehensive strategies to tackle its root causes and consequences.

Early childhood services are viewed as a key element in policies to prevent social exclusion. One example of this are initiatives to support the growing number of teenage parents, who have been identified as a group who are vulnerable to social exclusion, with childcare provision to enable them to continue their education.

3.2.5 Raising Standards

On election in May 1997, the Prime Minister declared his Government's priorities would be, "education, education and education." This commitment has been reflected in a legislative programme, in increased financial provision and in the volume of initiatives flowing from the DfEE to raise educational standards in all areas of the country. The Government's White paper 'Excellence in Schools', published in 1997 set out the challenges and an agenda for action as follows:

- to ensure that every child learns the basics of literacy and numeracy early and well;
- to increase levels of achievement and opportunities in schools for all pupils;
- to challenge schools to improve and take responsibility for raising their own standards;
- to tackle truancy and reduce exclusions from school;
- to reduce social exclusion by equipping all children to be active citizens and by encouraging young people to stay in learning after 18;
- to modernise comprehensive secondary education for the new century;
- to improve the quality of teaching and leadership in schools;
- to involve parents and local communities in the education of children, to reduce social exclusion and to develop effective partnerships at a local level to raise standards.

Whilst the emphasis has been on the work of schools in pursuing these aims, and there has been a wide ranging set of initiatives put in place to raise standards and tackle disadvantage, the years before compulsory schooling have also been a key focus for educational policy. In relation to early education and child care provision there have been significant shifts in the resourcing and expectations of provision, with new and increasing funding for the introduction and expansion of a range of educational support strategies for children from birth. This reflects the importance now attached to effective early learning and the early diagnosis of special needs in helping children realise their educational potential more fully.

3.2.6 Underachievement

There are concerns about some groups within the community and some areas of the country where low educational achievement is widespread. This is often allied to other problems such as truancy, exclusion from schools and youth crime. Experience has demonstrated that conventional solutions to these problems have not always been successful because they have been insufficient, incomplete, not comprehensive and come too late in children's life. It is now recognised that certain groups of pupils underachieve educationally. These groups include:

- certain groups of boys;
- certain ethnic and other minority groups;
- pupils with special educational needs;
- 'looked after' children;
- gifted children;
- mobile or transient pupils.

A key priority in current Government policy is to tackle underachievement in these groups, to raise expectations and to support higher achievement for all.

3.2.7 Life Long Learning

The Government has emphasised the need to change the national culture and to lift aspiration as an essential element in the push to lift levels of achievement. The intention is to change attitudes to learning so that no groups or individuals feel excluded from success within the educational system. Many LEA's are involved in the promotion of 'learning communities' where the overall aim is to encourage a climate of positive support for learning from cradle to grave.

3.2.8 'Joined Up Thinking' and Integration of Services

In addressing these social, economic and educational themes the Government is keen to make the links between policy areas in the public sector. It is attempting to approach issues such as poverty, unemployment, poor health, raising standards, under achievement in schools, social exclusion and life long learning as broad social problems which require 'joined up' solutions. At least five separate Government departments in England are currently involved in the early education and childcare revolution: there is a clear belief that 'joined up' thinking and action is required to support the scale and cost of the Government's social policy ambitions. These five departments include the Department of Education and Employment (DfEE), the Department of Social Services, the Department of Health (DoH), the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and the Treasury.

It has also become clear from international government and NGO studies (Bernard van Leer Foundation, 1994; Myers, 1992; Young, 1996; OECD, 1998; Iglesias and Sen, 1999) that policies which aim to integrate and coordinate educational, social and health initiatives are likely to be more effective and more wide ranging in their impact, particularly when one ministry is given the leadership, monitoring and evaluative role. Given this evidence, the Government is committed to the development of early childhood services which integrate a range of services, including education, care, health, adult training and family support. They support the view that education and care are inseparable and want to develop a more comprehensive support structure around children and families which can meet a wide range of needs.

3.3 Expansion, Integration and Reconfiguration

Over the past four or five years there has been a growing recognition of the value of high quality early education for all children by governments. In 1996, the previous government introduced a Nursery Voucher Scheme, which was to operate as a free market mechanism for funding and expanding educational provision for four year olds in England. This expansion was to be achieved through a combination of early education places within the state, private and voluntary sectors, all of which were required to meet certain educational standards.

Under the present Government the expansion programme for early education changed its funding mechanisms away from a free market system, gained in momentum and has been extended to cover a much wider range of children and family services, including childcare and family support. The intention is, over time, to put in place a more comprehensive and accessible system of early education, childcare and family support. It is intended that this integrated system of early education, childcare and family support will be provided through an expansion and reconfiguration of existing services in the public, private and voluntary sector which will be encouraged to embrace a multi-disciplinary approach to working. Providers of early education, childcare and family support, including health, are therefore being required to integrate their services more cohesively and to reconfigure their practice to ensure a more comprehensive and effective coverage of the whole range of children and families' developmental needs.

3.4 Access

Achieving universal access to an expanded system of early education, childcare and family support services in the UK is a key element in the Government's strategy. There is a concern in all policy statements that the new early education and childcare initiatives should be made fully inclusive and meet the needs of parents and children from all social and ethnic groups within society. There is an awareness that the under 3s particularly suffer a lack of access to appropriate services. Baby care (birth to 12 months) has become increasingly expensive as more 3 and 4 year olds move into free educational provision, thus raising the unit costs of provision which is catering only for birth to 3 year olds. The need to ensure access for all children and families to enhanced early years services permeates current policy development and is evident in a number of key themes in current policy.

3.4.1 Improved Access to Information

There is an acknowledgement that often parents have inadequate information about what education and childcare services are available to them and this inhibits access. The Government is concerned to improve the quality of childcare information services (CIS) to ensure that parents have the information they need to make informed choices in response to their childcare and education needs.

3.4.2 Equality of Access for Children from Ethnic Minorities

There is an acceptance of the fact that many children and adults from ethnic minority communities in the UK continue to suffer from discrimination and racism in their access to education and childcare (EYTARN, 1997; Andrew Smith, Employment Minister, January 1998). The Government is committed to taking steps to help break down the barriers to access that are faced by ethnic minorities and are introducing policies on equality for race and gender to help improve the situation of ethnic minority children and women with regard to access to ECEC services in the UK. There is a stated intention by the

Secretary of State for Education and Employment to make race equality integral to all DfEE policies and programmes, to help people in all communities realise their full potential, to promote the value of diversity in the workplace and to build partnerships to help achieve these goals.

3.4.3 Equality of Access for Children With Special Needs

The Green Paper, 'Excellence for All Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs' identified the need to put in place a strategy designed to raise the standards of achievement of all children with special needs. Although there is clear support for more inclusion in mainstream settings where parents want it and where appropriate support can be provided, there is also an acknowledgment that special schools should continue to play an important role as part of an inclusive education system. For 1999 - 2000 there has been a doubling of the funding to £37 million to provide targeted support for children with special educational needs (SEN) under the Standards Fund. The Green Paper stressed the importance of early identification and appropriate intervention to improve the prospects of children with SEN and reduce the need for more expensive intervention later on. There are a range of programmes in the Governments programme of initiatives which will include action for early support and intervention for children with special needs from birth.

It should be noted that special educational needs do not necessarily equate with special needs in terms of children in need.

3.4.4 Equality of Access for Rural Areas

The provision of childcare and early education in rural areas is recognised by Government as important. It is seen as not only of immense benefit to the children themselves, helping learning and development but also in overcoming the social and physical isolation which living in a rural area can bring. In many rural areas in the UK there are few of the facilities that urban areas offer and poor public transport to provide access to facilities in nearby towns. Childcare provision is also seen to benefit parents, allowing them to take up new opportunities, training and employment. Early childhood services can provide support for parents and families suffering the stress of poverty and isolation with little or no access to resources. The role of childcare is also vital to rural employment and development.

Despite these obvious benefits, research by the Rural Development Commission (1996), now the Countryside Agency, has shown that the level of childcare services in rural England is often very poor. This research has been supported by more recent figures which show that currently 86% of rural parishes have no private nursery, 93% have no public nursery and 92% have no out of school childcare (Countryside Agency, 1999). The reasons for this lack of access are scattered communities; the small scale of demand linked to low densities of population, poor transport, the high cost of providing good quality education and care combined with the low wages of many workers in rural areas, the lack of suitable

buildings, few large employers and the difficulty of finding suitably qualified and experienced staff in rural areas. In addition, it is argued (RDC, 1996) that the needs of rural people are often given less attention than those of townspeople. Often, the indicators used to identify deprivation take more account of urban characteristics, such as overcrowding, than rural ones, such as isolation.

In response to these needs the Government, working with the Countryside Agency, is attempting to develop more sensitive mechanisms to assess the needs of rural communities and to develop a range of childcare and education strategies which address these needs. It is acknowledged that no single model of childcare and early education can be recommended for rural areas, and that rural childcare and education needs to be flexible and adaptable, responding to local conditions and fitting in with the fabric of rural life generally. However, all new schemes are encouraged to be responsive to local needs, obtain support from a wide variety of sources, recognise that childcare services in rural areas take longer to develop and may need extra support provide a number of services under one roof to increase viability, and build on existing networks and resources such as schools (RDC, 1996).

3.4.5 Affordability

There is a concern, expressed by many parents (Prior et al, 1999) and national organisations (Daycare Trust, 1999), that funding for the childcare costs is insufficient and too expensive for many families in need. It is acknowledged by Government that parents in a wide range of personal circumstances find affording childcare difficult and need extra help with childcare costs. For example, parents in training and education, parents in part time or low paid employment, parents of children with disabilities, parents under 18 and still in full time education, parents living in rural areas, parents who are shift workers and those in difficult circumstances, such as refugees, the homeless and women escaping from domestic violence are identified as having particular needs (DfEE, 1998).

Evidence has therefore shown that access to early education and childcare services is often dictated by their affordability, particularly to families who live in poverty (DfEE, 1998; Daycare Trust, 1999; Prior et al, 1999). The rising costs of childcare, which has been primarily provided by the private sector and a burgeoning number of registered and unregistered childminders, has meant that access to high quality services has been very limited for certain sections of the population. It has also been recognised that the groups who are prevented from access because of affordability are often those who would benefit most from them (DfEE, 1998). A priority of the Government is therefore to ensure that access to good quality early years services is not limited by affordability factors. There is now a recognition that substantial Government investment is needed to ensure universal access to affordable services which provide all young children and their families with the support they need to thrive.

3.5 Quality

3.5.1 The Need for Quality Improvement

Government documentation emphasises that the programme of expansion in early years services in the UK needs to also ensure the quality of delivery. The case for the development of high quality early years services is well accepted at Government level and a number of key Government and national reports have highlighted this over the last decade (DES, 1990; National Education Commission, 1993; Ball, 1994; DfEE, 1997; Pascal, Bertram et al, 1999). It is also acknowledged that the quality of many early childhood services in the UK is not as good as it might be and that a programme of quality assessment and improvement will need to accompany the expansion programme (DfEE, 1998). The intention is to build upon existing early years services in the public, private and voluntary sectors to achieve the required expansion but to couple this with investment in enhancing the quality of these services in an ongoing programme of quality improvement, delivered through enhanced training, inspection and quality assurance schemes. The Government is also attempting to provide clearer guidance on what constitutes good quality early childhood education and care services through the publication of a series of quality guidelines, the development of an early years curriculum framework, and a more efficient regulation framework of registration, inspection and enforcement.

3.5.2 Enhancing the Quality of Early Years Staff

There is concern about the supply and recruitment of qualified early education and childcare workers, during a period of rapid and significant expansion of services (HERA 2 Report, 1999; Daycare Trust, 1999). Research has demonstrated that many childcare workers are not well qualified and that there are problems of high staff turnover, recruitment and retention in some sectors (HERA 2 Report, 1999; Pascal and Bertram, 1999, Daycare Trust, 1999). Recent figures from the Daycare Trust (1999) indicate 40% of the childcare work force is untrained with low pay and a high turnover. It is estimated that 60,000 new childcare workers are needed for the expansion of out of school childcare alone. These problems are compounded by low pay, poor career structures, lack of consistent training and qualification standards, low status of childcare workers and gender stereotyping (DfEE, 1998). There is a recognition that there are three key problems facing the Government in increasing the level of qualifications in the sector:

- not enough trained staff are working in childcare;
- too many skilled staff are leaving;
- not enough individuals are entering childcare and education training programmes.

(Daycare Trust, 1999)

The Government recognises the importance of providing more access to training in childcare and parenting skills as a key element in strengthening the quality of service provision. It also recognises the need to make such training available to informal carers as well as formal carers, to ensure such training is provided

through coordinated health, social service and education activity and to link these initiatives into local needs, through the work of local Partnerships. It has therefore stated its intention to set up a national training and qualifications framework which would be recognised and used across the field and also to increase funding for infrastructure, course provision and support for trainees (DfEE, 1998)

3.5.3 Developing Regulation and Inspection Systems

A key priority for the Government is to develop a comprehensive, cohesive and uniform system of regulation and inspection for all early years services. The current systems of regulation and inspection reflect the historical split between education, care and health services and do not really address the needs of reconfigured and integrated services for children and families from birth. Although nearly all providers come under a system of regulation and inspection, currently there is a lack of consistency, fairness and uniformity across the services, and in some cases the systems militate against partnership and integration. Moreover, it should also be noted that the distinction between education and care is increasingly recognised as inappropriate.

3.5.4 Developing Curriculum Frameworks

Although there has been a well defined National Curriculum framework for all education settings for children from 5 - 16 years, there has not been a corresponding framework which has guided the development of effective early education and care programmes for children from birth - 5 years. This has resulted in a diversity of programme content and process, and, in some cases, a downward pressure of the National Curriculum which was designed for older children, particularly on providers who cater for 3 - 5 year olds. Clearly defined curriculum programmes for under threes have been virtually nonexistent. A key priority for the Government is therefore the development of a nationally recognised framework and guidelines to allow providers to develop appropriate curricula (or developmental programmes) for under fives, which can support the development of high quality early childhood programmes.

3.6 Parental Partnership and Parental Choice

The Government has recently stated its keenness to emphasise the shared responsibilities of parents and professionals in the development of young children (Blunkett, 1999). Whilst facilitating the development of more centre based provision for young children from birth, the Government is actively encouraging all providers of early education and care to develop strategies for working in close partnership with parents to involve them more closely with the care and education of their children (QCA, 1999). There is also an emphasis on the need to develop more family friendly employment practices to facilitate this involvement.

In addition to this emphasis on increased partnership with parents the Government also has a clear commitment to provide parents with flexible and accessible choices in their early education and childcare preferences by supporting a system with diversity and flexibility, which can be responsive to a range of parental needs.

3.7 Decentralisation and Modernisation of Local Government

The Government is committed to an agenda aimed at modernising local government, which is intended to change radically the existing relationship of central and local government in the delivery of public services. The White Paper, 'Modern Local Government: In Touch with the People', published in 1998, and its ensuing legislation, has brought about a reform of political structures, with increased local democracy and accountability, and the new duty of best value in the delivery of public services. It is intended to make local councils more accountable, to provide for stronger leadership and to free up time spent in local committees for more community involvement and representation. Patterns of local authority planning and provision of public services also increasingly involve partnership with other providers, with a variety of community representatives and with service users.

3.8 Cost Effectiveness and Value for Money

The Government has moved beyond a cost minimisation approach in public service delivery in the UK, particularly with regard to early childhood services, and has accepted the need to invest substantially in the development of good quality ECEC. However, there has also been a concomitant emphasis on the need for all programmes and services to address issues of cost effectiveness and value for money. In addition, all public services now have to operate with 'Best Value' principles, in order to ensure the effectiveness and quality of their services, and to provide evidence on value for money in their accountability processes.

Newly developing early childhood programmes are thus coming under greater financial scrutiny to justify their existence and effectiveness. The Government is clearly concerned to ensure the newly allocated funding leads to maximum impact from its implementation. The development of evaluation systems in early childhood to ensure their value for money and cost effectiveness are becoming a priority for all providers. All new Government funded early childhood programmes are now required to have an in built evaluation strategy with a clear emphasis on documenting the outcomes and impact of new initiatives in order to ensure the meeting of objectives and cost effectiveness.

SECTION 4: POLICY APPROACHES

Since the last change of Government in May 1997, there has been unprecedented attention and resources devoted to the expansion and enhancement of early childhood services within the UK. This commitment at policy level has been operationalised in a wide range of initiatives, which have brought in a period of radical and far reaching restructuring of early childhood services. Merely documenting these changes reveals the extent and depth of the changes occurring, and their potential consequences for the future development of the social fabric of UK society. As Peter Moss comments, in a critical evaluation of the impact of current policy,

“Educational provision has been made for all four year olds and is to be extended to at least two thirds of three year olds by 2002; a National Childcare Strategy has been proposed, to be implemented by Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships, informed and guided by Child Care Audits and local Early Years Development and Childcare Plans; the Sure Start initiative will target children under three and their families in disadvantaged areas; a programme of Centres of Early Excellence, intended to highlight ‘best practice’, has been launched; new sources of funding have been provided, including a Childcare Tax Credit to be introduced in October 1999; both the regulation of early years education and childcare and the desirable learning outcomes are under review, the latter by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA); the QCA, together with the National Training Organisation (NTO), is working to develop and implement a framework for qualifications and training in early years education, childcare and playwork sectors. Faced by such evidence, no one can doubt that early childhood services are a priority of Government nor the determination of Government to increase access to and standards in these services.”

Moss, 1999, p. 229

In this section of the report, the range of current policy initiatives and the approach to service delivery that they represent will be described.

4.1 Developing an Integrated Approach

There is a clear intention by Government to cut across existing departmental boundaries and develop a ‘joined up’ approach to policy delivery in the interests of coherent and effective support for children and families. The aim is to develop a seamless web of policies which will cross traditional demarcation boundaries and make access easier for families and children in the UK. This integrated approach is being pursued through a number of policy initiatives, and through the funding mechanisms which accompany them. All the initiatives demand an approach to early childhood service delivery which is multi-sector, embraces the notion of partnership and requires the historical boundaries between education, care, health and family support to be reconfigured into a cohesive support system for children and families.

4.2 Working in Partnership: The Development of Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships

Partnership in the development and expansion of early childhood services is at the heart of current Government policy. The role of Local Authorities in service delivery is changing and patterns of planning and provision increasingly involve them in partnerships with other providers, and a variety of community representatives and users. The key exemplar of the partnership approach in action is the development of local Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCP) in England.

Early Years Development Partnerships (EYDP) were put into place in England by the Government soon after the 1997 election. They had a clear mandate and role in the development and expansion of high quality and accessible early education places within their local authority. The new Partnerships introduced a strategic planning framework in each Local Education Authority for the provision of nursery and childcare places across the private, voluntary and publicly maintained sectors. They might also be viewed as a mechanism to distribute resources between potentially competing sectors to ensure collaboration and an equitable distribution of the funding cake. They were given the target of providing a good quality early education part-time place, free of charge, for all four year olds whose parents want it, by September 1998. That target has been achieved. Targets were also set to extend a similar entitlement to three year olds over time. The EYD Partnerships became Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership or EYDCP in 1998 with the launch of the National Childcare Strategy. They have to represent a wide range of early years interests, including the private and voluntary sectors, local education services, health and social services.

The task of the local Partnership, working with its partner Local Education Authority, is to draw up an agreed annual local Early Years Development and Childcare Plan, taking into account the Children's Services Plans and Reviews which were previously formulated by the local authorities. The DfEE issues detailed annual planning guidance on the production of these Plans (DfEE, 1999). The EYDC Plans are linked to nationally delineated targets with regard to the provision of early education places for 3 and 4 year olds, and are also required to set out how child care places will be increased within their area. The Plans are required to address issues of quality, affordability and accessibility across the range of services in their area to consider how parents will have access to the information they need, by developing Children's Information Services (CIS) for their area. The EYDC plans are updated annually and are subject to approval of the Secretary of State. There are similar intentions to establish Early Years Partnerships in Wales. In Scotland, Childcare Partnerships have been established with the same remit as the English EYDCP.

The establishment of local Partnerships therefore demonstrates a commitment by Government to deliver the national policy concerns and priorities through local collaborative partnerships which cross historical service delivery boundaries. A DfEE commissioned evaluation of the effects and effectiveness of EYDCPs is currently underway, carried out by SWA Consultants Ltd.

4.3 Approach to Expansion

The aim of the Government is to increase accessibility to early education and childcare by the expansion of new early education and childcare places. Their stated objective is to support new education and care places catering for up to one million children from birth to 5 years by 2003. Support will be given for places in a range of different types of childcare services to ensure there is a mix of provision available to meet the needs of all children and their families. The clear intention is to build this expansion upon existing provision and to encourage cross sector involvement. Thus, providers from the private, voluntary and state sector are to be involved in the expansion programme. To achieve the projected expansion levels the Government are working through local EYDCPs, who are required to draw up local early education and childcare plans in line with national targets, and to identify and assess local need, paying particular attention to rural areas and the needs of shift workers. The Government is also making money available to sustain provision in disadvantaged urban and rural areas during this time of change. The expansion programme is being approached on two fronts; one focusing on the development of increased early education places, the other focusing on developing childcare places, and where possible to do this in unison.

4.3.1 The Early Education Scheme

In 1997 the new Government's intention to increase education places for 3 and 4 year olds was clearly stated. After election, the Government swiftly set about changing the previously instituted arrangements for expanding early years provision through the Nursery Voucher Scheme and introduced an alternative expansion mechanism. All the newly formed local Early Years Development Partnerships were required to draw up a local Plan which showed how a free, part-time, early education place would be provided for all four year olds whose parents wanted it from September 1998 onwards in each local area. They were also required to include targets for three year olds. This Plan was submitted to the DfEE for approval, after which funding was allocated to meet the costs of the new early education places. These new places were to be provided by a range of approved early education private, voluntary and state sector settings. Thus, in England free, part time, early education for all four year olds has been available since September 1998.

The Government is also committed to doubling the percentage of three year olds in free nursery places in England to 66%, (or 190,000 places), by 2002. To support this expansion a total of £390 million pounds is to be made available between September 1999 and March 2002. In September 1999 the first tranche of £40 million was allocated to 57 local education authorities with the greatest social need to fund free, part time, early education places for three year olds. In October 1999, the Government announced a further tranche of £100 million to continue this expansion. EYDCPs are required to target this new money on places where there is the greatest social need. From April 2000, EYDCPs will use this funding to increase the number of early education places for three year olds to around 83,000 in 2000 - 01. The Minister stated,

“This expansion in free three year old places is good news for both children and parents. The increase will mean that in 2000 - 01 over 50% of three year olds will be entitled to a free early education place....Parents will have a wide range of early years settings to choose from for their children. Over 80% of the free places created in September are provided by the private and voluntary sectors. We expect to see the private and voluntary sectors continuing to play a key role when all Local Partnerships benefit from this new money from next April.”

Margaret Hodge, Minister for Employment and Equal Opportunities, October, 1999

In Scotland, following the 1997 General Election, new Scottish Ministers announced their ambition for universal preschool provision for four year olds to be achieved by Winter 1998. The expansion was achieved by a specific grant scheme (introduced in the academic year 1998 - 99) to local authorities. Ministers were keen that the expansion in provision should include the private and voluntary sectors, especially where this would suit parental needs and preferences. Currently, all local authorities are commissioning places from the private and voluntary sectors. However, the attitude towards partnership varies across Scotland.

During Summer 1998, Scottish Ministers announced a further ambitious target for the expansion of early education to three year olds. Their aim is for universal provision for three year olds by 2002. Guidance to Childcare Partnerships in 1998 gave advice on planing the expansion of provision with specific grant available from the Autumn term of 1999. By the end of the academic year 1999 - 00 it is expected that around 60% of three year olds will be in early education provision. This expansion has led to a further marked increase in the number of places commissioned from the private and voluntary sector.

4.3.2 The National Childcare Strategy

In May 1998 in its Green Paper, “Meeting the Childcare Challenge”, the government announced an ambitious, comprehensive and unprecedented programme for the expansion of childcare in England for children from birth to 14 years, and up to age 16 for children with disabilities, through a National Childcare Strategy.

“Our aim is to ensure good quality affordable childcare for children aged 0 - 14 in every neighbourhood, including both formal childcare and support for informal arrangements. The strategy is founded on a commitment to promoting the well being of children, offering equal opportunities for parents, especially women, and to supporting parents in balancing work and family life.”

DfEE Green Paper, Meeting the Childcare Challenge, May 1998

It was stated that this strategy should, where possible, be integrated with educational provision in a way which promotes continuity for children. The clear intention is to extend access to day care for those who want it. Meeting the needs and enhancing the opportunities of children, is at the heart of the Strategy. The Government itself will not provide, but will draw on provision in the private and voluntary sectors. Green Papers covering the Strategy were also published in Scotland and Wales, and a consultation Paper is

planned for Northern Ireland. This radical initiative places the development of high quality, affordable and accessible childcare as a central priority for the Government, underpinning other key policy objectives, including welfare to work, tackling social exclusion, raising educational standards and supporting families in modern Britain. It also fits with the new workplace relationships being promoted through Fairness at Work and the Employment Relations Bill.

Mechanisms for implementing the National Childcare Strategy are to be planned, rather than simply depending on a market driven approach. The intention is, over five years of the Strategy, that out of school childcare will become available for every community needing it, helping up to one million children. Responsibility for delivering its ambitious targets rests with the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) at national level. Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships have also been given statutory responsibility for identifying local childcare gaps, planning, expanding and improving childcare services. The targets include:

- an expansion of childcare, including one million out of school childcare places over three years;
- help to parents with childcare costs through the childcare tax credit element of the Working Families Tax Credit;
- greater involvement by employers in childcare;
- a childcare information service in every local authority area;
- improvements in the quality of childcare and integration with education, including:
 - developing an integrated training framework;
 - introducing the minimum wage which will benefit many childcare workers;
 - reviewing current regulatory systems to develop a uniform system.

It is estimated that by the end of March 2000 over 22,000 additional birth to three year old childcare places will have been created in England , and over 60,000 new out of school childcare places for 4 to 14 year olds (DfEE, October 1999).

To support the development of the National Childcare Strategy significant Government investment has been made to put quality, affordable childcare for children aged birth - 14 years within the reach of all families who need it. In total, £470 million has been allocated for the strategy in England from 1998 - 2003; £170 million from the New Opportunities Fund to support out of school provision in 1999 - 2003, and £300 million, including £25 million receipts from the Windfall Tax in 1998 - 1999, from the DfEE. Within this total, £44 million has been made available from 1999 - 2000 for the expansion of childcare places. This includes £6.7 million to support existing good quality childcare that would otherwise be in danger of closing. Each local authority area has been allocated a share of these funds, and from February 1999 local Partnerships have been given responsibility to set out in their annual Plans their strategy for providing universal childcare for children from birth - 14 years, based on the annual Childcare Audit of provision in each Partnership area. They are also required to provide plans of how they will meet any shortfall of childcare places in their area over time. A new Working Families Tax Credit has also been introduced to increase accessibility for low and middle income families (see Section 4.9).

4.4 An Integrated Approach to Service Delivery

There is a clear intention by Government not just to expand the number of early education and childcare places, but also to reconfigure the way in which all services for children and families are delivered. The integration of early years services into an holistic and comprehensive child and family support structure which embraces education, care, health, family support and adult education is being strongly encouraged in funding strategies. A number of nationally led but locally focused early years programmes have been developed as 'trailblazers' to pilot new, innovative approaches to integrated service delivery and to provide evidence of their effects and effectiveness.

4.4.1 The Sure Start Programme

The Sure Start Programme is a cross-departmental strategy aimed at promoting the physical, intellectual and social development of children from birth to 4 years, particularly those who are disadvantaged, to ensure that they are ready to thrive when they get to school. The launch of Sure Start provides a clear demonstration of the Government's commitment to tackling complex issues which may reduce family breakdown, strengthen children's readiness for school and benefit society in the longer term by reducing crime and supporting the development of more stable family units. It is a key element in the Government's strategy to reduce social exclusion by shifting the focus away from remediation towards prevention. It is an acknowledgement by Government that high quality early investment can make a difference to the health of the child and their ability to thrive when they start school. The Government have set aside £452 million for the Sure Start programme in England which is intended to provide help and support for children from birth to 4 years and their families.

Sure Start is therefore a new and innovative strategy designed to work with families to give children in disadvantaged areas a better start in life. It is hoped that Sure Start will improve the life chances of younger children through better access to early education, health services, family support and advice on nurturing. To achieve this the Programme involves a cross departmental strategy to improve services for young children and families in areas of need. It is envisaged that by the end of 2002 there will be at least 250 local Sure Start programmes across England. They will complement the work of the EYDCPs, Children's Service Plans and Health Improvement Programmes. They will also build on existing good practice and link with other Government initiatives, such as National Priorities Guidance for health and social care and the New Deal for Communities.

The first 60 trail blazing Sure Start programmes began in summer 1999, and a second wave of 69 projects was announced in November 1999. These projects include:

- outreach services and home visiting;
- support for families and parents;
- services to support good quality play, learning and childcare;

- primary and community health care and advice about child health and development and parent health;
- support for those with special needs.

This programme has both national and local evaluation strategies, which are currently being developed.

Scotland also has a similar initiative, called Sure Start Scotland. It aims to provide additional and better integrated support for at least an additional 5,000 children in Scotland. The expanded support will provide a good start in children's lives and help children to benefit from preschool education which will be available to all Scottish three year olds by 2002. More generally, the initiative will promote social inclusion and is aimed at providing community based, family focused resources, including high quality childcare and direct support to parents, which through a variety of mechanisms will strengthen the parents' ability to maximise their children's potential.

In Scotland, £42 million has been allocated for this initiative over the next three years to local authorities. The planning role has been given to local authorities although a multi-disciplinary inclusionary approach is crucial to the success of the initiative. There is an acknowledgement that a number of different models for delivery will be appropriate.

4.4.2 The Early Excellence Centres Programme

The Early Excellence Centres (EEC) Pilot Programme is intended to provide a network, (initially up to 25), of early years providers demonstrating innovation in multi-agency, integrated early years services and high quality early education and childcare for children under 5 years and training for adults, bringing together education, care, health, adult education and community development. EEC are intended to provide models of good practice for other providers and to demonstrate the feasibility and effectiveness of integrated family services.

It is a phased programme and so far 29 Early Excellence Centres have been designated in England, with an expansion of the Programme under consideration. The EEC Programme forms an important part of the Government's broad based strategy for raising standards, increasing opportunities, preventing family breakdown, reducing social exclusion, increasing the health of the nation and addressing child poverty. Designated Centres or Networks are expected to undertake a wide range of functions, including:

- the development and delivery of high quality integrated education and day care for young children;
- the development and delivery of opportunities for parents, carers, families and the wider community to access support, health advice and adult education opportunities;
- the provision of multi-agency working in service delivery, including education, social services, health, and other agencies;
- the extension of family involvement in young children's learning and development;
- the combating of social exclusion;

- the dissemination of good practice in integrated service delivery and the provision of training for early years practitioners;
- the support of the EYDCP Plans;
- the exemplification of cost effectiveness and value for money;
- the dissemination of their work, and the work of the pilot programme, locally and nationally.

In short, designated Early Excellence Centres or Networks are testing out different approaches to integrated service delivery and acting as ‘beacons of good practice’ to support others who wish to adopt a similar approach. For example, one Centre might provide nursery education, extended day care, out of school services, family literacy and adult learning all on one site. Other models involve the networking of several providers and services. One of the key functions of the EEC is the dissemination of successful integrated service provision to other providers, through demonstration and training, and in this function they differ from other initiatives like Sure Start, which are primarily focused on supporting their immediate community of families. Early Years Centres or Networks which are successfully designated as Early Excellence Centres receive additional DfEE funding for three years to support and enhance the additional services they offer. Several of the Early Excellence Centres also link closely with Sure Start Projects, Healthy Living Projects and Education Action Zones. There is a National and Local Evaluation Strategy to evaluate the effects and effectiveness of this Pilot Programme currently underway (Pascal, Bertram et al, 1999; Bertram & Pascal, 2000). In Scotland, a centre-based approach to Early Excellence was not followed. Instead, Ministers launched an Early Years Best Practice Initiative, which aims to disseminate good practice via a series of local and national events.

4.4.3 Out of School Childcare

This initiative supports the National Childcare Strategy and is intended to provide opportunities to help parents, particularly women, balance work and family life and become economically active. Under the New Opportunities Fund (NOF), £170 million from the National Lottery has been made available to create out of school hours childcare places for 865,000 children across the UK between 1999 - 2003. Of this, £20 million will be spent on integrated out of school hours childcare and education schemes. The funding for this Programme is divided between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This funding will enable children and young people to participate in play, sport and arts activities. It provides out of school childcare, before and after school and holiday provision, for children attending any school, full time or part time, aged 3 - 14 years. Also some 15 and 16 year olds may be eligible, for example, if they have special needs. NOF’s grants complement the Government funding earmarked for the National childcare Strategy. So far awards totalling over £7 million have been made (DfEE, 1999).

4.4.4 Education Action Zones

A pilot programme of Education Action Zones (EAZ) has been established in England to encourage innovation and raise educational standards in urban and rural areas with a mix of under performing schools and the highest level of disadvantage. Action Zones are intended to provide opportunities for new local partnerships, led by Local Education Authorities, Training and Enterprise Councils, businesses or others, to act where current approaches are not working well or quickly enough. A key feature of the Action Zones is a multi-agency approach, working with parallel initiatives on employment, health and social services issues. It is anticipated that business involvement at national and local level will also be important. Action Zones normally cover two or three secondary schools, their feeder primary schools, and also associated early years services, and are set up for 3 - 5 years in the first instance. Each Zone can receive up to £1 million a year, of which the Government commits up to £750,000. These Zones are typically in areas of social deprivation, where the challenges are greatest and where the need for excellent educational provision is particularly important. So far, 56 EAZ's have been announced for England, with an anticipated total of 73 by the end of 2000.

Local interests have to apply to the Secretary of State to form a Zone. Each Zone is led by an Action Forum. Forums are likely to include representatives of the schools involved and the Local Education Authority. Parents, the local TEC, business, the Churches, voluntary bodies and others may also be represented, plus a Government nominee. Forums draw up action plans for raising standards and put these to the Secretary of State. Approved plans attract DfEE funding. It is intended to promote flexibility and innovation in Zones. For example, schools in Zones can tailor the use of the National Curriculum where appropriate. They could also propose to operate outside the national pay and conditions arrangements for teachers. Zones also have priority access to many of the Government's programmes, such as the Early Excellence Centres Programme, the Sure Start Programme and the Literacy and Numeracy Summer Schools.

4.4.5 Health Action Zones

The links between good health and diet and effective schooling have been acknowledged by Government in the introduction of Health Action Zones (HAZ) in England. These Zones are intended to provide a greater density of health provision in key areas within a health authority area in order to provide a wide range of health needs to tackle the root causes of ill health and address some of the particular issues pertinent to that, such as child health and underage pregnancy. To date, 20 HAZ have been announced. Several of the HAZ are linked in with Sure Start or Early Excellence Centre projects.

4.4.6 Regeneration Programmes

There are a number of regeneration programmes which draw funds from a variety of sources to develop strategies for tackling long term unemployment and to promote regeneration in regions and communities suffering from long term decline and under investment. These Programmes often include support for young children and families. Relevant funding programmes include:

- Single Regeneration Budget: bringing together 20 Government spending programmes;
- European Social Funds: supporting a wide range of programmes;
- New Deal for Communities: tackling multiple deprivation in the poorest neighbourhoods;
- Pathfinder Projects: providing greater coherence to regeneration work in an area.

4.4.7 Prevention of, and Support for, Teenage Pregnancy

Given the high rate of teenage pregnancy in the UK the Government is currently developing a number of locally based programmes to prevent teenage pregnancy. These programmes will include a range of strategies covering health, education and social support for teenagers who are at high risk. There is also a new programme of Childcare Pilots for teenage parents, announced in October 1999 by the DfEE. The intention of the pilots is to test out the effect on educational participation of offering childcare support for 16 and 17 year olds with babies, in order to help young mothers or fathers to continue their education and become job ready. At least two of the pilots are to be linked with Sure Start and Early Excellence Centre Projects.

4.5 Approaches to Quality Assurance, Improvement and Accountability

The Government is committed to ensuring the expansion of early childhood services is accompanied by a strategy to ensure that all ECEC services are of high quality. It is therefore providing leadership and strategic direction in quality assurance, improvement and accountability within a framework of planning, funding, quality control and the provision of professional advice and guidance for all early years providers. A clearer definition of quality early childhood services, which can be applied across sectors and which encourages integration of services, is emerging at national level through guidance provided by the DfEE for EYDCP's, and by QCA for early education providers. This includes the newly published Early Learning Goals and forthcoming curriculum guidance for early education providers (QCA, 1999). However, within this national guidance, the Government is also keen to encourage local, community focused responses to quality implementation. This mix of national direction on quality and local implementation of practice is a characteristic of the Government's approach to quality improvement and accountability in early childhood settings.

The UK has had well developed systems of regulation and inspection for some years for both the education and care sectors, but there has been little cohesiveness between and within the two systems. It has not had a

comprehensive system of quality improvement or well developed systems of accountability which are appropriate for integrated service delivery in the early years. These challenges are being tackled through a number of initiatives.

4.5.1 Developments in National Regulation including the Inspection Framework

Currently, early years education and care in England are regulated under two main systems. The maintained school sector, and also private, voluntary and independent providers wishing to claim state funding for the provision of *early education*, are subject the inspection arrangements overseen by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) described below. Providers of childcare are regulated and inspected under the Children Act, 1989. It should be noted that these co-existing systems are very different in scope, nature and process.

OFSTED Inspections: Schools in the public maintained school sector are inspected at least once every six years under Section 10 of the Schools Inspection Act 1996 (known as Section 10 Inspections) by a team of OFSTED registered inspectors. This inspection is carried out by a team of at least three inspectors over a three or more day period. Settings in the private, voluntary and independent sectors, who receive public funding for early education places are subject to Section 122 Inspections by OFSTED registered inspectors, (previously Section 5 Inspections), under the School Standards and Framework Act. The Section 122 OFSTED inspections are carried out by one inspector who makes a one day assessment visit. Both inspections check the quality and standards of provision leading to the 'Desirable Learning Outcomes', (now 'Early Learning Goals'), set for children of compulsory school age by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). It is important to note that inspections carried out under Section 10 and Section 5 (122) are significantly different. Although there are common strands, in a number of important respects, the two systems should not be seen as equivalent.

When Section 5 (122) inspections were introduced in 1996 to accompany the Nursery Voucher Scheme, aimed at expanding provision for 4 year olds in England, OFSTED and inspection contractors worked to a tight time scale to establish a new framework for quality assurance. They identified and trained enough personnel to inspect the 16,000 settings which had applied to be able to redeem nursery vouchers in the early stages of the scheme. This scheme is currently being applied to all voluntary and private settings providing funded early education places for 3 and 4 year olds.

In Scotland, Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) operate in a similar way to OFSTED. HMI inspect all local authority preschool provision on a cycle of around 6 - 7 years. These are thorough inspections whereby a centre's performance is assessed against a number of performance indicators. The final reports of inspections are published. HMI also inspect private and voluntary sector providers who provide grant funded preschool provision. These inspections fall into one of two types. Registration inspections are

carried out within six months of a centre being registered to provide preschool education. Thereafter, private and voluntary providers are assimilated into the normal inspection cycle for preschool settings.

Registration Under the Children Act 1989: Daycare in the private, voluntary and statutory sectors is regulated under the Children Act, which places the responsibility on Social Service Departments to register provision, to inspect it at least annually and to ensure that conditions imposed nationally or locally are enforced. Staff who often specialise in regulation of early years services, are organised in different ways with over half of them being based in registration and inspection units which regulate other kinds of provision e.g. residential homes.

There has been a demand from providers for some time to rationalise the existing arrangements for quality assurance under the different systems operating in the private and voluntary sectors, (the Section 5(122) OFSTED inspections with an education focus and the Children Act inspections with a care focus). In March 1998 the Department for Health and the Department for Education jointly issued a consultation document on the regulation of early education and day care. This document outlined the existing systems of regulation and set out the Government's desire to see a more uniform regulatory regime which took into account the tendency for early education and day care to be carried out in the same institutions; the expansion in day care under the National Childcare Strategy; and the concerns about the variability of regulation and inspection between different types of institutions and between geographical areas.

In August 1999 the Government announced that the regulation of early years education and childcare would be brought together under a new arm of OFSTED. The intention is to bring together two of the existing systems for private and voluntary providers into one consistent and uniform set of standards for all providers offering early years services (except maintained schools which will continue with the OFSTED Section 10 inspection system). Margaret Hodge, the Minister responsible for the initiative stated,

“The safety of our children and the quality of their care and education is paramount...We are sorting out the confusion, duplication and the unfairness which two separate regimes have created....Our proposals will bring together the best of childcare regulation and inspection with the best of early years education regulation and inspection. We shall have a set of clear national standards which will ensure that all children receive good quality, safe early years services and that providers are clear about the standards they must meet. I fully intend to involve those in the early years sector in devising these standards. We hope to bring forward legislative proposals as soon as possible.”

Margaret Hodge, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Public Statement, DfEE, 2nd August 1999.

The intention is that a new arm of OFSTED will be established to bring together the existing systems of regulation. It will have overall responsibility for regulating early childhood education and day care. Under this new integrated regulation system the new arm of OFSTED will develop the delivery of a regulatory system under national standards set out by the DfEE, in consultation with others. These standards will include all four aspects of regulation, namely registration, inspection, investigation and enforcement. It is

expected that the new regulatory framework developed by OFSTED will be modular, which will allow appropriate standards for different types of provision, with a single regulator carrying out whatever checks are necessary at a particular time, by selecting appropriate modules. It is also envisaged that the central functions of OFSTED will be underpinned by a regional and local network to deliver the day to day regulation of providers and this will embrace existing Social Service officers currently responsible for regulating day care. The current level of fees for registration and annual inspection levied on providers under the Children Act will be reviewed. It is intended that inspection reports of individual providers will be made available for parents and that OFSTED will publish an annual report of inspection trends and the quality of provision inspected. The new regulation and inspection framework will require primary legislation before it can be fully implemented. A Care Standards Bill was therefore announced in the November 1999 Queen's Speech, which set out the Governments' legislative programme for the current Parliamentary term.

In Scotland, there were similar concerns over local authorities' roles as both provider of, and regulator and inspector of, childcare services. In March 1999, a White Paper was published, "Aiming for Excellence", which announced Ministers' intentions to create a new body to be responsible for the regulation and inspection of those services currently regulated and inspected by local authorities, including childcare. The Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care will be established by primary legislation in the new Scottish Parliament and should take up its responsibilities in 2002. It is envisaged that there will be cooperative working between the Commission and HMI to ensure that providers are not overburdened by inspection procedures.

4.5.2 Local Implementation of Quality Assurance, Improvement and Accountability Framework

The role of the local authority has changed significantly in recent years, particularly in relation to the provision and monitoring of quality early education and childcare services. Many local authorities have integrated responsibilities for children and families at departmental and committee levels in order to facilitate a more coherent and 'joined up' approach to local policy making and implementation. The establishment of the local Partnerships, and their relationship with the local education authority, has also meant a readjustment in relation to the planning, provision and monitoring of early education and care provision at a local level. The new provisions therefore require a new way of working in partnership with all stakeholders, and local authorities are no longer able to take unilateral decisions, on service delivery or quality assurance, as they have in the past.

Working in partnership with their EYDCP, local authorities have a statutory obligation to monitor and improve the quality of early education and day care provision in their area. Staff are employed to act as quality assurance and development workers within a local area, and to facilitate the provision of quality improvement systems and professional development opportunities for all early years workers. The quality assurance work is normally carried out by locally appointed early years advisors/inspectors, who may have

both a regulatory and inspection brief. The quality improvement work is normally carried out by locally appointed early years development workers, who may have responsibility for working with a number of local service providers. Each EYDCP Plan is required to demonstrate how it is coupling the national systems of quality inspection with local systems of quality improvement. In most cases these locally supported systems in ECEC services are moving towards 'self evaluation and action planning' models of quality improvement.

A number of quality improvement strategies have been developed through national research and development projects and are being adopted at a local level in the UK. These include:

The Effective Early Learning Project (Pascal, Bertram et al 1997) is a national (and internationally adopted), quality evaluation and improvement programme developed by the Centre for Research in Early Childhood at University College Worcester, originally for early education settings, but increasingly being used in day care services to support an integrated approach to service delivery. The programme is implemented through a rigorous three day training programme, followed by a process of supported and externally validated self evaluation, action planning and improvement. The process also carries accreditation, both for the setting and the staff, who are trained to implement the evaluation methodologies.

The Preschool Learning Alliance 'Aiming for Quality' Scheme has been developed for preschools. This is a self evaluation scheme, supported by a series of documentation and procedures, which are validated by PLA officers. The scheme provides an accreditation process for preschools (including those defined as day nurseries).

The Confederation for British Teachers (CfBT), linked with the University of Glasgow is developing an accreditation scheme based upon evaluation materials developed by the Scottish Independent Nurseries Association. The pilot scheme has been implemented in Scotland and England and the full scheme will be launched shortly.

The Day Care Self Evaluation Scheme (Munton and Mooney, 1998) has been developed by the Thomas Coram Research Institute with funding of the Department of Health to provide. This is a self evaluation and development scheme which operates through the use of detailed evaluation materials and guidance, aimed primarily at day care settings.

National Childminders Association Accreditation Scheme: developed for childminders.

The Early Childhood Education Forum Quality and Diversity Framework: produced by the collaboration of a wide group of early childhood national organisations. This framework is intended to enable early childhood practitioners to think about, develop and extend the learning of young children from birth to 8 years.

Funding for the implementation of these self evaluation schemes is increasingly being found through the Standards Fund, allocated to each EYDCP by Government to support quality and training initiatives.

4.6 Approaches to Staffing, Qualifications and Training

There is an acknowledgement that a key factor in the development of quality early years services is the quality of staff who work within the services. The lack of sufficient well qualified practitioners in the profession, outside the state school sector, is well documented in the UK and the Government has made the enhancement of qualifications and access to training a key part of its approach to raising the quality of services. There is also some disparity in the staffing requirements of different types of early years service which the Government is attempting to tackle. A number of initiatives are addressing the important staffing issues which early years services currently face.

4.6.1 Changes in Staffing Requirements

There are different adult:child ratios for different early years settings. Current ratios for maintained nursery classes and nursery schools with 3 - 4 year olds in England and Wales are 2:26 (1:13) and 2:20 (1:10) respectively, where one is a qualified teacher and one a qualified nursery assistant. Adult: child ratios in reception classes are not regulated, and in some cases may be 1:30. In Scotland, the ratio for all local authority settings for three and four year olds is 2:20. There are no reception classes in Scotland.

Current Children Act regulation for the centre based full and sessional day care sector, including voluntary preschools, requires an adult:child ratio of 1:8 for 3 -5 year olds; 1:4 for 2 -3 year olds and 1:3 for 0-2 year olds, regardless of qualification. For home based childminders the adult:child ratios are 1:3 for under 5's and 1:6 for 5 -7 year olds.

In August 1999 the Government announced an injection of £30 million to increase the number of qualified staff in reception classes in England and to move towards more consistent staffing levels in early years settings. This money, which will provide a 75% grant of the estimated average cost of an additional member of staff, is being initially directed towards 60 local authorities in areas of highest deprivation to provide 3,000 more staff in reception classes by 2001 and will benefit 75,000 children. The intention is to reduce adult:child ratios in reception classes to a maximum of 1:15. In October 1999 a further £13 million was announced to reduce adult child ratios in a further 40 local authority's reception classes from September 2000.

This initiative has been signalled as the first step towards changing adult:child ratios for three and four year olds, in order to put in place a more consistent approach across private, voluntary and statutory early years settings. In this initial phase of development, a pilot scheme of 50 private and voluntary nurseries who

have a fully qualified teacher and a qualified nursery assistant will be allowed to work on the same ratios as the maintained nursery sector of 2:26. These settings will be monitored closely to identify the effect of this change.

International and national research on the effect of adult:child ratios on the quality of day care will also be reviewed more thoroughly to identify key messages on the relationship between ratios and the quality of day care. Research data currently being compiled from the Institute of Education, University of London, Effective Provision of Pre-School Education Project (EPPE) examining a range of factors in early years settings which may have an effect on child development, including staffing ratios, (for more details of the EPPE Project see Section 5), will also be examined. Evidence from the private and voluntary sector pilot scheme and the review of research will inform further decisions on ratios. This work will begin in January 2000.

In Scotland, Ministers are also committed to the harmonisation of adult:child ratios and the input of qualified staff across all sectors. A consultation paper, 'The regulation of Early Years Care and Education' was issued in March 1999. Following this consultation, Ministers are due to announce their intentions.

4.6.2 The Encouragement of Lifelong Learning

There is an increasing emphasis in all fields of public service for higher skill levels and training to support these. Lifelong learning is a strong theme in educational policy making and encompasses basic literacy to advanced scholarship. It is the Government's intention to generate a culture and system which enables adults to access education and training at any stage in an individual's working lives. By international standards, a high proportion of students at British higher and further education institutions are mature students. We also have a lower rate of retention in the later stages of our education system. The Government wants to create a 'learning society' in which everyone, from whatever background, routinely expects to learn and upgrade their skills throughout life. They acknowledge that this will require a revolution in popular culture, in attitudes to learning, in participation levels and in delivery methods. A wide range of initiatives are being introduced to support this policy.

In June 1999, the Government published a White Paper called 'Learning to Succeed, which set out the framework for delivering a 'Learning Age' vision (set out in a Green Paper, February 1998). This proposes new arrangements from April 2001 to set up a Learning and Skills Council with 47 local councils and a £5 billion budget, with employers having the largest input; a new youth programme, Connexions; greater cooperation between 6th forms and colleges; an independent inspectorate for all work related learning; a new role for OFSTED in 16 - 19 provision in schools and colleges; an Employment Service, taking over work-based learning for unemployed adults; and savings from cutting bureaucracy and streamlining service delivery.

A range of other life long learning initiatives have been announced. These include a University for Industry (UFI), to be launched in autumn 2000, with a programme to open up access to life long learning in the home, the workplace and the community, with a £44 million budget for 1999 - 2000. It is anticipated that 100 UFI 'learning centre hubs' will be operational by March 2001. A Learning Direct national freephone helpline has been set up offering impartial advice on careers and training, with a £6.25 million budget for 1999 - 2000. A scheme of Individual Learning Accounts has also been established in April 1999, funded via Training and Enterprise Councils (TEC), to empower adult learners by helping them to save for and plan for learning. They operate much like standard banking accounts and the intention is to make them available under a national framework. Through these Accounts, individuals will get 20% discount (up to £500 a year) and 80% discount on certain IT training. Employer contributions will qualify for deduction from taxable profits.

These, and other initiatives, such as the Family Literacy and Numeracy schemes, are directed to double adult basic skills provision to help 500,000 a year by 2002. A £9 million cash boost for adult education from the DfEE Standards Fund (to be doubled in 2000), has been made available. Local education authorities are also devising Lifelong Learning Development Plans with their partners, to identify gaps in provision and lever in extra funding, to develop local Training Targets, in line with National Targets.

A key factor in all the new initiatives is that education and training should be available at work, at home, in part-time or full-time study, at times and places which suit individual needs. Developments which are intended to make education and training more flexible include:

- open and distance learning;
- flexible modes of study;
- modular courses;
- work based study;
- access to funding.

The Government has also introduced a national training framework which includes:

- national education and training targets;
- 800,000 extra places in further and higher education by 2002, many of which will be taken up by part time and mature students;
- career development loans;
- training for the unemployed (New Deal Programme);
- generous discounts for individuals and employers through learning accounts;
- 36,000 organisations committed to Investors in People;
- Union Learning Fund cash boost to £10.5 million over four years;
- over 160 projects set up to promote community based learning through the Adult and Community Learning Fund.

At present 1 in 5 adults have poor basic skills and many adults have poor access to training and adult education. The aim is to help 500,000 adults a year by 2002. It is anticipated that these developing opportunities will benefit the large number of unqualified and poorly trained early years staff, and also many parents of young children.

4.6.3 Developments in Early Childhood Qualifications and Training (excluding teacher training)

The ambition of the Government is to provide seamless, high quality services across care and education that meet the needs of children and their families. Training is clearly a central concern in the realisation of this aim. The Government intends to deal with the confusion and duplication in training in the early years sector. Many childcare qualifications are not recognised outside their local area or their sector and there is a need to link further and higher education effectively, so staff can progress to higher levels of qualification and training. To address these issues the Government is establishing a national qualifications framework which includes both academic and vocational qualifications, to overcome the traditional barriers which have bedevilled the care and education sectors in early years. It is also promoting greater flexibility within the system to facilitate employees in all sectors to attain progressively higher levels of skills.

To facilitate these intentions in the field of early education and care, in November 1998, a new Early Years National Training Organisation (EYNTO) was established. This body is one of 75 NTOs that have been established to improve the future competitiveness of the UK by increasing the level of knowledge and skills of workers in each sector. It is a strategic organisation that claims to represent everyone, including paid staff and volunteers, who works in the UK with children between the ages of 0 - 8 years (excluding teachers). It functions legally as a division of the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education, (CACHE) and is funded by CACHE and the Early Years Sector, with additional funding for Project work from central and local government. The Early Years NTO is responsible for the training strategy for the UK early years sector and, while it does not itself provide training, it advises on all issues of training and qualifications. To fulfil these responsibilities it has worked collaboratively with the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) to develop a national Qualifications and Training Framework for the early years, launched in September 1999, which includes links into graduate teacher training (QCA, 1999). The framework sets out the skills and competencies people working with children will need in order to deliver good quality integrated services. The framework also provides national recognition for qualifications, enabling people to progress in careers across the sectors and explaining what training and development is needed to achieve the competencies and qualifications. The NTO will also identify training needs and maintain accurate data about the work force and coordinate the provision of training.

In Scotland, where the early education and childcare picture is less complex, an overarching Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework has been established. As part of this, the development of an 'early years map' of training and qualifications is in progress.

To support the increased demand for trained childcare workers there has also been an increase in Government funding for adult training. For example, the Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) have been allocated an additional £7 million in 1999 to train childcare workers. The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) is also to train an extra 68,000 childcare workers in 1999, and the Standards Fund is providing increased training for childcare workers in 1999 - 2000 through the local Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership Plans. Childcare training is to be provided by a variety of bodies nationally, including Further and Higher Education Colleges, PLA, Montessori Training Colleges, and the National Childminders Association.

4.6.4 Developments in Teacher Education and Employment

The Teacher Training Agency (TTA) currently administers the funding for initial teacher training in England. It also accredits institutions offering ITT courses and acts as a source of information and advice on teaching as a career. At present it does not involve itself in the development of training and qualifications for other early years workers, which are being developed by the Early Years NTO and QCA. In Scotland, initial teacher training is funded by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council. Almost all teachers employed in the state school system, and some in the private and voluntary sectors, complete an approved course of initial teacher training (ITT) which leads to the award of qualified teacher status (QTS) or, in Scotland, a teaching qualification (TQ). Initial teacher training courses are provided by universities and other higher education institutions. A National Curriculum for ITT in England and Wales was introduced in September 1997, based on the requirements of the National Curriculum, and recognising Early Years as a specialism, along with subject specialisms. In Scotland, all courses must comply with guidelines issued by the Secretary of State. In Northern Ireland, ITT covers five areas: understanding the curriculum and professional knowledge; subject knowledge and preparation; teaching strategies and techniques and classroom management; assessment and recording pupils' progress; and foundation for future development. This model of professional competence is also designed to link the three main stages of training - initial training, induction, and early in-service training - to promote continuing professional development across all three.

Non-graduates usually qualify for qualified teaching status by taking a three or four year degree course in which subject study and professional training are undertaken concurrently. Graduates normally take a one year Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) course. Part-time and distance learning PGCE courses are also available and mature applications are encouraged. Some innovative, cross disciplinary Early Childhood degrees are also being developed with the aim of supporting a more integrated view of early childhood services. These courses have addressed the need to train practitioners at degree level with the skills required to manage complex, multi-professional settings which meet the broad range of needs of children and families.

Following training and appointment, all teachers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are formally appraised over a two year cycle to assist their professional development and to improve the quality of education for pupils. The Government is currently reviewing the current appraisal arrangements. There is no statutory appraisal in Scotland. However, the Government is committed to ensuring all Local Education Authorities operate effective systems of staff development and review. The current appraisal guidelines are being reviewed and The Scottish Executive plans to issue new guidelines.

The Government also intends to establish General Teaching Councils (GTCs) throughout Britain by 2000 which will act as a voice for the profession and a focus for everyone with an interest in high standards of teaching. A General Teaching Council already exists in Scotland with which all teachers in state schools in Scotland must be registered.

In 1998 the Government published a Green Paper “Teachers - Meeting the Challenge of Change”, which raised a number of issues with regard to teacher recruitment, retention and professional development. The intention of the Green Paper is to introduce a new pay and rewards structure for the teaching profession which will reward good teachers for excellence in the classroom, provide increased opportunities for professional growth and development, and to boost the recruitment of good graduates into the profession (Blunkett, 1998). The Green Paper makes proposals to strengthen and support teaching in schools through better leadership, better rewards, better training and better support. In summary, the Green Paper proposes the introduction of:

- a new pay structure for the teaching profession;
- appraisal of teacher’s performance as the basis for professional judgments on pay and career development;
- a performance threshold giving access to higher pay for teachers with consistently strong performance;
- a School Performance Award Scheme to reward achievement by whole schools;
- more pay for tough leadership jobs, the option of fixed term contracts and more effective appraisal for heads linked to pay;
- a National College for School Leadership and a new framework for headship training;
- more flexibility and more rigour in initial teacher training;
- systematic career and professional development;
- a national fast track scheme to help talented trainees and teachers advance rapidly through the profession;
- more effective use of, and training for, teaching assistants and other school support staff;
- a Small School Support Fund to encourage small schools to work together.

These Green Paper proposals have been out for consultation and the results of this consultation are currently awaited.

4.6.5 Anti-Racist Training

Since 1976 the UK has had a Race Relations Act which addresses issues of direct and indirect discrimination. However, recently the facts of on going racial discrimination and disadvantage have been highlighted in a number of high profile national incidents, such as the Stephen Lawrence case and the following MacPherson Inquiry which identified the concept of 'institutionalised racism'. There is therefore a concern by Government to ensure that anti-racist policy, training and service delivery is a key element in the development of all public, private and voluntary services, including early childhood services. The Early Years Training Anti-Racist Network (EYTARN) has been working to address these issues for some time and has developed a framework to ensure that all early years services and every setting should be organised so that they ensure the provision of racial equality in employment and all services for young children and their families (EYTARN, 1999). It consists of six parts:

- all EYDCP's should incorporate policies for racial equality as a part of their Early Years Development Plan;
- all early years workers should ensure that these policies are implemented and monitored;
- all EYDCP's should ensure all people working in early years settings are committed to implementing racial equality;
- all aspects of early years services should be free of unlawful racial discrimination;
- everyone working in early years services and all children and families should be treated with equal concern;
- strategies should be developed which support learning positive attitudes towards those different from themselves and counter any negative attitudes and behaviour to differences.

The adoption of this framework has been recommended by the DfEE in its planning guidance for all EYDCPs, and most are working at their strategies to implement its constituent elements, using guidance issued by EYTARN.

4.6.6 Developments in Terms and Conditions

The introduction of the minimum wage in the UK has benefited many low paid childcare workers. There has also been recognition (Daycare Trust, 1999) that the pay, conditions and levels of training for childcare workers should be monitored as the National Childcare Strategy is implemented, and the Daycare Trust (1999) is supporting a campaign to ensure a better deal for some of the lowest paid workers in Britain.

4.6.7 Enhancing Practitioner Recruitment and Retention

The successful delivery of the expansion in early education and the National Childcare Strategy requires a massive expansion in the size of the childcare and early education workforce. It is estimated that up to 60,000 new early years workers will be needed over the next five years for out of school childcare alone

(Daycare Trust, 1999). There is also a general shortage of new teachers, which is acute in some curriculum areas and in certain geographical locations. Strategies to attract more childcare workers and to build an enhanced career trajectory for them are currently being considered. There is a particular concern to attract more male early childhood workers into the profession. The Teacher Training Agency has also launched a national recruitment strategy for teachers, which aims to attract more males and more teachers from ethnic minority groups, into the profession.

4.7 Approaches to the Early Childhood Curriculum

4.7.1 The Early Learning Goals and Foundation Stage Curriculum

In October 1999, the Government announced the introduction of a Foundation Stage to precede the National Curriculum Key Stages 1 and 2 within England (QCA, 1999). The Foundation Stage encompasses children from the age of 3 to the end of their Reception year (5+ years). This initiative is a major innovation and is intended to make a key contribution to the establishment of quality early learning and good practice across all sectors who provide early education in England. The Foundation Stage 'Early Learning Goals', developed by QCA, set out what children should be able to do by the end of their Reception year. These goals replace the previously delineated 'desirable learning outcomes' (DLOs) for children of statutory school age and will come into operation from September 2000. The revised guidelines provide for the development of children's personal, social and emotional skills as well as more subject based areas of learning. The new framework does not set targets for each year of the Foundation Stage, as in the Key Stages of the National Curriculum, and the 'Early Learning Goals' do not form a curriculum in themselves. They are intended to provide the basis for planning throughout the Foundation Stage, thus laying the foundations for future learning. The guidance also acknowledges the importance of play in young children's development. The role of practitioners in supporting children's learning is emphasised. More detailed guidance on effective teaching in the Foundation Stage is being developed by QCA and will be published in Summer 2000.

The Foundation Stage Curriculum is organised into 6 areas of learning:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Language and Literacy
- Mathematics
- Knowledge and Understanding of the World
- Physical Development
- Creative Development

These 6 areas are identified to help practitioners plan the learning environment, activities and experiences and to provide a framework for the early years curriculum. Following these 6 areas a series of relevant

Early Learning Goals have been identified. These ELG establish expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage, but are not a curriculum in themselves.

The 'Early Learning Goals' for each area of learning provide a delineation of what children should be able to do by the end of their reception year (aged 5+ years).

The previous Government introduced baseline assessments of pupils in Personal and Social Development, Language and Literacy and Mathematics when they enter primary school in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The purpose was to provide information for curriculum planning and to establish a baseline against which the progress of children and a school may be viewed. Currently, there is no national system of baseline assessment in Scottish schools. The QCA will consider changes to existing schemes for Baseline Assessment in England in accordance with the new Foundation Stage 'Early Learning Goals'.

Curriculum frameworks and guidance for the under 5s in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland differ from that in England. For example in Scotland, there is no statutory curriculum but rather a set of guidelines covering preschool, 5 - 14 (including primary and the first two years of secondary education), and secondary education. The guidelines are based on existing good practice and have been developed with the involvement of the teaching profession and representatives of parents and the wider community. They are subject to widespread consultation before publication in final form. They have generally been well accepted by the teaching profession which has invested considerable effort in implementing them. Discretion is left to schools and teachers to plan the detailed content of their programmes.

A 'Curriculum Framework for Children in their Preschool Year' was also published in Scotland by HM Inspectors of Schools in September 1999. An update, to take account of the expansion of preschool education to three year olds was published by the Scottish Consultative Council for the Curriculum in June 1999, entitled, 'A Curriculum Framework for Children 3 - 5'. The guidelines address the learning and development needs of children from the time they enter preschool education. The guidelines take account of what children have already learned by the time take up a preschool place and underline the fact that learning for young children goes on all the time, not just in Centres delivering 'education'. The guidelines are therefore relevant to all who are involved in the education and care of young children.

A key feature of the Scottish guidelines is the emphasis on learning through play. The key aspects of children's development and learning are highlighted. These are:

- emotional, personal and social development;
- communication and language;
- knowledge and understanding of the world;
- expressive and aesthetic development;
- physical development and movement.

Each key aspect sets out a range of learning to which all children are entitled during their preschool years and the guidelines give a number of detailed examples from practice. HM Inspectors of Schools, in conducting inspections of preschool settings in Scotland will look to see whether children are being given access to the full range of learning opportunities described in the Framework.

4.7.2 National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy

The Government is committed to raising standards in schools. National targets have been set in literacy and numeracy. By 2002, the Government expects that 75% of all 11 year olds will be reaching the standards expected of their age in mathematics and 80% of 11 year olds will be reaching the standards expected of their age in literacy. These are ambitious targets and in order to support their achievement the Government introduced the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) in September 1998, and the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) during 1999 for all primary schools. In both these programmes there is an intensive support programme as well as the ongoing development of the summer literacy and numeracy school programme. The National Literacy Strategy and National Numeracy Strategy have also informed the development of the Foundation Stage 'Early Learning Goals'.

4.8 Approaches to Family Oriented Policy

A key element in the developing system of early childhood services has been a commitment by the Government to encourage and facilitate more family support and involvement in children's learning and development. To this end a number of initiatives have been introduced.

4.8.1 Family Friendly Employment

In August 1999, the Government's Department of Trade and Industry set out its intention to encourage more family friendly employment policies with the introduction of more rights for parents. From December 1999 for the first time in England, fathers will get the right to parental leave when their children are born or adopted. Paid maternity leave will be increased from 14 to 18 weeks, (which can be extended to 29 weeks on statutory pay after birth), and the qualifying period of employment is to be cut from two years to one. Mothers who qualify will get pay at 90% for the first six weeks, with a low flat rate payment for the remainder. Mothers, fathers and adoptive parents will be entitled to up to 13 weeks unpaid leave over the first five years of a child's life, and parents and carers will also gain the right to time off to cope with 'family emergencies', such as dependants' illness or death or breakdowns in childcare arrangements. Fathers and mothers from poor households who exercise their right to parental leave are also entitled to claim benefit to supplement their income from the time they take off work. This means that all two parent families have access to income support of at least £100 a week if they take up their new statutory entitlement to three months unpaid leave to care for children. Previously, only lone parents and the sick or

disabled would have been allowed to claim financial help from the state while taking parental leave from their employer. This move, also introduced from December 1999, is expected to help about 1000 parents a year and demonstrates an intention to encourage the take up of parental leave amongst low income people in work. A package of support for businesses to ease the burden of new rules providing for 13 weeks unpaid leave over the first five years of a child's life have also been announced. The clear intention of all of these changes is to make it easier for working parents and carers to balance work and home responsibilities. These increased rights mostly fall under the terms of the 1996 European Union directive agreed under the Social Chapter and were included in the Employment Relations Act passed in July 1999.

The Government has also sponsored Parents at Work (a national organisation) to produce a pack for employers to explain the business benefits of helping their employees with childcare needs. They have also published a consultation document, "Supporting Families" which describes the benefits of family friendly employment policies.

4.8.2 Family Literacy Strategy

The Family Literacy Programme aims to improve language and literacy among parents and children. It covers the following activities:

- courses for families with children from 3 to 6+;
- support for families where English is an additional language.

During 1999 - 2000 the Government Standards Fund will support a wide range of Family Literacy courses, with the intention, by the year 2000, of covering all Local Authority areas.

4.8.3 Parent Involvement and Choice in Education and Childcare

The DfEE has asked the local EYDCP to make plans for a range of support for parents and informal carers, such as family members and friends, including information, advice, equipment, training and access to childcare. A key part of this strategy is the provision of more information to inform parent's childcare and early education choices. To facilitate this the Government is offering funding for start up costs for free information services at a local and national level, and particularly for the development of Information and Communications Technology for this purpose. The Government is also keen that such information services should be managed locally to ensure good local coverage and responsiveness but should hook into a national system of information and data. Information on childcare services should be unbiased, accurate and up to date and made available to parents in a wide variety of forms and languages. A national childcare information line is being considered as a supplement to local information services.

Parental involvement is also a key part in the newly developing Early Excellence Centres and Sure Start programmes. Within the school sector, the DfEE wants to see more parents involved in running schools. School Governing Bodies are to be restructured to increase parental representation. Parents are also to be given a greater say on local authority education committees. Each school is also required to have a written home - school agreement with its families, drawn up in consultation with parents. This agreement explains the respective responsibilities of the school and parents and what it expects of its pupils. Parents are invited to sign the agreement after their child's entry to the school. These agreements remind parents of their legal obligations in terms of school attendance, make expectations clear on discipline and set out how schools will implement national homework guidance. Each school must give parents a report on their child's progress at least once during the school year; and a copy of the governors' annual report.

The following information must be made available to parents if they request it:

- performance tables for all their local schools;
- a detailed prospectus or school brochure;
- school inspection reports.

This information is intended to make schools more accountable to their parent body and local community and encourage teachers and pupils to improve their performance.

4.9 Funding and Financing ECEC Services

Funding for early education, childcare and family support has been significantly increased since 1997. It is estimated that the investment over the period 1998 - 2002 will amount to some £7.5 billion. Extra money has been allocated both for the development of infrastructure and for the development of new childcare and early education places.

4.9.1 Early Education Funding Mechanisms for Four Year Olds

The Government has undertaken to provide a free, good quality, part time early education place for every eligible four year old whose parents want it. This part time entitlement is for five two and a half hour sessions per week. Parents may decide not to take up their full entitlement, in which case the place may be funded on a pro-rata basis. Free early education places for four year olds are currently funded through two routes:

- Under Fives Standard Spending Assessment (SSA);
- Specific grant under the Nursery Education and Grant Maintained Schools Act 1996.

SSA

The Under Fives SSA allocation is calculated according to:

- the population of birth to 3 year olds at a set point in time;
- the number of 4 year old children in LEA maintained provision at a set point in time.

Local education authorities determine through their Fair Funding arrangements how the SSA, which is unhypothecated, should be distributed to schools and nurseries in the maintained sector. Fair Funding is the successor to the Local Management of Schools (LMS) Scheme. It is a single, unified funding system for all maintained schools in England, which also encompasses the funding of former Grant Maintained schools within the local education authority (LEA) funding mechanism.

Under Fair Funding there are five strategic areas for which an LEA may deduct resources from the Local Schools Budget. The areas are specific grant, special educational needs, school improvement, access to education and strategic management. Once the LEA has deducted resources for its central needs, the remaining funds, which is the Individual Schools Budget, is then delegated to schools. This is done using predominantly pupil numbers and other formula factors. The Government has made it clear to LEAs that at least 80% of the Local Schools Budget should be delegated to schools.

Specific Grant

Specific grant (also known as nursery education grant), is calculated based on a termly headcount of all eligible children attending settings on a particular day. All providers that are included as part of a local authorities' Early Years Development and Childcare Plan, are entitled to submit claims for payments via their LEAs. The grant rate for 1999 - 2000 is £1,130 per eligible child for five, two and a half hour sessions over 33 weeks per year.

Specific grant is payable via LEAs in respect of all eligible children educated in settings in the private and voluntary sectors, and for any new places created in the maintained sector since the most recent qualifying Schools census. In respect of the private and voluntary sectors settings, LEAs simply operate as paymasters on behalf of the Secretary of State.

Payments to Providers

The DfEE makes an interim payment to LEAs of 50% of specific grant due. This was previously based on an estimate from a local authorities' providers of the number of eligible children expected to be attending their settings that term. However, from Spring Term 2000, LEAs will no longer need to supply termly estimates of the demand for Nursery Education Grant, instead the DfEE will be using the previous years headcount data to calculate the first payment.

A balancing payment would then follow in the second half of the term once the LEA had provided the DfEE with the results of the termly headcount. LEAs are expected to pay providers within ten working days of receipt of funds from the DfEE.

4.9.2 Early Education Funding Mechanisms for Three Year Olds

The Government is committed to offering children, particularly those in social need, more early education before they commence compulsory schooling. £390 million is being made available over three financial years, starting in 1999, to fund free early education places for three year olds, on a national basis. At present this will not mean universal provision for three year olds. However, it will increase the proportion of three year olds able to access a free place from 34% to 66% by 2002, with increasing numbers anticipated beyond this date. These places are being phased in from 1999, beginning with the 57 LEAs of greatest social need. From 2000 funding will be distributed across all LEAs to enable all areas to increase the number of three year olds able to access a free early education place. These new free places for three year olds will be focused on the children with the greatest social need through a policy agreed by the local EYDCP.

These places will be funded in a similar way to that for four year olds, with a few noticeable differences.

- This policy does not presently allow universal places for three year olds. LEAs have been allocated enough funding to allow them to create a specific number of new, free places for three year olds. Once LEAs have reached this funding limit, they are not able to be funded above it.
- Specific grant will be available to the private and voluntary sectors as it is for four year olds, subject to the providers and children being eligible. The first 57 LEAs who are receiving funding for supplying new places for three year olds during 1999 - 2000 are able to receive specific grant for any new places created specifically for the 1999/2000 academic year. From autumn term 2000, base figures will be issued to LEAs, based upon data received above the base figure will then be funded through specific grant. A specific grant must, as previously mentioned, be within the funding limits as allocated.

4.9.3 Childcare Funding

Each EYDCP is responsible for drawing up an annual plan, underpinned by a local Childcare Audit, which identifies shortfalls in the local provision of childcare services and areas of greatest need. The Plans should detail the Partnership's approach to the implementation and location of funds. Existing providers will be identified during the audit process and may be approached for direct participation in the Partnership's plans.

Childcare grant is used mainly to develop infrastructure and to provide services e.g. development workers, children's information services, training and quality assurance arrangements, which are accessible to and benefit to all local childcare providers. A small number of providers who need a subsidy to maintain financial viability may receive direct funding, from the childcare grant, via the local authority, if they meet criteria determined by the local partnership.

4.9.4 Funding for Training

The Training and Enterprise Councils (TEC) Childcare Partnership Training budget was allocated £4 million in 1998 -1999 and TECs have been allocated £7 million in 1999 - 2000 and will have further funding for 2000 - 2001 for the delivery of childcare workforce training. The budget is ring fenced and TEC may not vire the money for other programmes. TEC are reimbursed towards the costs of delivering training and development activities for childcare workers (or those who want to work with children) and childcare providers, as set out in their Business Plan.

TECs are required in their Business Plans to identify training and development activity which supports childcare. They are also required to maintain a close dialogue with EYDCPs to ensure that training meets local needs and reflects the requirements of both existing and potential childcare workers in their area. Training and development activities eligible for funding under this budget include:

- new or additional training opportunities delivered flexibly to better meet the needs of people working with children;
- innovative locally devised approaches to overcome barriers to training i.e. time, transport, venue, urban/rural location;
- support for those wishing to work towards qualifications;
- training, advice and support for those who run/want to run childcare businesses i.e. self employed childminders; to improve the skills required to run sustainable provision.

Providers do not directly access this funding but benefit from training and other support provided locally.

4.9.5 The Introduction of the Working Families Tax Credit

The introduction of the new Working Families Tax Credit and the Disabled Person's Tax Credit from October 1999 marks a significant contribution to the funding of childcare for low income families in the UK. These schemes replace the existing system of Family Credit and Disabled Working Allowance. The tax credits are targeted at low and middle income families and are intended to be more generous than the benefits they replace, so that more people will be eligible. In its first full year of operation, 2000 - 2001, it is expected that 1.4 million families will receive the tax credit, about half a million more families than previously received Family Credit and the Disabled Working Allowance. It is anticipated that the childcare tax credit will make a significant contribution to the EYDCP Plans, by helping to make childcare more

affordable for low (and middle) income households. The tax credits are new forms of financial help from the Government which are intended to make work pay and help eligible families with childcare costs.

'Childcare tax credit' can be worth up to a maximum of £70 a week for one child; and up to a maximum of £105 a week for two or more children to a limit of 70% of the costs of registered or approved childcare. Families can benefit from the maximum childcare tax credit if household earnings are less than £14,000 a year with one child, and £17,000 with two or more children. Families with up to £22,000 a year with one child in childcare, and £30,000 with two or more children in childcare, may also be eligible for some help towards childcare costs.

Eligible childcare for the Tax Credit scheme includes childcare for under 8s which is registered under the Children Act, (such as childminders and nurseries), and out of school childcare for the 8's and over, (such as breakfast clubs, after school clubs and holiday play schemes, provided on school premises or by a Local Authority). Other provider organisations may apply to become an accredited organisation and so eligible for the Tax Credit from April 2000. The intention of this new scheme is to increase demand for childcare services and make it accessible to a wider range of low and middle income families. The DfEE is working closely with the Inland Revenue to ensure that financial help for working families with childcare costs is widely publicised.

SECTION 5: RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

5.1 Priorities in Research and Evaluation

The purpose and place of research and evaluation in relation to the development of early childhood policy and practice has received increasing attention over recent years in the UK. The importance of research and evaluation as key contributors to the successful implementation of the Government project on early childhood is not disputed. In fact, research and evaluation from the UK and abroad which demonstrated, unequivocally, the long term and societal importance of investing in high quality early childhood services, have played an influential part in the current priority accorded to this aspect of Government policy. The development of a lively and productive research community in early childhood has been substantial over the last decade.

5.1.1 Debate on Applications of Educational Research

In recent years there have been questions raised about the relevance of educational research in the UK. The influence of research on the development of policy and practice has also been disputed (Tooley and Darby, 1998). An independent review of educational research, commissioned by the DfEE in 1997, indicated that the disparate funding mechanisms in educational research had led to a large number of small scale studies which had generated little synergy or impact (Hillage, 1998). This critique has prompted discussion in the research and political community about the current efficacy of educational research, and the future direction of its development.

This debate in relation to early childhood research has been more difficult to locate as research into early childhood education and care is spread across a number of disciplines, including education, social science, psychology, paediatrics, health and sociology. However, there has been a growing discussion in the research community about the relevance and ethics of some research methodologies in early childhood (David, 1997; Bertram, 1998). The lack of evidence currently available about the efficacy of different early childhood programmes and intervention strategies has also been highlighted in a recent review of early childhood interventions in the UK which was commissioned by the UK Treasury. This review found that many early childhood programmes had been implemented over the last ten years, but few had a well developed evaluation strategy associated with them and so had not generated definitive evidence on either their effectiveness in achieving aims or their cost effectiveness. It was also pointed out that evaluative methodologies in education, particularly cost effectiveness methodologies, were not well developed (Oliver et al, 1998; Pascal, Bertram et al, 1999). This current debate has led to a refocus on evaluation strategies in early childhood policy and a critical review of the research strategy, methodologies and funding for early childhood research nationally.

5.1.2 Government Funded Research and Evaluation

The Department of Education and Employment (DfEE) and the Department of Health (DoH) regularly commission research and evaluation projects into various aspects of educational and social policy. In recent years, an increasing number of these projects have focused on early childhood provision. The findings of these projects are usually published by the funding Department in their in-house research reports. Since the debate on the relevance and efficacy of educational research in 1998, there has been an expressed desire by all Government Departments for their funded research to be more effectively managed and more strategically planned. To this end, in July 1999 the DfEE circulated a consultation paper entitled, "Developing Our Research Strategy". This Consultation Paper acknowledged the crucial importance of research in developing the Department's knowledge base to inform good policy. It announced a review of the way it works with the research community to ensure a more effective interaction between research and policy making. To support this initiative, and to reflect the importance given to informing policy with research evidence, the DfEE's research budget is to double from £5.4 million in 1999 to £10.4 million by 2002. The consultation reiterates the centrality of the DfEE's research and evaluation effort for policy development and their desire to ensure that policy initiatives provide value for money and cost effectiveness. This means that research and evaluation will have a clear priority in the work of the DfEE for the foreseeable future. There is also a move in relation to early childhood research for Government departments, (particularly Education and Health) to work together when commissioning such work. The commissioning of such large scale, longitudinal research projects by the DfEE, such as the EPPE Project (Sylva et al, 1999) is evidence of the increased priority given to 'evidence based' policy and practice in early childhood. This indicates an important change in the way policy and practice will develop in the future, with far more emphasis on research and evaluation evidence to demonstrate impact and effectiveness.

The DfEE has recently stated 10 research priorities (DfEE, 1999) for educational policy, but early childhood does not feature in these as an individually identified area. Rather, it is implicated in a number of the 10 identified themes e.g. ICT, cost effectiveness, educational participation. This may be due to the emphasis in the research strategy on schools rather than the broad range of early childhood services. The DoH has not as yet issued such a clearly delineated research strategy. However, despite this lack of visibility in research priorities, the DfEE and DoH in their joint early childhood policy have a strong ongoing evaluation programme attached to all new early childhood programmes, which are funded as an integral part of programme budgets. These evaluative data are intended to provide systematic and rigorous evidence on the impact and cost effectiveness of all new early childhood policy initiatives and over time should provide very valuable data as they progress. It should be noted that the DoH has developed a different research culture and strategy to the DfEE. For a number of years they have been supporting a range of research centres e.g. Thomas Coram Research Unit, in order to develop a long term programme of research. They have also tended to favour the funding of ongoing programmes of research work rather than short one off research projects.

The DfEE also has a stated intention to work more closely with the whole research community in order to generate a body of knowledge to inform policy making. As a coordinating mechanism for research in schools they are establishing the 'National Educational Research Forum'. This will help identify what research is being undertaken and identify the priorities for further work. It is also intended to provide greater coordination between the perspectives of funders, researchers and practitioners. The DfEE is also intending to encourage more interaction between Department officers and researchers, by seconding researchers to work in the DfEE and also seconding DfEE officers to work in research centres. It is hoped that this intention will extend to the early childhood research community, including those who work in the non-school sector.

Recently, there has been a significant increase of Government funded evaluations, as a clear mechanism to inform the development of policy and practice, in both the DfEE and the DoH. This impetus has been further supported by the Treasury who are aiming to develop 'evidence-based' policy across all Government Departments. Since 1998, all new policy initiatives in early childhood have costs for evaluation included, and there is a requirement that the effectiveness and outcomes of all policies are demonstrated. There is also a concern to focus on cost effectiveness as a key strand in these evaluations. The development of cost effectiveness methodologies is being supported through the establishment of a new Research Centre in the Economics of Education in 1999. Exemplars of current policy evaluations include the Early Excellence Centre Evaluation (Pascal, Bertram et al, 1999; Bertram & Pascal, 2000); the Sure Start Evaluation (currently being developed) and the EYDCP evaluation (led by SWA Consulting Ltd.). All these evaluations are developing methodologies and data sets by which the effectiveness, cost effectiveness and impact of the initiatives might be assessed in both the short and long term.

5.1.3 Review Systems for Research

Up until now there has been no national review system for social and educational research in the UK. Review has mainly worked through peer review, functioning as part of the process of academic refereeing for publication and grant refereeing for funding. The National Foundation for Research in Education (NFER) has held an annual register of educationally based research projects for a number of years, but this is voluntary and not comprehensive of all the work in the field. The various national and charitable research funding bodies also hold lists of their funded projects. However, there has been no central mechanism for review and collation of all the research underway in the field. To remedy this situation, the DfEE is currently sponsoring a collaborative effort to develop a codified data base of all high quality research in education, including early childhood, following the model of the Cochrane Collaboration in health research. Cochrane Collaboration allows medical practitioners to have instant access to the last research findings in a particular area of medicine. It is intended that such systematic and regular reviews of educational research evidence will be commissioned using the evidence collated by the new centre. This will provide an important national and international resource for all who work in the field.

5.1.4 Government Statistics as Sources of Information

The UK is a data rich country and all Government departments at local and national level collectively hold an enormous range of administrative and statistical data which has relevance for early childhood policy. The Office of National Statistics (ONS), located in London, holds extensive national and local data sets for most areas of social, economic, health and educational policy, many of which are available on the Internet. There is also a newly established Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), funded by local governments, with the key aim of providing comprehensive data summaries of all data sets held nationally and locally, for each policy area, including early childhood. Some of these data sets allow analysis at postcode level.

The DfEE and the DoH have their own statistical and information division which collects and publishes annually a comprehensive set of facts and figures about the implementation and take up of education and employment policy, and health policy, respectively. At present the DfEE and DoH have three major collections of data which include information about ECEC services in England.

- i) The Annual School Census: This data is collected on the third Thursday in January each year from all schools, including registered private schools. These data provide information about teachers and teacher assistants, as well as the number of pupils registered at the school, their age, gender and full or part time status, at the time of the survey. These data are collected at school level and published nationally in statistical bulletins.
- ii) The Early Years Census: This is a new data collection which began in January 1999. It was designed to assist OFSTED and the DfEE in the tracking of private and voluntary providers who are members of the local EYDCP, and in receipt of funding for educational places for 4 year olds. It also collects information on the number of funded educational places for 3 year olds. This survey focuses on the number of children who should have attended the provision during the week of the survey.
- iii) The Day Care Survey: This is a recently developed survey, initiated in 1999 and carried out in annually in March. It counts the number of childcare places in registered provision at local authority level, and includes childminders, out of school clubs, day nurseries, playgroups and holiday schemes.

Taken together, these data will include statistics on education and care provision for birth to five year olds in all sectors. At present there is limited data available on provision in the private and voluntary sector, and of provision for the under threes but this will improve once the data from the Day Care Survey comes on stream. There is also at present some double counting of childcare places across the different data sets, and sets may use different counting categories e.g. places or pupils. However, these inconsistencies are being addressed and there is a clear intention to combine the Early Years Census and the Day Care Survey to create a comprehensive and more extensive annual census on early years provision in England. The DfEE hope to launch a pilot of a new early years annual census in 2000. They are also looking at making the data available on the internet. These data will play an important role in monitoring the development of government early childhood policy over time.

In Scotland, the system for data collection is very similar to England. There are three types of data set:

- i) The School Census: which covers registered school places available.
- ii) The Preschool Education Centres Census: which covers education places available and was extended to include private and voluntary funded educational provision in 1999.
- iii) The Day Care Survey: which covers day care places in the private and voluntary sectors.

In the past data has been under used for research and evaluation purposes, and until recently there has been little cross analysis of DfEE and DoH data with that held by other Departments. The cross fertilisation of data has been inhibited because these data sets are kept in diverse locations, do not follow common patterns of collection or collation and are not always easily accessible. However, the DfEE is actively developing the use of data and is working towards a more uniform system of data collection to enable cross analysis of data sets. To this end, the DfEE, working with the DoH, is attempting to extend the analytical potential of the administrative data collected by a range of other Government departments, which are relevant to early years policy making e.g. The Labour Force Survey (for parental employment), The Family Resource Survey (for childcare use), The General Household Survey (for live in care). It has initiated a project called, 'The 2000 Review', to coordinate all analytical information for the under fives in order to be able to make the general economic and social case for investing in the Under Fives, rather than simply to make the case for the individual strands of current policy. It is also developing other initiatives in core areas to collate and analyse cross department data sets for use in the policy making process at national and local level. Some of these initiatives are cross departmental. For example, the Quality Protects Initiative, led by the Department of Health, is providing an audit of information available across departments on children and families. These developments in data handling, collation and analysis over time should lead to an improved, comprehensive and better utilised national data base, for the development of both policy and practice in early childhood.

5.1.5 Use of Inspection Evidence

The evidence collected through the OFSTED inspection system is held nationally and analysed regularly. Once a year, the Chief Inspector's Report is published, which highlights evidence of annual changes and trends in educational provision and effectiveness, as judged through the evidence collected through the national inspection system. Also, OFSTED regularly carries out special focused reviews of its evidence, for example, on the quality of provision in various forms of preschool setting, and the attainment of children in certain aspects of their learning. Children's cognitive development or learning in literacy and numeracy is also monitored closely by OFSTED using data from the national assessment system.

The data held by OFSTED is being made more accessible for wider use and researchers are being encouraged to analyse and use it within their research projects. There is clearly a wealth of valuable data held by OFSTED which may be used to enhance the evidence base of the quality of early childhood provision in the UK.

The evidence collected through the Children Act inspections is not so detailed and not held in a central location so does not provide the same detailed data base held by OFSTED. Under the new inspection and regulation regime, which brings the two systems together under a new arm of OFSTED these data should be collated centrally for all early childhood settings.

5.1.6 Use of Audit Commission Evidence

The Audit Commission carries out regular reviews of the cost, value for money and cost effectiveness of all aspects of public service delivery at both national and local level. In 1996 it carried out a useful costing analysis of early childhood education and care services and the different forms of provision currently available (Audit Commission 1996a, 1996b). It found that cost per child hour was the most valid unit cost for evaluating early childhood provision across sectors. The study revealed a significant disparity in funding and costing for different forms of provision. It also pointed to the need to be careful when comparing costings, as often full costs are not included in analyses, and this can skew results.

5.1.7 Local Childcare Audits

With the introduction of the National Childcare Strategy, from 1998 the Government requires all local Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships to carry out a local Childcare Audit to map the need and take up of childcare places in their local area, and also to identify shortfalls. These data are centrally collated by the DfEE which in time will give a much more detailed national analysis of childcare provision and uptake.

5.1.8 Practitioner Research

There has been an opening up of the research climate and culture within the UK and an encouragement of practitioner research as a source of evidence of good practice and the effects of various initiatives. For example, since 1997 the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) has provided financial support and forums for the dissemination of small scale practitioner research projects. Regulations for the initial training and continuing professional development of early childhood practitioners, particularly at graduate level and above, also emphasise and utilise practitioner research as a key strand in their training methodology.

5.1.9 Current Priorities for ECEC Research

The DfEE (1999) has indicated that its current priorities for early childhood research and evaluation are:

- an evaluation of the effects and effectiveness of all new early childhood programmes;
- an evaluation of the cost effectiveness of different types of early childhood provision and of different early intervention programmes;
- research to establish difference in the take up of early childhood services between people of different social background, gender, ethnicity, disability, special needs;
- research to provide comparative international evidence of the impact and effectiveness of different early childhood strategies;
- research on training, qualifications, recruitment and supply of early childhood practitioners;
- research on the relevance of ICT to preschool teaching and learning methods;

It is anticipated that these areas will provide the future framework for the development of Government funded research and evaluation.

5.2 Funding of Research and Evaluation

Research and evaluation in early childhood, as in all areas of service delivery, is always limited by the availability and nature of funding. In the past, the funding for research in this field has been severely limited and researchers have struggled to find adequate funding to carry out their work. This was particularly true for longitudinal projects which entailed ongoing financial support. Also projects which have attempted to explore the growing field of early childhood studies and the sociology of childhood have found it difficult to locate funding because it is not specifically policy or practice geared, and employs alternative, and less technical, research methodologies. The funding situation has improved in recent years but early childhood still lags behind other areas of study in terms of financing and resourcing because of the dominance of a rather narrow and technical research paradigm.

5.2.1 Funding Sources

Funding for research and evaluation in early childhood comes mainly from five sources:

1. Central Government Departments e.g. DfEE, DoH;
2. National Research Funding Bodies e.g. Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC); Medical Research Council (MRC);
3. Charitable Trusts and Foundations, National and International Organisations and Professional Unions;
4. Local Government Departments and Local Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships;
5. Higher Education Institutions.

In the past much of the UK research in early childhood education and care has been funded by charitable trusts and foundations as both Government and the national research funding bodies have not given this area of policy and practice high status. In recent years this has changed as early childhood has become a focus for policy internationally and nationally and as a result, more Government initiated early childhood projects are funded. It is evident, however, that national research funding bodies like ESRC still underfund in this area, compared to other fields. Funding from charitable trusts has increased over recent years, with some trusts making early childhood a key priority in their allocation of funds. Trusts who prioritise early childhood work include The Esmée Fairbairn Charitable Trust, The Gulbenkian Foundation, and the Aga Khan Foundation. In addition, the increase in funding allocated at a local level has meant that many local authorities and local partnerships are commissioning their own early childhood research and evaluation projects to inform the development of policy and practice in their local area. Some institutions of higher education have also invested in research projects in early childhood to stimulate their Research Assessment Exercise rating and have established research centres dedicated to this area of research (e.g. The Centre for Research in Early Childhood, University College Worcester). Over the last five years a number of university sector institutions have also established professorial Chairs of Early Childhood, which is a key indicator of the enhanced status and profile of this area of research activity. Early childhood studies is emerging as a field of study in its own right and separated from contributory fields such as paediatrics, psychology or sociology. In short, the increased overall funding available for early childhood research has stimulated a significant increase in the number and scale of research and evaluation projects in the UK over the last five years, but some inequity in funding allocation still remains.

5.2.2 Funding Levels

It is very difficult to ascertain globally exactly how much money is currently provided for research in ECEC in the UK. We can give some overall estimations of funded research in the field of education, but are unable to break these figures down further to provide an accurate picture of the total research and evaluation budget for early childhood services as a whole.

The DfEE total research budget is to be increased as follows over the next three years:

1998 -1999	£5.4 million
1999 - 2000	£7.4 million
2000 - 2001	£9.4 million
2001 - 2002	£10.4 million.

Other publicly financed research expenditure on education and employment issues is estimated at approx. £11 million per annum (DfEE, 1999). £26.5 million is also allocated to education departments in higher education for research purposes (DfEE, 1999). It is anticipated that early childhood research and evaluation will benefit from a proportion of these increases in funding.

5.3 Innovative Approaches to Research and Evaluation

There is evidence of a broadening out and of innovation in the field of early childhood research in the UK. For example, we can see:

- more examples of multi-method research and evaluation projects;
- more use of qualitative, as well as quantitative, methodologies;
- more use of practitioner research;
- more focus on issues of cost effectiveness;
- more emphasis on practitioner or policy relevance in research designs;
- more emphasis on dissemination of findings.

There is a de-mystifying of the research process going on in early childhood, with much more effort being made to make the research accessible and relevant to those in the field. There is also much more involvement of practitioners, parents and children in the research process and a consequent improvement in the ethics of the research process, particularly, where young children are involved. The emergence of many research and development projects, such as the Effective Early Learning (EEL) Project (Pascal, Bertram et al, 1999) and The Peers Early Education Partnership (PEEP) Project (Brooks, 1998), are a reflection of the close interaction between research and practice which is developing. There also seems to be a balance emerging between large scale outcome focused studies and surveys, such as the Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) Project (Sylva et al, 1998) and the Survey of Parents of 3 and 4 Year olds and Their Use of Early Years Services (Prior et al, 1999), which can map trends and patterns in early childhood service delivery and impact; and smaller scale, qualitative case studies, such as the work of Moyles (1997) on adult's support for play practices, which can provide rich, illuminative evidence of policy in practice. The use of new IT techniques in research data gathering and data analysis has also significantly enhanced the reliability and visibility of the research process. The early childhood research community is developing actively within the UK. This is illustrated in the recent launch of an Early Years Specialist Interest Group (SIG) within the British Association of Educational Research (BERA) in 1996, and the high profile of UK researchers in the European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA), which is based at the Centre for Research in Early Childhood at University College Worcester, England.

5.4 Significant Research and Evaluation Projects

This section will provide a brief overview in tabular form of examples of significant research and evaluation projects which have informed early childhood policy in the recent past. It will also provide exemplars of significant research and evaluation projects being undertaken currently in the UK. It should be recognised that these tables are not comprehensive or exhaustive of all the research and evaluation

going on in the field of early childhood. On the contrary, they can only provide exemplars of the kinds of funded research underway and the range of issues being explored.

5.4.1 Exemplars of Past Research and Development Projects

Table 3

5.4.2 Exemplars of Current Research and Evaluation Projects

Table 4

Table 3: Exemplars of Past Research and Development Projects

Year	Title and Description	Researchers	Funding Body
1969 - 1976	<u>The Nottingham Child-Rearing Study</u> A longitudinal study of mothers and children to explore social class patterns of childrearing	Newsom & Newsom University of Nottingham	*
1970 - 1975	<u>Child Health & Education Study</u> A longitudinal study of the cognitive and social benefits of different forms of preschool experience	Osborn & Milbank Bristol University	*
1975 - 1978	<u>Oxford Preschool Research Project</u> A national 3 year inquiry into the care of children under 5, particularly outside the home	Bruner & Judge University of Oxford	SSRC
1987 - 1988	<u>Evaluating Research on the Under 5s</u> A Government commissioned review of all research relating to the education of under fives, intended to inform the further development of policy.	Clark University of Birmingham	DES (now DfEE)
1982 - 1990	<u>The Day Care Project</u> A major longitudinal study of dual earner families whose first child went into day care before 6 months, including child outcomes at 6 years.	Melhuish, Moss, Brannen, Mooney et al Thomas Coram Research Unit	DoH

Table 4: Exemplars of Current Notable Research and Development Projects

Year	Title and Description	Researchers	Funding Body
1993-	<u>Effective Early Learning Project:</u> A research and development project which aims to evaluate and improve the quality of early learning for 0 - 8 year olds in education and care settings across the UK, The Netherlands and Portugal.	Pascal, Bertram Univ. College Worcester	Charities & LA's
1991 - 1999	<u>Avon Longitudinal Study of Pregnancy and Childhood</u> A longitudinal study of a birth cohort of children followed from birth to document their development and the impact of contextual influences.	Golding Bristol University	DfEE
1996 - 2001	<u>International Leadership Project:</u> A collaborative international study investigating aspects of leadership in early childhood professionals in 5 countries.	Rodd Univ. of Plymouth	*
1997 - 2003	<u>Effective Provision of Preschool Education Project:</u> A longitudinal study of the outcomes of children's early preschool experiences, looking at the preschool contextual and family factors which affect children's long term educational and social progress.	Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj- Blatchford London Institute	DfEE
1997 -	<u>Quality Provision for the Under Threes:</u> A research and development project aimed at documenting and enhancing the quality of education and care provision for under threes.	Abbott Manchester Met. Univ.	*
1997 - 2000	<u>Self Evaluation in Day Care Settings:</u> A project aimed to develop and implement systems of self evaluation in day care settings.	Munton & Mooney Thomas Coram RU	DfEE
1998 - 2003	<u>Evaluation of Peers Early Education Partnership Project:</u> An evaluation of a birth to school entry programme based on a disadvantaged estate involving a cohort of all children born on the estate between 1.4.98 - 31.3.99, compared with a matched cohort of children not benefiting from the programme.	Brooks, Shay and Cross, NFER	Charities] DfEE
1999 - 2004	<u>Evaluation of Early Excellence Centre Pilot Programme:</u> An evaluation of the EEC Pilot Programme to identify its effects and effectiveness, including cost effectiveness.	Pascal & Bertram Univ. Coll. Worcester	DfEE

SECTION 6: CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This review of early education and care in the UK provides a striking portrait of services during a time of enormous change and expansion. As such, it is illuminative of the issues which lie at the heart of developing high quality education and care services which are accessible, affordable and capable of meeting the needs of children and families in a modern world. Much has been achieved in the last two years in the UK and the Government has a clearly articulated agenda for further development. As ECEC policy and practice continues to move forward in the UK we have set out some of the key areas where we feel significant progress is being made.

6.1 Integrated Services for Children and Families

There is a clear and stated intention to develop an integrated system of education, care and family support within early years services in the UK. This is an enormous challenge given the existence of the diverse and fragmented set of services which have evolved over time in response to local need. Current Government policy has made significant progress in the integration of these services into a more coherent and comprehensive system of support for all children and families. This has been achieved through the establishment of local partnerships, a linking together of policy initiatives across departments at national and local level, and the encouragement of substantial new funding.

In this new vision, it is recognised that early years services will need to reconstruct themselves, not only as services for children but also as services for families. This requires the development of a different range of professional skills and expertise. Early years settings, and the practitioners within them, will need to continue to evolve so they can address the needs of adults as well as children, and operate in a more holistic, and ecological way. This has enormous implications for the accommodation, training, resourcing and professional identity of those who work in the field of early childhood. Much is underway to achieve this vision, with increased cross sector training initiatives, enhanced working conditions and more opportunities for early years staff to work together and develop a common professional identity.

6.2 Development of Services for Birth - 3s

Services for children from 3 - 5 years have developed considerably over the last two years, and although there remains a shortage of quality childcare places for this age phase, access to affordable, high quality ECEC places has improved rapidly. However, a key priority for the Government is the further development of childcare places for the under 3s. This development will be important in enabling parents to access more training and employment opportunities. It is also recognised that this is the time in a child's life at which the greatest potential benefit might be given to the most disadvantaged children, especially if the childcare provision has a strong educational element in it.

Much is being done with the introduction of the Sure Start Programme, the Early Excellence Centre Programme and the Working Families Tax Credit, which are offering new kinds of services for the under 3s and providing financial support for families to access them. It is anticipated that current action to enhance staff training and recruitment for this age phase, raising the status of work with under 3s and increasing financial incentives for under 3s services to start up, will encourage further expansion of high quality services for these children in the UK.

6.3 Development of Quality

The issue of quality in early years education and care is being widely addressed in the UK with the development of a more integrated and coherent quality regulation and inspection system, the publication of good practice guidance and the availability of specialist training. Over time these initiatives should ensure that all settings meet certain minimum standards of quality, which may gradually be made more stringent as standards of provision improve. The need to provide incentives for settings to go beyond minimum standards and work towards providing excellence in their services is also being addressed through the introduction of systems of ongoing self evaluation and improvement in early childhood settings. These systems are becoming well established in the UK and all types of early years settings are now implementing them in their practice.

6.4 Staffing

There remains a shortfall in the numbers of qualified early childhood practitioners coming into the profession. This is a central concern as the development of the services and the commitment to quality will crucially depend on the ability of the profession to attract and retain high quality and well trained staff. Access to well articulated, coherent and appropriate training opportunities for many early years practitioners is improving, and cross sector training opportunities are now more available at every level, from basic vocational training to higher degrees. We can also identify an emerging reconceptualisation of the professional skills required of an early years practitioner and the consequent emergence of more multi-sector, multi professional training which brings the different sectors together and provides them with a new and shared identity. Work is also underway to provide a more clearly articulated career progression for those who work in early years services, leading to a well rewarded post, with appropriate conditions of service and good prospects for promotion.

6.5 Increasing Equality of Access

Access to high quality early childhood services for many groups in our society has been limited in the past, but this is now improving with targeted action to make services more accessible, flexible and affordable. Providers and practitioners in all areas are now encouraged to address the 'hard to reach' groups in their communities to ensure equality of access to their services. There is some evidence that where these groups are represented in the staffing of a service then it provides easier access for those within the community who might otherwise be reluctant users of the service, and many settings are considering this in their recruitment plans.

6.6 Articulation of Preschool and School

It is acknowledged that the significant developments being made in preschool services in the UK provides an opportunity for a reconsideration of the articulation of preschool and school in the UK. There is a concern to ensure that children moving from preschool to school do not experience discontinuity which may disrupt and prevent a smooth progression of the child's learning and development. The emphasis on partnership between home, school, preschool and care is enhancing the articulation within the system as a whole and providing opportunities for an exchange of professional practice and expertise. The introduction of a more coherent and comprehensive system of ECEC also provides for less fragmentation and a clearer understanding of good practice which can facilitate closer co-operation and collaboration of the different phases in the UK education system.

6.7 Research and Co-ordination of Research

Research and evaluation work in early childhood has developed considerably over the last decade. It is being given more attention, more funding and has more visibility, and is thus able to feed more effectively into the development of policy and practice. A number of developments in research methods and methodologies are also contributing to the utility and visibility of early childhood research. For example, the promotion of transferable practitioner research, which provides valuable insights into the implementation issues of the newly developing services, and, the development of evaluative methodologies to address cost effectiveness of early childhood services, are important developments. More effective methods for the dissemination of research and evaluation findings is a priority to ensure that the profession is fed by the best professional knowledge that is available.

In addition, developments in the collection and utilisation of early childhood statistical data in the UK will provide an important and invaluable evidential base from which policy and practice may develop more effectively in the future. This will also facilitate valuable comparative and developmental work which may be carried out from such statistics.

In Conclusion

The development of a system of accessible, affordable, high quality, integrated education, care and family support for children and families in the UK is well underway. Enormous strides have been taken over the last two years and already it might be said that early years services are being transformed in their quality, accessibility and affordability. It is astonishing that so much has been achieved in such a short time. Much of this is due to the commitment and dedication of those who work in the front line of service delivery, who are grasping the vision provided by the Government and responding to the enormous challenges that they have been set. The significant increase in funding allocated by this Government has also been a major facilitating factor. There remains much to be done, but the conditions are in place for a radical transformation in the opportunities and conditions of life for many young children and their families in the UK.

REFERENCES

- Audit Commission (1996a) *Counting to Five*, Audit Commission: London.
- Audit Commission (1996b) *Under Fives Count*, Audit Commission: London.
- Ball, C.(1994) *Start Right: The Importance of Early Learning*, RSA: London.
- Bernard van Leer Foundation (1994) *Why Children Matter: Investing in Early Childhood Care and Development*, Bernard van Leer Foundation, The Hague, Netherlands.
- Bertram A.D. (1998) Editorial, *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, Vol.7., No. 1.
- Bertram & Pascal (2000) *First Findings*, DfEE: London.
- Blunkett, David, (1998) Secretary of State for Education, *Forward to DfEE Green Paper Summary, Teachers - Meeting the Challenge of Change*, DfEE, London.
- British Medical Association (1999) *Growing Up in Britain*, BMA: London.
- Brooks G., Shay J., Cross J and Smith G. (1998) *The NFER Evaluation of the Peers Early Education Partnership (PEEP): Interim Report*, NFER: Slough.
- David T. (1998) *Researching Early Childhood Education: Methodological and Ethical Issues*, Keynote Paper presented at European Early Childhood Education Research Association Conference, Munich, Germany, September 1997.
- Daycare Trust (1999) *Childcare Now: Briefing Paper 2*, Daycare Trust: London.
- Department of Education and Science (1990) *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Quality of Educational Provision for Three and Four Year Olds: The Rumbold Report*, DES: London.
- DfEE, (1997) *White Paper: Excellence in Schools*, DfEE: London.
- DfEE (1998) *Meeting the Childcare Challenge, Summary of Responses to the Green Paper*, DfEE: London
- DfEE (1999) *Developing DfEE's Research Strategy Consultation Paper*, DfEE: London.
- DSS (1999) *Opportunity for All: Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion*, DSS: London
- EYTARN (1997) *Planning for Excellence*, EYTARN: London.
- HERA 2 (1999) *Final Report: Childcare Training in the UK*, Suffolk County Council.
- Hillage T. (1998) *Excellence in Research in Schools*, DfEE: London.
- Iglesias E.V. and Sen A.K. (1999) *Investing in Early Childhood and Development, Breaking the Poverty Cycle: Investing in Early Childhood*, paper presented at the Inter-American Development Bank Conference, Paris: France, March 1999.
- Johnston, Donald (1999) OECD Secretary-general, Interview in *The Age*, Australia, Saturday October 16th, 1999

- McKie S.(1999) *Generation Y Boys*, Barclays Life Assurance: London.
- Mental Health Organisation (1999) *Children Under Stress*, MHO: London.
- Moss, P. (1999) Renewed Hopes and Lost Opportunities: Early Childhood in the Early Years of the Labour Government, *Cambridge Journal of Education*, Vol. 29, No.2, June 1999, pp229 - 238.
- Moss, P. and Petrie P. (1997) *Children's Services: Time for a New Approach*,
- Moyles J. (1997) *Too Busy to Play?*, NFER: Slough.
- Munton A. and Mooney A (1998) *The Day Care Self Evaluation Scheme*, DfEE: London.
- Myers R. (1992) *The Twelve Who Survive*, Routledge: London.
- National Childrens Bureau (1997) *The Quality and Diversity Project*, NCB: London.
- National Education Commission (1993) *Learning To Succeed*, Heinemann: London.
- OECD (1998) *Early Childhood Education and Care Policy: Proposal for a Thematic Review*, OECD: Paris.
- OFSTED (1999) *Survey of Regulation and Inspection in Local Authorities*, OFSTED: London.
- Oliver C., Smith M. and Barker S. (1998) *Effectiveness of Early Interventions*, Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education: London.
- Pascal C. and Bertram A.D (1997) *The Effective Early Learning Project: Case Studies in Improvement*, Hodder and Stoughton: London.
- Pascal C., Bertram, A.D., Mould, C., Ramsden, F. and Saunders, M. (1997) *The Effective Early Learning Project: A Professional Development Programme*, Amber Publications: Worcester.
- Pascal C., Bertram, A.D., Gasper, M., Mould, C., Ramsden, F. and Saunders, M. (1999) *Research to Inform the Evaluation of the Early Excellence Centres Pilot Programme*, DfEE: London.
- Power, C. (1992) *Health of Our Nation*
- Prior G., Courtney G.and Charkin E.(1999) *2nd Survey of Parents of Three and Four Year old Children and Their Use of Early Years Services*, Research Report RR120: DfEE: London.
- QCA (1999) *Early Years Education, Childcare and Playwork: A Framework of Nationally Accredited Qualifications*, QCA: London.
- Rural Development Commission (1996) *Developing Rural Childcare*, RDC: Wiltshire.
- Scott W. (1999) *Early Years Care and Education: Implications of Recent Developments for Local Authorities*, The Education Network: London.
- Social Exclusion Unit (1998) *Truancy and School Exclusion*, OHMS: London.
- Social Exclusion Unit (1999a) *Bridging the Gap*, OHMS: London.

Social Exclusion Unit (1999) *Report on Teenage Pregnancy*, OHMS: London.

Sylva K., Melhuish E., Sammons P. and Siraj-Blatchford I (1998) *Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) Project*, Institute of Education: London.

Times Educational Supplement, *Extra Help Called into Receptions*, pp6, October 8th 1999.

Tooley J. and Darby D. (1998) *Educational Research - a critique: a survey of published educational research*, OFSTED: London.

Young M.E. (1996) *Investing in Young Children*, Discussion Paper No. 275, World Bank, Washington, DC.