

Early Learning & Childcare

Research Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UNISON Scotland commissioned an independent assessment of the contribution made by Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) staff to childcare and education services in Scotland. The research constructively informs the work of UNISON Scotland in promoting the role, contribution and interests of Early Years Workers (EYWs) in the context of any upcoming expansion of ELC in Scotland by the Scottish Government (SG). The focus of this research is the contribution that the ELC workforce make to current provision in Scotland. Within these parameters, the specific aims are to: describe the ELC sector and its surrounding policy context; analyse the available data on the ELC workforce, their roles and qualifications and how these have developed over the years; provide a short literature review summarising the evidence on workforce roles; examine the available inspection evidence to identify the impact different workforce roles have on the quality of the service; conduct an audit questionnaire survey of UNISON Scotland members in the ELC workforce (the survey achieved 490 usable responses, a response rate of 20%) to ascertain their views of their role and any contrast with GTCS-registered teachers and other staff; conduct five regional focus groups with members of the ELC workforce; and develop any other ideas consistent with the above aims and UNISON's broad policy positions.

The main findings are detailed below.

ELC has become increasingly prominent and embedded in the national policy environment in recent years. Expansion of the sector has been driven on the explicit recognition by the Scottish Government that investing resources early in children can have substantial short, medium and long term educational, social and labour market returns, particularly for those children living in socio-economically disadvantaged households. There has also been widespread acknowledgement that these ELC services must be of a sufficiently 'high quality' to have the most beneficial effects. Both of these 'drivers' are firmly embedded in the policies that shape the ELC sector. ELC has been embedded within the national curriculum since 2007 and is a major component of an interlinked policy landscape that is attempting to address the sustained gap in educational outcomes for and between children in Scotland, often linked to child poverty and unequal opportunity, and limiting social mobility. Although Unison Scotland has broadly welcomed ELC expansion, they have a number of concerns about the future development of the sector: the nature of, and risks in, particular approaches to expanding provision, notably by expanding private sector provision and/or by the introduction of a voucher system, leading to a two-tier service.

The current ELC workforce shows a profile that is predominantly female, in early and mid-career age groups, is mainly working full-time, on permanent employment contracts and professionally qualified for their roles. This raises a number of wider labour market challenges for the sector moving forward: principally, changing the attractiveness of the sector, the gender profile and ensuring staff retention and development. There are now a

variety of generic skills and qualifications pathways to working in the ELC sector. Roles are linked to a set of benchmark qualifications which govern role requirements and new career pathways up to degree level.

The research evidence on quality ratings shows that there is a link between staff qualifications and performance: high quality ELC is associated with highly qualified staff irrespective of whether staff have a degree in teaching or childhood practice. High quality staff, alongside tailored continuing professional development (CPD) and local authority support, is linked to positive practice impacts. Research of this nature underpins SG proposals for additional graduate-level ELC staff to enhancing the quality of these establishments, especially where there are existing deficits in service quality or where new facilities are developed in areas of low or non-existent capacity.

Research on quality ratings is, however, unable to distinguish the impact of different types of staff - teachers or EYWs - on ELC provision or on children's outcomes. The best experiences for children seem to be where there is a range of staff with complementary skills and relevant higher level qualifications. In short, in Scotland and elsewhere, the research evidence to date has no definitive answers to questions about the differential impact of different types of workforce qualifications on the quality of ELC provision, notwithstanding a general consensus across the research base that better qualified leadership and workforce are likely to deliver higher quality provision and, by extension, better outcomes for children. The evidence on existing quality standards in Scotland shows that ELC establishments are rated highly (compared to other areas regulated by the Care Inspectorate) and that those in the public sector (often with no GTCS-registered teachers working in the establishment) appear to offer as good and comparable a service to those offered by establishments managed by teachers, particularly in areas of social deprivation. The evidence on quality standards in Scotland in 2016 shows that overall ELC service ratings have remained consistently high; 90%+ of all day care services are graded good, very good or excellent; and public sector ELC provision tends to be rated more highly than private or voluntary sector establishments. There appears to be no overall correlation in Scotland between areas of deprivation and the quality of available pre-school day care or the type of nursery provision.

Existing gaps in the evidence and associated research challenges have practical consequences. One logical question that follows on from the points made above is whether the proposed deployment of graduate-level ELC staff in disadvantaged areas in Scotland will in practice help to close the 'attainment gap' in future years, especially if ELC provision in these areas is already of sufficiently high quality.

Similarly, although educational research has consistently highlighted the importance of GTCS-registered teachers in nursery education, there is little evidence that the quality of services has diminished in Scotland as the presence of teachers has declined. Instead CI inspection reports present a clear picture of an ELC workforce comprising teaching and early years professionals delivering high quality services. This persists where teacher management is not present, as illustrated in the quality performance ratings of Children

and Family Centres. Although previous research presenting teachers' perceptions on their 'unique' contribution to ELC implies that their replacement with other EYWs is problematic, this cannot be substantiated on the basis of the existing research evidence. Arguably, these competing 'professional' narratives are unhelpful and are likely to obscure the importance of diverse expertise, complementary skills and effective partnership working in ELC settings.

In terms of the roles of EYWs, the range of role-related tasks is wide with a very consistent and regular emphasis on the application of EYW's education and training in child development. The focus on CfE-based learning activities (developed through play) ranged from individualised curriculum planning and implementation to developing emergent skills in literacy, numeracy, language and creativity. Tasks based on child development and emergent learning were most likely to be undertaken daily or most days. All of these activities were reported by around 90% and above of respondents. The work roles also encompass a contribution to strategic and operational planning, and to regulatory inspection bodies, alongside working with parents (and vulnerable families), professional staff in other agencies and mentoring other staff or students.

In terms of whether EYWs undertake these wide ranging activities, the availability of teachers in the ELC establishment appears to have no significant impact. A significant minority of respondents in extended day care settings only accessed advice from a teacher either rarely or never (43%), and nearly a fifth never accessed any such advice (17%). While one possible explanation might have been that advice was simply a function of proximity to an ELC setting, in reality, only 48% of respondents in nursery school/class settings had access to advice from a teacher all or most of the time, and nearly a quarter (24%) of respondents in nursery schools/classes reported that they rarely or never had access to advice from a teacher.

In relation to their role, a majority of EYWs agreed that they had sufficient time to reflect on the progress of children (81%); sufficient autonomy to make decisions about how best to support children (73%); that they received sufficient training (62%) and that they were happy about the quality of provision in their establishment (56%). Alongside this, almost all respondents highlighted the level of responsibility in their role (93%) and that their work was very stressful (83%). Most (84%) had concerns about the impact of expanded entitlement on the quality of service they provided.

Evidence of 'upskilling' was reflected in our data, with 17% of EYWs already holding degrees and most of the 18% currently undertaking additional qualifications engaged in degree-level study. While the proportion of degree-level graduate qualifications is low in the top two age bands (54+), it is fairly evenly spread across all of the younger age bands, suggesting an upward trajectory of qualification levels over time. However, 'upskilling' also creates challenges for the sector in matching pay to increasing workforce qualifications and skills. There is a need for greater recognition that the working roles of EYWs are increasingly complex and challenging.

The data shows that their working role reflects the involvement of EYWs in delivering a national curriculum and actively contributing to child development. The findings offer a strong counter to any view that EYWs are simply engaged in the provision of 'basic childcare'. By any of our measures, EYWs appear to employ a range of knowledge, expertise and skill that represents an integral part of the necessary learning and development support children central to CfE.

Most EYWs strongly agreed or agreed (97%) that their role was essential to helping children make successful transitions to primary schools and that they made a difference to children's school attainment (89%). There was a very strong convergence in their views on their role compared with teachers, with 79% either strongly agreeing or agreeing that teachers and EYWs made *equivalent contributions* to child development and 78% reporting that both groups did largely the *same sets of tasks*. Focus group participants strongly highlighted the child-centred nurture approach taken by EYWs with the primary emphasis on progressing individual child development through play. Participants stressed the time invested in children, observing and identifying their learning interests through different play settings and using a responsive approach to develop these interests to build interest in learning. Not surprisingly, their tasks and responsibilities were typically described as time and resource-intensive. Participants consistently highlighted the pressures and stresses on their time presented by involvement in meeting multiple and sometimes competing demands and expectations.

Most EYW respondents thought that they got the right level of support from other EYW colleagues (77%) and team leaders/supervisors (60%), but just over third (34%) wanted more support from their team leaders or supervisors. Nearly half (46%) wanted more support from their head teacher or depute or from their head of establishment (42%). The desire for more support from learning and psychology professionals (42%), other professionals (42%) and social workers (32%) may reflect the challenges in supporting children (and/or families) with additional needs, but may also reflect resource constraints in accessing the support of other professionals. Not surprisingly, their strongest positive working relationships were reported with other EYW colleagues (reported by 88%) and team leaders/supervisors (60%). These were reported more frequently than positive relationships with teachers (49%), head teachers (47%), ELC management (43%), professionals in health (42%) and learning support (42%).

More EYWs reported feeling highly valued or valued by parents (94%) and their local community (69%) than by external regulatory bodies (56%) or the general public (49%). Indeed, EYWs reported in greater number that they felt valued by parents and the local community than by most of the groups they worked alongside in ELC, including teachers. They felt equally valued by parents and their own work colleagues. Participants in the focus groups also voiced a consensus about the value of establishing positive relationships with parents.

These relationships also featured heavily in the focus groups. Regarding relationships with teachers, the key issue for many of the focus group participants related to the

considerable variation in teachers input in ELC settings, with participants highlighting the value of teachers' input where they were perceived to be 'actively contributing' as part of a 'whole' nursery team. Yet many voiced concerns about the scale of the pay disparity between EYWs engaged in learning roles in ELC and their GTCS-registered teaching colleagues.

Most survey respondents had concerns about the extension of entitlement to 1,140 hours. These concerns were also reflected in the focus groups. Participants felt that the previous increase in children's entitlement to 600 hours had a number of positive and negative impacts. Positively, there was a recognition that this increase had brought benefits for children and working parents. This was balanced by concerns about the increased volume and pace of work for EYWs and structural problems finding 'space' and resources for play and learning at times of peak demand. Some participants also felt that increased hours had impinged on 'family time', meaning that some children had to experience a longer day (at a younger age) compared to school hours. Some also questioned the ability of some children to cope with sometimes 'chaotic' daily and weekly childcare arrangements where parents were relying on different types of provision for the same child. These issues were all amplified and extended in relation to the proposed increase in children's hours to 1,140. Almost all survey respondents (96%) expected this to have a 'significant impact' and the vast majority of the responses expected this impact to be very negative. The main concerns were over additional administrative and working pressures on staff (25%); the pressures on children coping with long days and the loss of family and parenting attachment time (21%); the potential reduction of EYWs to 'childcare' roles because less time would be available to emphasise learning if staff resources were not increased accordingly; and diminished quality of service and standards (18%). Other concerns raised related to pressures on space, buildings and the availability of places for children (17%) and the need for more new staff (12%) to support this entitlement extension.

In contrast, the proposals for additional graduate support in deprived areas received more positive support. Despite the value attached to having better qualified staff, almost half (46%) thought that this would have little impact on outcomes for children. The remainder thought that graduate-level staff would have either a slight (29%) or significant impact (25%). Survey participants generally welcomed the potential for additional staff support and that better qualified staff could contribute to staff development, raise quality standards and improve learning outcomes for children. These were strong themes in the survey responses: 86% of 'significant impact' responses were very positive. Focus group participants also generally welcomed the utility of having better qualified staff to shape existing practice and, by extension, outcomes for children. Notably, focus group participants were more supportive of graduate presence as a route to progression for existing EYWs and voiced concern that better qualifications needed to be balanced by experience.

Unison Scotland have both supported an expansion of ELC and the increasing professionalisation of EY work over the last decade or so, and have championed the

provision of ELC in the public sector. Our findings suggest that these developments, while positive, have involved role stretch for EYWs. While role stretch as upskilling can be beneficial for workers, role stretch as work intensification is not. At a time of significant expansion, protecting the professionalism of EY work, and the work experience of EYWs, will bring challenges. From our research, we believe that the key to ensuring quality of provision - crucial to improving children's outcomes and to having any chance of reducing the attainment gap - will be protecting the conditions that allow EYWs to deliver high quality education and care.

1. INTRODUCTION

This research was commissioned by UNISON Scotland and provides an independent assessment of the contribution made by Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) staff to childcare and education services in Scotland and how they can contribute to Scottish Government (SG) policy aims that currently underpin the planned expansion of this provision across Scotland. The research not only extends a piece of earlier work conducted by this research team in 2005¹, it covers similar terrain to recent research commissioned by the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) and conducted with General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS) registered teachers working in ELC settings. The research presented here will constructively inform the future work of UNISON Scotland in promoting the role, contribution and interests of Early Years Workers (EYWs) in the context of any upcoming expansion of ELC services in Scotland.

Research Objectives

The focus of this research is the contribution that the ELC workforce make to current provision in Scotland. Within these parameters, the specific aims are to:

- Describe the ELC sector and its surrounding policy context
- Analyse the available data on the ELC workforce, their roles and qualifications and how these have developed over the years
- Provide a short literature review summarising the evidence on workforce roles
- Examine the available inspection evidence to identify the impact different workforce roles have on the quality of the service
- Conduct an audit questionnaire survey of UNISON Scotland members in the ELC workforce to ascertain their views of their role and any contrast with GTCS-registered teachers and other staff
- Conduct five regional focus groups with members of the ELC workforce
- Develop any other ideas consistent with the above aims and UNISON's broad policy positions.

Structure of the Report

In the following sections we outline: the methodological approach to the research (Section 2), the policy context of the ELC sector in Scotland, the workforce and inspection regimes (Section 3); evidence on working roles in ELC (Section 4); partnerships and value (Section 5), policy impacts (Section 6); and finally, our conclusions on the roles and development of the ELC workforce in Scotland (Section 7).

¹ See Findlay, P., Findlay, J. and Stewart, R. (2005) Nursery Nurses in Scotland. UNISON: Glasgow.

2. METHODOLOGY

General Approach

To address the research objectives, a flexible methodological approach was adopted based on the synthesis of three main strands of data. These data strands were:

- Publicly available contemporary and longitudinal data on the development of early years policy, workforce roles (and qualifications) and a review of the available inspection evidence on quality service standards. This data will be used to describe the ELC sector in Scotland, to assess available evidence on issues of interest and to highlight current debates and challenges in ELC.
- Primary data generated through a bespoke online survey (using Qualtrics) of UNISON Scotland ELC members to gauge the perceptions of those who are part of the current workforce. EYWs were asked their views on various issues that related to their workplace settings and arrangements, their contribution to early learning and child development, and their partnership working arrangements (including supports and barriers) with other relevant professionals such as GTCS-registered teachers, social workers and health workers. Data was also generated on respondents' perceptions of change in their jobs, how they are valued and likely outcomes of planned expansion of the ELC sector.
- Primary data generated by conducting five regional focus groups with UNISON Scotland EYW members to explore the issues raised in the survey in greater depth and in specific context.

This mixed-method generated a complementary set of data that addressed the research objectives previously outlined. The data stages are listed below in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Data Collection Stages

| Stage | Task |
|-------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | Desk research |
| 2 | Key stakeholder scoping interviews |
| 3 | Survey of UNISON Scotland ELC Members |
| 4 | Focus Groups with ELC staff |

Desk Research

Existing published data was collated and analysed to provide the context for the primary data collection. The literature review covered a range of publicly available sources, including academic research, literature available from UNISON Scotland and from SG and other policy bodies. Academic publications were reviewed on key aspects of early years research pertaining to Scotland and the rest of the UK, plus international evidence where this had a relevance for the sector in Scotland. The policy literature spanned current workforce data, recent reviews of the ELC sector in Scotland and data from reviews of available inspection evidence, with a specific focus on workforce roles in ELC.

Key Stakeholder Scoping Interviews

To complement the desk research we also conducted two scoping interviews with representatives of UNISON Scotland. Alongside the desk research, these interviews informed the primary data collection.

Survey

An online survey of members UNISON Scotland was conducted using Qualtrics. Qualtrics is a user friendly, web-based, interface for creating and distributing online, self-completion questionnaire surveys, monitoring participants' responses, and downloading data into numerous software packages such as Excel or SPSS. The Qualtrics survey could be accessed online through a tablet, laptop or PC or through a smartphone. We also provided support for respondents who could not access the online survey by providing telephone support that allowed respondents to request and complete a survey entry by email return or via hard copy by postal return.

A link to the survey was circulated by email to a total of 1,949 members of UNISON Scotland known to be working in the ELC sector on 6th June 2017. This was supplemented two weeks later by the postal issue of 2,000 letters to those members of UNISON Scotland who did not have a current e-mail address attached to their membership details but who held a job title that suggested that they may work in the ELC sector. A system of reminder emails to encourage response was issued at various points to encourage responses from those for whom we had electronic contact details. Since the survey was issued relatively close to the main summer holiday period (potentially inhibiting the numbers of survey responses), it was decided to extend the survey fieldwork until beyond the end of the main Scottish summer holiday period: the survey was closed 31st August 2017.

A total of 650 survey returns were submitted by members of UNISON Scotland working in ELC. We adjusted the response rate by accounting for 33% of the postal invitations (i.e. 2000) to take into account those who did not work in ELC. This gives us an adjusted final response rate of 20%, although uncertainty about the eligibility of the numbers in the postal component of the sample and concerns over whether the email addresses held by Unison are current suggests a higher true response rate. While less than we might have hoped for in a union-commissioned survey, this response rate is consistent with other online surveys. After data cleaning, usable responses totalled 490, which excluded individuals who had opened the survey link but not or only minimally completed the survey. The achieved number of responses allows for a robust analysis of the data and, crucially, of variations within the data.

The survey consisted of 43 questions. These included a combination of fixed, multiple-choice (i.e. allowing respondents to choose one or more of the options listed) and open-ended (i.e. allowing respondents to record answers in their own words) questions. The survey variables focused on various aspect of the role, responsibilities and contributions of EYC workers. The survey variables covered the following areas:

- Demographic data (gender, age, ethnicity)
- Workforce role data (job title, sector, length of experience in ELC, contract hours and contractual position, qualifications, local authority location, gross annual

- salary, type of ELC establishment, whether worked with children with additional needs, management roles and type of management)
- Contribution (engagement in activities in relation to the early years curriculum and engagement in developing activities in relation to children, as well as planning and inspection activities)
 - Supporting parents
 - General views on working role and the ELC sector
 - Access to and support from GTCS-registered teaching staff in ELC
 - Access to, frequency of and the value attached to various sources of support for ongoing work activities and professional development
 - Engaging and sharing reflective practice
 - Partnership working with other professionals in ELC and the value attached to these sources
 - Views on the impact of the increase in children's hours (due to the 600 hours entitlement and the proposed 1140 hours entitlement)
 - Views on the impact of proposed additional degree or graduate level staff in ELC establishments in deprived areas.

The data was analysed using SPSS. The main variables used to interrogate differences in were: current job; the length of time respondents had worked in the ELC sector; qualifications; type of establishment worked in; and management arrangements. In the analysis below, for brevity, we only highlight differences where these were statistically significant at 0.05.

Sample

In terms of the main demographics characteristics, the survey sample was almost exclusively female and almost evenly divided between those aged 45 years and above (53%) and those aged 44 years and under (49%), with the largest age grouping between 35 and 54 years. This is consistent with an older public EYW profile in the public sector. Most were white. Table 2.1 outlines the sample's characteristics, excluding those respondent unwilling to offer demographic information.

Table 2.1 Gender, Age and Ethnicity of Sample (n, %)

| | |
|------------------|------------|
| Gender | % |
| Female | 99 |
| Male | 1 |
| Base (n) | 471 |
| Age | |
| 18-24 | 4 |
| 25-34 | 15 |
| 35-44 | 30 |
| 45-54 | 35 |
| 55-64 | 16 |
| 65+ | 2 |
| Base (n) | 471 |
| Ethnicity | |
| White | 99 |
| Other | 1 |
| Base (n) | 471 |

Respondents worked in all local authority areas across Scotland.

In terms of their labour market characteristics most respondents worked in the public sector (98%); worked in nursery school or class establishments (76%); held basic EYW support, childcare development or practitioner roles (88%); had worked in ELC for over 11 years (69%); were in permanent posts (95%); worked full-time; and were on 39 week contracts (72%)² (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Main Labour Market & Organisational Characteristics (n, %)

| | |
|--|------------|
| Sector | % |
| Public | 98 |
| Private | 2 |
| Sample Size (n) | 489 |
| Establishment | |
| Nursery School/ Class | 76 |
| Extended Day Care Nursery/ Family Centre | 22 |
| Other | 2 |
| Sample Size (n) | 489 |
| Current Job Roles | |
| Support/ Practitioner Level (C2/C3) | 88 |
| Lead Practitioner/ Depute Head of Unit/ Centre | 10 |
| Head of Unit/ Centre | 2 |
| Base (n) | 489 |
| Length of Time in ELC Sector | |
| < 1 year | 10 |
| 1-5 years | 13 |
| 6-10 years | 16 |
| 11-20 years | 35 |
| 20 years + | 34 |
| Base (n) | 489 |
| Contract | |
| Permanent | 95 |
| Temporary | 5 |
| Base (n) | 486 |
| Hours | |
| Full-time | 72 |
| Part-time | 28 |
| Base (n) | 489 |
| 39/52 Week ~Contract | |
| 39 Weeks | 73 |
| 52 Weeks | 20 |
| Other | 6 |
| Base (n) | 485 |

In terms of their annual salary (gross) the average figure for those working part time was £11,763 and the figure for full time EYWs was £21,570.

Focus Groups

Focus group participants were all recruited by local UNISON Scotland branch officers to provide a representative range of views from members with experience of different childcare settings across Scotland, including those working in school-based nursery settings, those in extended day care, those working with children in deprived areas and those with children with additional needs in their care.

² Compared to ELC workforce data, our survey sample is skewed towards full-time workers.

A total of 36 participants took part in the focus groups. These were conducted in UNISON Scotland branch office venues in the early evenings to maximise the opportunity to attend. The only exception was Group 4, which was conducted during the day. All groups lasted between 1-2 hours. The topics under investigation were drawn from the same semi-structured guide to allow for comparison across groups and covered the themes used in the questionnaire to provide for detail and depth around these issues, as well as to explore respondents' views in their own particular context. The groups were recruited to obtain a mixture of participants including those working: in extended day provision and nursery schools/classes; in different urban/rural regional locations across mainland Scotland; with experience of delivering services to a range of early years age groups (0-3 and 3-5 years). All participants had a minimum of 2-3 years of experience working with young children in ELC settings. This enabled participants to speak with a degree and depth of knowledge and expertise in, and experience of, the issues being addressed.

The details for each group are outlined below (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3: Focus Group Sectors, Location and Attendance

| Group | Sector | Location | Participants (n) |
|-------|--|-------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Mixed: Nursery School & Class/ Extended Day Care | Mixed Urban-Rural | 8 |
| 2 | Mixed: Nursery School & Class/ Extended Day Care | Urban | 9 |
| 3 | Mixed: Nursery School & Class/ Extended Day Care | Mixed Urban-Rural | 7 |
| 4 | Mixed: Nursery School & Class/ Extended Day Care | Mixed Urban-Rural | 3 |
| 5 | Mixed: Nursery School & Class/ Extended Day Care | Urban | 9 |

Although we cannot say that the views of participants in the focus group discussions are statistically representative of those held by the wider population of ELC workers in Scotland, the responses of those participants who attended the focus groups provide a representative range of views on the issues under investigation and add depth to the data generated through the survey.

Copies of the survey questionnaire and focus group guide are in the Technical Report.

3. POLICY, WORKFORCE, SKILLS & STANDARDS

In this section, we describe the policy context surrounding the ELC sector and present available data on the workforce, their roles and qualifications. We then review existing literature on ELC workforce roles and the how these impact on service quality. There have been two main drivers of what may be described as ‘transformational’ change in the pre-school and school-based education sectors over the past decade in Scotland. The first is the explicit recognition by the SG that investing resources early in children can have substantial short, medium and long term educational, social and labour market returns, particularly for those children living in socio-economically disadvantaged households. The second is widespread acknowledgement that ELC services must be of a sufficiently ‘high quality’ to have the most beneficial effects. In Scotland, both of these broad drivers are firmly embedded in policies that shape the ELC sector; in the understanding of staff engaged in ELC; in skills, qualifications and training frameworks and approaches; in the regulation arrangements responsible for the ‘quality control’ of ELC settings and staff; and in the current plans for the future expansion of services in Scotland. Although we focus almost exclusively on the ELC sector, it is also worth noting in passing the synergy and national curriculum link between ELC and later school-based provision.

ELC Policy & Guidance Frameworks

ELC is a generic term typically used to cover the full range of early education and childcare currently available in Scotland. The term was first introduced in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*. Findlay et al (2005) provided a detailed policy background of the development of the sector up to 2005. Thereafter the policy landscape has been framed by a series of evidence-based policies³, that supporting young children’s learning and wellbeing provides a foundation for lifelong learning and more equitable outcomes (e.g. reducing poverty or increasing social mobility). International evidence has shown that such benefits are dependent upon the quality of the experiences and opportunities offered to young children (OECD 2012)⁴. This, in turn, relies heavily on the skills, dispositions and understandings of the adult workforce providing those experiences and opportunities (DfE, 2015).

A fuller description of SG policies is provided by Siraj and Kingston (2015). A summary of the main policies that currently shape ELC is provided below. These are:

| Policy Initiative | Main Points |
|---|---|
| Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) (2004) ⁵ | Implemented at the early level in 2007, CfE identified the core purposes of education for all those aged 3 to 18 years and determined the key principles to be applied in a redesign of the curriculum. CfE identified four key purposes of education – to enable young people to become ‘ <i>successful learners</i> ’, ‘ <i>confident individuals</i> ’, ‘ <i>responsible citizens</i> ’ and ‘ <i>effective contributors</i> ’. |
| Early Years Framework (EYF) (2008) ⁶ | The EYF covers all children from pre-birth to age 8. This evidence-based social policy outlined the importance of the early years of life to child development and offered a commitment to break inequality cycles in health, education and employment through prevention and early intervention. The framework has a 10 |

³These policies are linked to an overarching series of national policy planning frameworks, objectives and outcomes. For example, the National Performance Plan 2007 was the framework for five strategic objectives and sixteen outcomes, three of which are linked to education and early years’ policies in the CfE and EYF. In these sectors the aim is to improve the provision and quality of services (Siraj and Kingston 2015).

⁴OECD (2012) *Starting Strong III: a quality toolbox for early childhood education and care*. Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/startingstrongiiiqualitytoolboxforearlychildhoodeducationandcare>

⁵Curriculum Review Group (2004) *A Curriculum for Excellence*. The Scottish Government: Edinburgh.

⁶The Early Years Framework (2008). Scottish Government: Edinburgh.

| | |
|---|--|
| | <p>year horizon. It recognised the fragmented nature of ELC services and promoted service quality in ELC. Three other policy initiatives sit alongside the EYF, <i>Equally Well</i> (addressing health), <i>Achieving our Potential</i> (addressing poverty) and Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) (addressing support services for children, young people and parents).</p> <p>EYF adopted a rights-based approach where ‘children and families are supported by a workforce which is highly skilled, well trained, appropriately rewarded, well supported, highly valued by all and with attractive career paths’ (p13). The EYF included measures of ten local actions in an ongoing programme of implementation that relies on relationships between national and local government.</p> |
| Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland’s Children and Families (2010) | <p>This policy document provides national guidance to support practitioners (in ELC, social care and health care) working with babies and toddlers aged 0-3 and their families. This guidance was intended as a foundation for a child’s future learning and development, taken forward in CfE, and is based on the concept that care and learning are inseparable, mirroring the Early Years Framework. It identifies <i>Rights of the Child, Relationships, Responsive Care</i> and <i>Respect</i> as the key principles of effective practice. It is not prescriptive but suggests beneficial supportive approaches for children and families across collaborative services.</p> |
| Building the Ambition (2014) ⁷ | <p>Building the Ambition provides national practice guidance for all those delivering early learning and childcare to babies, toddlers and young children. The document outlined the <i>Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014</i>. This replaced the previous entitlement of up to 475 hours per year of free sessions of pre-school education for all 3-5 year olds in Scotland with a more flexible offer of up to 600 hours ELC per year for 3-5 year olds (from August 2014) and 2 year olds (from August 2015). It outlined that parents may also purchase additional hours of ELC for children who have an entitlement and for those who are not yet entitled to free hours.</p> <p>The Act also includes provision regarding the rights of children. ELC was recognised as an important driver for national outcome measures, and recognised that existing entitlements for 3 and 4 year olds were insufficient to address the growing numbers of families who needed extended hours to support them in work.</p> |
| A Blueprint for 2020: The expansion of early learning and childcare in Scotland (2016) ⁸ | <p>Bf2020 sets out the Government’s vision for ELC, its progress to date in realising the vision, and seeks views on a number of proposed future developments including an increase of entitlement to up to 1140 hours per year of free sessions of pre-school education for all 3-5 year olds in Scotland; and the deployment of graduate-level ELC staff in disadvantaged areas to help close the ‘attainment gap’ in future years.</p> |

The commitment to early childhood was supported by the introduction of an early level of the 3-18 CfE in 2007 and the publication of the EYF in 2008. The latter emphasised transformational change and the need for a workforce that was ‘fit for purpose’ which was reflected in a raft of new training initiatives in the sector (see Dunlop et al 2016⁹). Naumann et al 2013¹⁰ highlighted the range of providers, the gap between the early education entitlement for 3-4 year olds and services for under-threes, the high costs of child care mostly offered in the private sector and issues relating to the welfare system and social support for families with children.

Underpinning these policy initiatives, the SG has also conducted reviews on various aspects of ELC and educational policy (e.g. on progress and milestones). For example, the emphasis on better qualifications and training in the ELC workforce was reinforced

⁷ Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland’s Children and Families (2010). Scottish Government: Edinburgh.

⁸ A Blueprint for 2020: The expansion of early learning and childcare in Scotland Consultation (2016). Scottish Government: Edinburgh.

⁹ Dunlop, AW. et al (2016) The Contribution of GTCS-registered Teachers as part of the early learning and childcare workforce in Scotland. EIS: Edinburgh.

¹⁰ Naumann, I., McClean, C., Koslowski, A., Tisdall, K. & Lloyd, E. (2013) *Early Childhood Education and Care Provision: International Review of Policy, Delivery and Funding*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government Social Research.

by a recent independent review by Siraj and Kingston (2015).¹¹ These authors made a series of recommendations on how the skills, qualifications and training of staff working within the ELC and out of school care sectors, from birth to age 14, can contribute to improved outcomes (both short and longer term) for children, help to reduce social inequality and close the attainment gap. The interest in attainment has reflected an increasing focus on the startling effects of socio-economic inequality on educational attainment (or the ‘poverty attainment gap’). The authors also provided a detailed outline of current SG initiatives that support the quality improvement of ELC services: the multi-agency Early Years Taskforce (EYTF) with responsibility to translate national policy into local actions, who manage an Early Years Change Fund (EYCF) that targets investment into services; alongside the Early Years Collaborative (EYC), which is another multi-agency quality improvement programme with dedicated work streams covering health development milestone targets for particular groups in ELC.¹² Siraj and Kingston (2015) note that it is still too early to see the impact of these work streams and policies. However, we note that in recent comments, Siraj has praised the ‘progress’ made in Scotland since the 2015 review compared to other devolved administrations in the UK and in England. As an extension of this progress, in March 2017 the SG pledged to introduce the Living Wage into private sector nurseries by the end of the current parliament as part of the proposed expansion plans.¹³ While this is likely to result in a pay increase for many EYWs working in private sector establishments, the Living Wage will fall considerably short of pay for EYWs in the public sector.

The SG now plans a large increase in ELC provision with a commitment in the Education Delivery Plan (June 2016) to almost double the hours of ELC to 1,140 hours per year by 2020: ensuring that nurseries and children in the most disadvantaged areas in Scotland additionally benefit from an extra teacher or degree-qualified ELC professional from August 2018. The SNP Manifesto (April 2016) also promised £500 million a year by 2021 to be spent on new infrastructure (600 new ELC centres) and 20,000 more qualified staff. SG is currently consulting over its detailed proposals as set out in *‘A Blueprint for 2020: The expansion of early learning and childcare in Scotland’*. This expansion is said to build on the investment already made in ELC and further improve partnership working to provide continuity for children as they transition through ELC settings to schools. The new model offers more flexibility for parents using a ‘funding follows child’ approach which would be less reliant on local authority ELC settings but with Councils retaining control over childcare funding. While UNISON Scotland has welcomed the policy intention to expand ELC provision, their concern is that the proposed funding is insufficient to meet the ambitious numbers of staff and buildings while still maintaining high quality provision. The ‘Blueprint for 2020’ proposals also include ‘voucher’ options, signalling an implied increase in childminding.

UNISON Scotland has published a detailed response to these SG proposals.¹⁴ They welcome the proposal to expand ELC as a means of tackling poverty by addressing the barriers that costly childcare erect to labour market participation, and as a means of reducing the attainment gap. However, Unison’s response also raises a number of concerns about the nature of, and risks in, particular approaches to expanding provision, notably by expanding private sector provision and/or by the introduction of a voucher

¹¹ Siraj, I. and Kingston, D. (2015) *An Independent Review of the Scottish Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Workforce and Out-of-School Care (OSC) Workforce*. UCL, Institute of Education. London.

¹² Those aged 0-30 months and those aged 30 months to the start of school.

¹³ Scotland ‘taking early years workforce more seriously’ than other UK nations. Holyrood 28.06.17.

¹⁴ <http://www.unison-scotland.org/library/Expansion-of-ELC-january-2017.pdf>

system. The response points to problems of low pay and lower qualifications in private sector ELC provision, which expanded private sector provision risks exacerbating by increasing the proportion of provision based on low pay and unqualified staff. In relation to voucher schemes, UNISON Scotland notes the risk of creating a two tier system which may exacerbate rather than reduce the attainment gap. Neither of these approaches to expansion address the complexity and cost of the existing system, and UNISON Scotland points to the recent experience of increasing social care provision in ways that have added to the complexity and fragmentation of provision.

UNISON Scotland supports expanded ELC public sector provision free at the point of use, seeing this as the most cost effective way of ensuring both a co-ordinated and comprehensive service, and to ensure the workforce is properly paid, well qualified and has access to flexible working. The response cites recent research by JRF that also advocates public provision of childcare as an effective anti-poverty measure.¹⁵ Public provision is argued as the best support for service quality, workforce development and keeping learning and care aligned. There is also a concern over whether adequate funding will be available to expand ELC provision in ways that maintain/improve the quality of that provision, deliver good EYWs jobs and improve rates of staff retention.

The ELC Workforce in Scotland

An older and more familiar term for some of the ELC workforce is *nursery nurses*. As in 2005, we acknowledge that the title of those workers formerly known as *nursery nurses* has changed in recent years and that working roles in the sector still have a varied nomenclature across local authorities. For example, *child development officers* and *early years workers* are two common job titles alongside *early learning practitioners* and other designations. This variation in job titles and roles can raise some challenges in disaggregating Scottish Government statistics to look at the particular group of interest to this study, although most will be classified by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) category in C2-C6 bands.

The ELC workforce includes both paid and unpaid staff and anyone who works with parents, children or young people. There are key workforce data available (e.g. SSSC 2015¹⁶), alongside annual data on the numbers of children, providers, workforce and finances (e.g. Care Inspectorate 2016, Scottish Government 2015¹⁷).

The term ELC emphasises that the ‘care’ and ‘education’ of very young children are not separate issues but reflect a wider developmental process for young children in the settings which operate across public (typically local authorities), private, charitable and self-employed (i.e. childminders) sectors and include all those services which offer education and childcare to children up to school age (i.e. children and family centres,¹⁸

¹⁵ JRF Programme Paper: Creating an Anti-poverty childcare System, available at <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/creating-anti-poverty-childcare-system>.

¹⁶ Scottish Social Services Council, *Scottish Social Service Sector: Report on 2015 Workforce Data*.

¹⁷ See Financial Review of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland: the Current Landscape (2015). Scottish Government Social Research: Edinburgh. Early Learning and Childcare Statistics 2015: The provision and use of registered day care of children and childminding services in Scotland as at 31 December 2015: Scottish government: Edinburgh.

¹⁸ These provide day care and education together with a range of support services for families. This could include specialised services, which provide women’s aid or respite care and support. All are provided by either local authorities or voluntary/not for profit organisations. They usually focus on providing a service for children and families in greatest need of support.

nursery schools or classes attached to schools,¹⁹ and childminders²⁰). ELC services include all those registered with the Care Inspectorate (CI).

In 2016 (from CI 2016 data unless specified), the main characteristics of the ELC sector and workforce were as outlined below.

- There is a significant amount of variation in the characteristics of ELC settings in Scotland. These vary by sector, in their funding, working environments, qualifications and career routes, management and regulation arrangements
- There was a total of 9,402 registered ELC services operating across Scotland (most were self-employed childminders in the private sector) with registrations for 252,200 children, up 11% from 2015. In 2016, there were 3,733 day care services, with increasing capacity (in nurseries +3%) and the availability of funded places (in 94% of nurseries, 72% of children and family centres and 75% of playgroups), largely due to the expansion of funded hours from 475 hours to 600 hours in August 2014
- While the overall number of day care services has declined over 2010-2016, capacity in the sector has increased with moves towards a smaller number of larger providers
- Most day care services (55%) offer whole-day sessions for children, but only 34% of local authority nurseries do so
- Almost half (46%) of day care services were in the public sector, with 30% and 23% in the private and voluntary sectors respectively. In the public sector, there is more nursery service (1,497) than children and family centre (161) provision. However, while the number of nurseries has remained largely constant, the numbers of children and family centre services have increased by 13% since 2011
- Public sector provision tends to be higher in more urban and very rural island local authority areas (e.g. Eilean Sar and Orkney), while private sector provision tends to be higher in rural local authority areas and in those urban areas with relatively more affluent populations (such as Aberdeen Edinburgh or Renfrewshire). Not surprisingly, Glasgow and Edinburgh had the highest concentrations of ELC workers (both including and excluding the number of childminders). There does not appear to be a higher density of day care services in more affluent areas. However, in more deprived areas, childcare is provided to a slightly larger extent by local authorities, whereas private providers tend to operate in less deprived areas
- Over the period 2010-2015, the number of ELC staff has increased by 5%, mainly in day care services²¹

¹⁹These can take several forms, from a nursery class attached to a primary school, to a stand-alone nursery. They are operated by public, private and voluntary/not for profit providers.

²⁰ Childminders are defined as those who look after at least one child (under 16 years) for more than a total of two hours per day on domestic premises (but not the home of the child's parent(s)). Parents/ relatives cannot be the child's childminder. Similarly, the day care of children is defined by the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 and covers services that look after at least one child (under 16 years) on non-domestic premises for at least two hours per day and on at least six days per year. This includes nurseries, crèche provision, after school clubs and playgroups but not services that are not part of school activities or where care is not provided (e.g. youth groups) (Scottish Government 2008). These services can be run by the public, private or voluntary sector and require to be registered with the Care Inspectorate whether or not parents pay for the service.

²¹ This increase was primarily driven by the previous expansion from 475 hours to 600 hours for 3-4 year olds.

- In December 2015, there were 39,030 people employed in the ELC sector. Most (86%) worked in day care services and of these, 41% were in the private sector, 39% in the public sector and 20% in the voluntary sector
- Almost three quarters of staff in day care services were practitioners (73%) while 9% were managers and 18% were support staff
- The workforce was predominantly female (97%) with a tendency towards younger age groups working in the private sector (average age 28 years) and mid-career, older staff in the public sector (average age 43 years).²² Childminders were more likely to work full time, with 71% of childminders working full time compared to 49% of day care service staff
- In 2015, most day care ELC staff were on permanent employment contracts, though around a fifth (21%) had non-permanent contracts. Terms and conditions for the ELC workforce were better in the public sector (average annual salaries of £58,000 for managers) than the private sector (average £23,000 for managers). More day care staff in public sector ELC earned the Living Wage than in the private sector, with 80% of the latter earning less than the Living Wage.
- All ELC staff are required to register with the SSSC, the CI or the GTCS and must either hold or be working towards a relevant qualification for their role.²³ In September 2015, 70% of the day care workforce held the required qualification (84% of all practitioners and 28% of all managers). The highest proportion of qualified staff were in the public sector (88%), who tended to be significantly better qualified than their counterparts in partner settings (66%),²⁴ non-funded local authority settings (63%) and particularly than in private and voluntary (non-funded) sector settings (50%)²⁵
- A significant proportion of managers were also registered with the GTCS (i.e. teachers working in nurseries in primary school settings). Childminders must be registered with the Care Inspectorate.

In short, ELC day care provision is mainly public sector (especially so in urban areas) and characterised by increasing numbers of staff, capacity and funded places, offering whole-day sessions for children. The ELC workforce in day care is predominantly female, in early and mid-career age groups, is mainly working full-time, on permanent employment contracts and professionally qualified for their roles in ELC. The trends towards expanded capacity in the sector and more EYWs largely reflect the impact of Scottish Executive and SG policies over the past decades which have sought to introduce and improve the scale and quality of provision.

²² The age difference reflects career moves towards better employee terms and conditions, pensions and career development opportunities in the public sector.

²³ This excludes childminders who are required to register with the Care Inspectorate but do not have to hold any specific qualification: although the Care Inspectorate is developing a learning and development framework and pathway for this group. Details on the qualifications of this group are planned to be available from 2017 onwards.

²⁴ Where local authorities work with private and voluntary providers and fund a limited number of childcare places.

²⁵ Research has shown that, on average, delivery of ELC is significantly more costly per hour in local authority settings than in partner provider settings. This applies across all age groups although quality also tends to be higher in local authority settings. Research also identifies the overwhelming role of staff pay in explaining the unit-cost gap. By most standards, pay in private and not for profit partner providers is low, even at senior and management grades (see Financial Review of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland: the Current Landscape (2015)).

In a recent report, Skills Development Scotland (SDS)²⁶ note that the proposed new expanded model for ELC provision offers a range of workforce challenges and opportunities. While there is a clear need for increased provision/capacity, and for an expanded and more qualified workforce, there may still be a number of overarching concerns, as outlined below.

- There are concerns over the attractiveness of the ELC sector to potential recruits. The sector has long been characterised as low status, low wage and low skill, reflecting gendered assumptions about the nature of the work. Workforce diversity is also an issue and there is a need to recruit beyond the existing largely white female workforce
- There are some concerns over the quality of existing recruits and their basic skill set (e.g. in literacy and numeracy) and the type of ‘more able’ recruits needed in an expanded service. About two thirds of service providers currently report difficulties in recruiting staff, particularly in more rural areas, where ELC provision is lower²⁷ There is a need to ensure that new recruits have adequate levels of literacy, numeracy, digital/ICT skills, communication and science-based knowledge to enable them to work in partnership with colleagues, children, parents and other professional groups in ELC roles
- While SSSC estimate that staff retention of 83% (90% in local authority settings and 78% in the private sector) is relatively high in day care children’s services, this was below the average retention rate for all industries in the UK in 2015 (88%). Higher staff retention in the public sector ELC reflects its better pay rates and opportunities for development.

Linked to the proposed expansion of ELC, SDS also list a number of important structural challenges and priorities around the quality of future ELC services for children and parents. These are as follows:

- The need to utilise fully childminders as additional ELC resources.²⁸ An expansion of education and training opportunities for childminders as ELC partners is advocated as well as resources to overcome the training/learning costs and any geographic (i.e. remote areas) barriers for this group
- Although universities, colleges and training providers highlight that they are able to meet new expanded demand for training and qualifications, there may also be some scope to develop new qualifications (e.g. work based learning at SCQF 9 (degree level) and ‘mandatory’ modules and units in existing qualifications
- The need to ensure that facilities and buildings can accommodate increased capacity
- The need to provide high quality placements in a range of ELC settings to facilitate skill development and increasing demands for specialist provision (e.g. Gaelic speakers)

²⁶ Skills Development Scotland (2015) Skills Investment Plan: Prospectus for Scotland’s Early Learning and Childcare Sector.

²⁸ Only 11 of 32 local authorities in Scotland currently work with childminders as ELC partners.

- The need to deliver leadership and management skills, and opportunities for networking and mentoring to drive up demand for these roles
- The need to manage and monitor the flow of workers into the ELC sector.

Clearly, expansion is not simply about more staff and increasing structural capacity but about developing a workforce (supported by training) that has the ability to shape outcomes and attainment levels for children. To consider this in more depth, this report reviews the diverse range of ELC roles, skills and qualifications in Scotland.

ELC Roles, Skills & Qualifications

As noted above, there are a plethora of job titles (and role descriptions) across ELC provision. Although these may vary across local authorities, there are core tasks and activities that allow us to assess and measure the role and contribution of the ELC workforce to children's education and development. In ELC settings, this contribution is largely framed around the concept of 'play' through which children can be exposed to a variety of activities that help to develop the skills, capacities and behaviours that will facilitate successful transitions to more structured classroom-based educational settings in primary schools. The ELC workforce is expected to lay the groundwork and foundation for children's future attainment in education and the wider labour market. This raises three important issues. The first relates to the increasing 'professionalisation' of the ELC workforce. The second relates to the role of GTCS teachers in ELC. The third relates to any relationship between the workforce skills and qualifications, quality of provision and children's outcomes. We consider the latter two issues in the section following on 'Quality Standards and Outcomes' but before doing so, we consider the roles, skills and qualifications of EY workers.

In January 2011, the SG produced an interim publication 'The Early Years Framework - Progress so far'.²⁹ This set out key priorities and progress of the EYF, alongside the delivery of systems to improve the core qualifications of staff working with young children ('Putting quality at the heart of service delivery'). ELC qualifications have since been streamlined and developed to improve the quality of service delivery. Currently, ELC workers are expected (as part of their working roles) to:

- Understand, develop and apply a knowledge of child development
- Plan and implement a curriculum for each individual child to HMIE and/or Care Inspectorate standards
- Observe, record and report on children's development
- Participate in training and CPD to update their knowledge
- Liaise and work alongside other agency professionals (teachers, social workers, speech therapists, police, other establishments/ schools) and accommodate for those children with special needs (e.g. cognitive, behavioural and physical disabilities)
- Liaise and work with parents/ carers (e.g. parenting supports, health initiatives and help targeted at vulnerable families)
- Facilitate the transition of children to primary school settings
- Reflect on their own practice.

²⁹ The Early Years Framework – Progress so Far (2011). Scottish Government: Edinburgh.

ELC workers carry out these activities across a variety of roles with a variety of designations. For ease of understanding, we distinguish in this report between three types of job in EYC: *Support Worker, Practitioner and Manager*. These roles and the activities of the ELC workforce contribute to children's development by supporting early and emergent exposure of pre-school children to:

- literacy
- numeracy
- linguistic/language and speech development (e.g. through conversation and stories)
- creative activities (play, drawing and painting)
- activities to support physical and mental health and healthy lifestyles (nutrition and sports)
- social and citizenship behaviours (e.g. working in groups, supporting tolerance and diversity).

There are a variety of generic skills and qualifications pathway routes to working in the ELC sector. Each of the key roles in the sectors is linked to the undertaking and/or completion of a set of benchmark qualifications which govern both role requirements and career progression. The list below gives an indication of the range of relevant qualifications, although it is worth noting that many of these have equivalents both historically and beyond the Scottish Qualifications Framework.

- **Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)** for those already in work or entering the ELC sector. These are largely delivered by non-college providers
- **Higher National Qualifications (HNQs)** some of which allow for transfer to second or third year Higher Education courses
- **Apprenticeships** (Modern, Technical, Professional and Foundation) enabling employers to develop their workforce to qualifications whilst in employment
- **Professional Development Awards (PDAs)** which allow members of the ELC workforce to develop their skills through a variety of learning routes (e.g. taught and self-directed learning). SSSC accepts PDAs at the SCVQ degree level for manager and practitioner roles
- **Degree** (both undergraduate and postgraduate) which is required for entry/promotion to leadership and management positions in ELC
- **Awards and non-accredited training** (e.g. CPD courses).

Working roles and functions require SCVQs depending on the level of responsibility and contact with children. The main SSSC categories that apply in the ELC sector are:

- C2 childcare staff who provide direct personal physical, emotional, social or health care and support to children and families, accountable for dealing with those routine aspects of working roles outlined above, and usually with no supervisory responsibility. C2 encompasses most EYC *support workers*, usually qualified at SVQ 2 or equivalent. The benchmark qualifications are an NC in Early Learning and Childcare at SCQF level 6 or an SVQ Social Service (Children and Young People) at SCQF level 6
- C3 and C4 staff who supervise the delivery of particular aspects of childcare and may supervise other staff. The role may involve the assessment, development and implementation of childcare plans and the monitoring and evaluation of aspects of service delivery. These staff may work with minimal supervision and may be

designated to take charge of a discrete service delivery area in the absence of the person with ongoing responsibility. C3 and C4 encompasses most EYC *practitioners*. The benchmark qualifications are an HNC Childhood Practice (at SCQF level 7) or SVQ Social Services Children and Young People at SCQF level 7

- C5 and C6 staff are lead practitioners or managers responsible either for discrete aspects of the service, for monitoring standards and for staff deployment. C5 staff may be *lead practitioners*, while C6 staff have overall *management* responsibilities and are the equivalent of Head Teachers and Deputies. The benchmark qualifications are the BA (or BA Hons, Graduate or Postgraduate Diploma, Master of Education or SQA PDA SCQF level 9 in Childhood Practice, plus up to two years working in the sector

All staff working in day care children services (except childminders) need to be registered with SSSC and hold (or be working towards) achievement of certain qualifications. In particular, this means that for the purpose of registration, ELC workers in supporting roles are required to hold or be working towards a relevant practice degree at SCQF level 6/SVQ level 2 (e.g. National Certificate) or above. Those in roles with more responsibility are required by regulation to hold or work towards at least a relevant degree at SCQF level 7/SVQ level 3 (or comparable). Managers need to hold or be working towards a relevant university degree and practice qualification. The qualifications framework provides a defined career pathway for ELC workers and supports moves towards a better qualified workforce with the opportunity to develop and expand SVQ 3 or 4 levels into a degree level qualification as an entry into leadership and management roles.

The setting for the bulk of qualifications for entry and career development in the ELC sector is further education (colleges) rather than apprenticeships and higher education though, consistent with a policy impetus to expand the ELC sector, all three of these pathways have experienced increasing numbers in recent years.

Current college data show that there are 23 providers of ELC-related learning across Scotland, with the largest numbers of learners based in colleges in the Central Belt. Learner numbers have increased by between a fifth and third over the period 2012-2015 in relation to enrolments (21%), student units of measurement or SUMS (21%)³⁰ and credits (28%). In 2014/2015, learners had a range of 29 different qualifications options with most undertaking SUMS (74,908) and Credits (67,557). Enrolment learners mainly entered ELC courses with other non SCQF level qualifications (26%), with SCQF 5 (e.g. National 5 qualifications) (23%) and SCQF 7-12 (e.g. SCQF 3 and above) (18%).

Modern Apprenticeships are more prevalent than other apprenticeship routes. The numbers undertaking apprenticeships increased by 13% over 2014-2016. In 2015/2016, 1439 ELC workers started a Modern Apprenticeship and while only 56 young people in 2015/2017 started a Foundation Apprenticeship, this was expected to increase to 236 in 2017/2019. In March 2016, almost three quarters of those who started the MA route completed it successfully (73%).

³⁰ The Scottish Funding Council ((SFC) provides grants to colleges to undertake to deliver a specified type and volume of activity which is measured in the numbers of student units of measurement (SUMS).

In 2014/2015, there were 1369 ELC-related enrolments in Higher Education (HE) routes. Undergraduate enrolment largely concerned the BA in Childhood Practice (51%), while training in Nursery Teaching accounted for 12% of enrolments.

Quality Standards & Outcomes

In Scotland there is a very pronounced disparity in educational outcomes for children from different socio-economic groups, which begin in early years. Sosu and Ellis (2014)³¹ outline a recent longitudinal study, the *Growing Up in Scotland Survey* (GUS), which identified the nature of this attainment gap among preschool children (Bradshaw, 2011).³² The data on cognitive ability of children aged 3 to 5 from different income backgrounds shows that those from high-income households significantly outperform their low-income household counterparts in vocabulary and problem solving at both ages. By age 5, the scores correspond to a 13-month (but slightly narrowing) gap in vocabulary development and a 10 month (but expanding) gap in problem solving. The data provide evidence that the attainment gap already exists by the age of 3 and begins to widen in certain domains of learning by age 5. In a recent report for the JRF, Sosu and Ellis (2014) present further evidence that this gap further expands as pupil's progress through their school years, with a direct impact on school leaver destinations and future income levels in adulthood.

Dunlop et al (2016) highlighted the sustained gap in educational outcomes for and between children in Scotland, often linked to child poverty and unequal opportunity, and the corresponding increased policy and educational emphasis on 'changing the landscape of inequality in Scotland' using ELC provision. These 'big issues' provide the context for their research on the contribution GTSC-registered teachers make to ELC. They note the dearth of research literature on the contribution of GTCS-registered teachers in the ELC sector.

Some research has identified 'sorting' into types of ELC provision as a possible driver of gaps in attainment, Bradshaw et al (2014) argue that in Scotland children from different socio-economic backgrounds only show small differences in the type of pre-school provision they attend and the number of hours for which they attend. Nursery classes in local authority primary schools are the dominant provider for children in all income groups (58% compared to 20% who attended another type of local authority pre-school setting, such as a stand-alone nursery or family centre, with 14% of children attending a private provider and 8% a voluntary provider). Local authority nursery schools/classes are less likely to be attended by children in the highest income quintile than by those in the lowest income quintile (47% compared with 67%). In contrast, use of private settings increases with income – only 7% of children from households in the lowest income group attended a private provider compared with 24% of children from households in the highest income group. These differences largely reflect the different childcare needs of dual-income couple families. This fundamental distinction is often associated with a range of other differences in the characteristics of the settings children experience in terms of the size, age range catered for and, crucially, the quality of the care and education being provided (Bradshaw et al 2014). In particular, children attending private providers were found to be significantly less likely to experience higher quality provision. Just 16% of children attending a private pre-school setting had a provider who

³¹ Sosu, E. and Ellis, S. (2014) Closing the Attainment Gap in Scottish Education. Joseph Rowntree Foundation: York.

³² Bradshaw, P. (2011) Growing up in Scotland: Changes in child cognitive ability in the pre-school years, Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

scored five or six against all four Care Inspectorate (CI) quality themes compared with 37% of children who attended a local authority primary school nursery class.

A variety of robust evidence suggests that experiencing high quality pre-school experiences makes a positive difference to outcomes beyond 16 + (Taggart et al 2015).³³ For Siraj and Kingston (2015), the evidence for the impact of high quality ELC is strong and international. Some of the most robust evidence comes from the longitudinal study Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE which later became EPPSE) project in England, in which children were observed and assessed while in a variety of pre-school group settings. Following this, their progress was tracked through compulsory schooling. Children who attended pre-schools had higher cognitive and socio-behavioural outcomes at primary school entry than those who did not (Sylva et al., 2004).³⁴ Follow-up studies found that positive pre-school effects were still apparent at the end of primary school (Sylva et al 2008).³⁵ Further, attendance at higher quality pre-schools continued to predict higher achievements in mathematics, science and socio-behavioural outcomes at 14 years old (Sylva et al 2012³⁶) and at age 16 in GCSE results (Sylva et al 2014).³⁷

The current literature on the impacts and beneficiaries of ELC provision reaches two important conclusions. First, that investing early in children can have substantial returns, particularly for those in disadvantaged households (Cunha et al 2006).³⁸ Second, that pre-school experience needs to be of ‘high quality’ to have the most beneficial effects (e.g. Cascio, 2015).³⁹ For example, Cunha et al (2006) demonstrate that gaps in cognitive skills emerge at early ages and establish that intervening early allows children to more effectively build later skills. Similarly, Goodman and Sinasi (2005)⁴⁰ evaluated the effects of undergoing pre-school on a cohort of British children born in 1958.⁴¹ They found positive and long-lasting effects from early education: large improvements in cognitive tests at age 7, which remained significant throughout the schooling years, up to age 16; and a positive but short-lived impact on test scores. The effects on socialisation appear to be more mixed, with adverse behavioural effects from parental reports at age 7 persisting, for pre-school children, up to age 11. There were also positive effects on average for children in families facing serious difficulties, suggesting that in the early years, pre-school may play an important role in protecting such children from some of the potentially harmful effects of growing up in ‘isolation’ in their own family environment. Children from families with severe difficulties benefit significantly more in terms of maths and reading tests at age 7, in gaining qualifications and in future income

³³ Taggart, B., Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P. & Siraj, I. (2015) Effective pre-school, primary and secondary education project (EPPSE 3-16+): How pre-school influences children and young people's attainment and developmental outcomes over time.

³⁴ Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I. and Taggart, B. (2004) The Effective Provision of Pre-school Provision (EPPE) project: Final report. Nottingham: DFES Publications.

³⁵ Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., and Taggart, B (2008) Final Report from the primary phase: pre-school, school and family influences on children's development during Key Stage 2 (7 – 11) Research Report DCSF RR061. London: Department for children, schools and families.

³⁶ Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., and Taggart, B (2008) Final Report from the primary phase: pre-school, school and family influences on children's development during Key Stage 2 (7 – 11). Research Report DCSF RR061. London: Department for children, schools and families.

³⁷ Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj, I. & Taggart, B. with Smees, R., Toth, K., Welcomme, W. and Hollingworth, K. (2014) Students' Educational and Developmental Outcomes at age 16. Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education EPPSE 3-16 project.

³⁸ Cunha, F., Heckman, J. J., Lochner, L., & Masterov, D. V. (2006). Interpreting the evidence on life cycle skill formation. *Handbook of the Economics of Education*, 1, 697-812.

³⁹ Cascio, E. U. (2015). The promises and pitfalls of universal early education. IZA World of Labor.

⁴⁰ Goodman, A. and Sinasi, B. (2005) Early Education and Children's Outcomes: How Long do the Impacts Last?

⁴¹ In contrast to many studies, they were able to assess whether any effects on cognition and socialisation were long-lasting, as well as to estimate their net impact on subsequent educational attainment and labour market performance.

levels. Similarly, small scale trials of intensive interventions on very young disadvantaged children have revealed impressive long-term benefits (e.g. Heckman et al 2010).⁴² Greater benefits for more disadvantaged children have also been found for some universal programmes (e.g. Felfe et al., 2015⁴³), although evidence on this point was found by Blanden et al 2016⁴⁴ to be rather ‘weak’ using English data, with no long-term benefits for any identifiable group.

The literature also frequently mentions that pre-school benefits are only found from ‘high quality’ ELC programmes (Cascio, 2015), a conclusion generally reached by comparing the features of programmes with benefits for children’s outcomes such as those in Norway (Havnes and Mogstad, 2011)⁴⁵, Spain (Felfe et al 2015) Oklahoma and Georgia (Cascio and Whitmore-Schazzenbach, 2013)⁴⁶, with those showing no benefits such as in Quebec (Baker et al., 2008) and in Danish family care (Gupta and Simonsen 2010).⁴⁷ While Cascio (2016)⁴⁸ (comparing US states) found that universal systems have much greater benefits for disadvantaged children than targeted programmes, there is still considerable uncertainty about the precise features of these universal systems that generate their relative success, a finding recently echoed by Blanden et al (2017)⁴⁹ using English administrative data for over two million children. Their results showed that staff qualifications and childcare quality ratings have a weak association with teacher assessments at school, based on comparing children who attended different nurseries but attended the same primary school; and that although children’s outcomes are related to the nursery they attend, which nurseries are good could not be predicted either by staff qualifications or OfSTED ratings (i.e. the measures of quality used by the UK Government).

In Scotland, Bradshaw et al (2014) found that there were no significant systematic differences in the quality of pre-school settings that more and less advantaged children attended. In other words, children from higher income households or whose parents had higher qualifications were *no more likely* than those from lower income households or whose parents had lower qualifications to attend a higher quality pre-school setting. This was despite small differences (in socio-economic circumstances) in the type of pre-school provision they attend and the number of hours for which they attend, as illustrated above.

There have been various reports on the link between workforce roles (and qualifications), ‘quality’ ratings of ELC provision and outcomes for children (summarised in Siraj and Kingston 2015). In Scotland, these relationships were explored in developments to improve leadership and management, building on work by HMIE (2007) to highlight leadership quality as a key to ensuring positive outcomes for children. In other words,

⁴² Heckman, J. J., Moon, S. H., Pinto, R., Savelyev, P. A., & Yavitz, A. (2010). The rate of return to the HighScope Perry Preschool Program. *Journal of Public Economics*, 94(1), 114-128.

⁴³ Felfe, C., Nollenberger, N., & Rodríguez-Planas, N. (2015). Can’t buy mommy’s love? Universal childcare and children’s long-term cognitive development. *Journal of population economics*, 28(2), 393-422.

⁴⁴ Blanden, J., Del Bono, E., McNally, S., & Rabe, B. (2016). Universal Pre- school Education: The Case of Public Funding with Private Provision. *The Economic Journal*, 126(592), 682-723.

⁴⁵ Havnes, T., & Mogstad, M. (2011). No child left behind: Subsidized child care and children's long-run outcomes. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 3(2), 97-129.

⁴⁶ Cascio, E. U., & Whitmore-Schanzenbach, D. W. (2013). The Impacts of Expanding Access to High-Quality Preschool Education. *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, 2013(2), 127-192.

⁴⁷ Gupta, N. D., & Simonsen, M. (2010). Non-cognitive child outcomes and universal high quality child care. *Journal of Public Economics*, 94(1), 30-43.

⁴⁸ Cascio, E. (2016) ‘Does Universal Preschool Hit the Target? Program Access and Preschool Inputs?’ Mimeo.

⁴⁹ Blanden, J., Hansen, K., & McNally, S. (2017) Quality in Early Years Settings and Children’s School Achievement. Centre for Economic Performance Discussion Paper 1468. LSE: London.

staff needed a high level of understanding and knowledge of learning and child development to lead learning and shape high quality interactions with young children that accounted for their stages of development. The key aspects of this (for ELC practitioner roles and above) were the ability to:

- manage team expertise
- develop the skills of less qualified staff
- access and utilise the expertise of a range of professions in ELC
- organise engaging learning environments for children
- enable children to make choices and be independent
- improve through ‘reflective’ practice.

The role of early years leadership has been prominent in research looking at the link between staff qualifications and performance (as measured by inspection ratings). For example, an Education Scotland⁵⁰ report in 2012⁵¹ looked at the link between performance and staff qualifications in settings where ELC management had a degree in education or childcare. The study found that most ELC centres achieved ratings of satisfactory or above in all of the quality indicators, and that in most of these centres, most had high percentages of either teachers or staff with relevant qualifications. In other words, high performing ELC provision was associated with highly qualified staff. The impact on the quality of children’s experiences was lower where staff had no higher level qualifications. Evidence from inspections showed that children’s experiences were often of a higher standard in centres where, traditionally, GTCS-registered teachers were deployed, or EYW staff had undertaken higher level qualifications and training. However, in centres where EYW staff demonstrated effective practice, and there was no teacher deployed, the report found that EYWs had often undertaken additional higher level qualifications and training. This, alongside tailored continuing professional development (CPD) and high quality support from the local authority, led to positive impacts on practice. Research of this nature underpins SG proposals for the deployment of additional graduate-level ELC staff in disadvantaged areas to help close the ‘attainment gap’ in future years by enhancing the quality of these establishments, especially where there are existing deficits in service quality or where new facilities are developed in areas of low or non-existent capacity.

The Education Scotland (2012) report however, was unable to distinguish between the impacts on quality ratings made by different types of staff. Variations in the input and involvement (i.e. peripatetic) of GTCS-registered teachers in ELC settings make comparisons of this type very difficult to interpret, and the lack of any measurement of teacher input (in frequency/contact and nature of input) over time in ELC establishments simply undermines the robustness of any analyses of CI ratings trying to link staff composition to children’s and establishment outcomes. There are research challenges in understanding the impact of workforce composition on children’s outcomes and significant weaknesses in existing attempts to compare the contribution of GTCS-registered teachers with other ELC staff.

Similar points were made in relation to an SSSC report in 2014 on the impact of the BA in Childhood Practice, although Education Scotland had found in 2012 that the BA Childhood Practice Award was beginning to show a positive impact on children’s

⁵⁰ Formerly, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education (HMIE).

⁵¹ Education Scotland (2012) Making the difference. The impact of staff qualifications on children’s learning in early years, Edinburgh Education Scotland

learning in the early years. Their findings showed that the best experiences for children are found where there is a range of staff with complementary skills and relevant higher level qualifications. In short, in Scotland and elsewhere, the research evidence to date has no definitive answers to questions about the differential impact of different types of workforce qualifications on the quality of ELC provision, notwithstanding a general consensus that better qualified leadership and workforce is likely to deliver higher quality provision and, by extension, better outcomes for children. It is worth noting, however, Blanden et al's (2017) critique of the efficacy of quality indicators in ELC and whether these are actually linked to improved outcomes for children.

Currently, ELC establishments in Scotland can receive one shared inspection from two different bodies (the Care Inspectorate and Teaching Scotland) visiting together. CI use four measures to assess quality in their inspections: *Care & Support* (how well the service meets the needs of service users), the *Environment* (where the service is delivered, for example, how clean, well maintained and accessible it is, the atmosphere of the service, how welcoming it is), *Staffing* (ratios, the quality of the staff, including their qualifications and training) and *Management and Leadership* (how the service is managed and led and how it develops to meet the needs of the people who use it). In a CI inspection, these provide indicators of how well an individual service is performing,⁵² alongside data on complaints and enforcement.

The evidence on existing quality standards in Scotland shows that ELC establishments are rated reasonably highly (compared to other areas regulated by CI) and that those in the public sector (often with no GTCS-registered teachers working in the establishment) appear to offer as good and comparable a service than those offered by establishments managed by teachers, particularly in areas of social deprivation. Analysis of Growing Up in Scotland (GUS) data found that very few children were attending settings that scored unsatisfactory grades over any of the indicators (Bradshaw et al 2014).⁵³

The evidence on quality standards in 2016 showed the trends identified below.⁵⁴

- Overall ELC service ratings have remained consistently high. Typically, less than 1 per cent of all day care services for children are graded unsatisfactory or weak in the quality standard categories. Usually 90%+ of all day care services are graded good, very good or excellent in these categories
- Public sector ELC provision tends to be rated more highly than private or voluntary sector establishments. While 94% of all local authority day care provision is rated at all grades as good or better, the comparable figures are 83% in the voluntary sector and 80% in the private sector
- Public sector ELC provision tends to be rated more highly than private or voluntary sector establishments. While 94% of all local authority day care provision is rated at all grades as good or better, the comparable figures are 83% in the voluntary sector and 80% in the private sector

⁵² Rated on a six-point scale (by supporting evidence): Excellent (6), Very Good (5), Good (4), Adequate (3), Weak (2) and Unsatisfactory (1).

⁵³ Bradshaw, P., Lewis, G., and Hughes, T. (2014) *Growing Up in Scotland: Characteristics of preschool provision and their association with child outcomes* Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

⁵⁴ . Early Learning and Childcare Statistics 2015: The provision and use of registered day care of children and childminding services in Scotland as at 31 December 2015: Scottish government: Edinburgh.

- Similarly, while nearly half of local authority services have very good or excellent grades (48%), this only applies to around a third of voluntary (34%) and private sector (33%) provision
- For example, while 94% of local authority nurseries had all grades at good or better (and nearly half - 49% - had all grades very good or excellent), this compared to 82% and 35% respectively of their voluntary and private sector counterparts
- While childminders have the highest quality ratings within private sector provision, children and family centres have the highest quality ratings of all ELC provision
- There was no overall correlation between levels of area deprivation and the quality of available pre-school day care or nursery provision (in terms of all standards *good* or better). This was also the case for each of the nursery provider sectors.

A critical aspect of the work by Bradshaw et al (2014) however, was that quality (as measured by CI and Teaching Scotland indicators) did not appear to impact differently on children's cognitive or social development (i.e. highly rated settings were not different from moderately rated settings), suggesting a weak link between inspection criteria and children's socio-emotional and cognitive outcomes. An analysis of the data on children's pre-school characteristics (i.e. type and quality of provision, length of time in pre-school setting, size of the setting, etc), however, showed that:

- The *Care and Support* CI measure was associated with improved vocabulary outcomes by age 5
- Children who attended higher rated *Care and Support* providers were more likely to exhibit higher vocabulary skills by age 5 irrespective of their abilities at age 3
- This finding held irrespective of the socio-economic background of the child or the type of ELC provider they attended
- The length of time children spent in any ELC setting did not impact on their socio-emotional and cognitive development
- Attending high quality ELC provision will benefit children's vocabulary which may help reduce other known wider socio-economic inequalities.

Not surprisingly, the review by Siraj and Kinston (2015) made three related recommendations: to use the CI *Care and Support* indicator in future inspections as well as in education, training and all qualifications designed to improve quality; establishment of a joint or unified inspection process or body; and for further research on the links between inspection and children's outcomes to support the development of indicators and ensure that inspections inform improvements.

However, this still leaves open the question about the efficacy of the indicators currently being used by regulation bodies. For example, we know that degree-led leadership and management makes a difference to the quality of ELC establishments (as measured by inspections) but not how this drives specific developmental social, cognitive, emotional and behavioural outcomes for children. The current quality score indicators and the range of pre-school characteristics used for analysis and/or developmental change measures may be insufficiently discriminatory to allow for more subtle analysis. As Dunlop et al (2015)⁵⁵ have noted, although Scotland has begun to invest heavily in ELC workforce qualifications, there is as yet no robust evidence of the differences these make to outcomes for children.

⁵⁵ Dunlop, A-W. (2015). Aspirations and actions: early childhood from policy to practice in Scotland, *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 23:3, 258-273.

These research and evidence challenges have practical consequences. A logical question that follows on is whether the proposed deployment of graduate-level ELC staff in disadvantaged areas in Scotland will in practice help to close the ‘attainment gap’ in future years, especially if ELC provision in these areas is already of sufficiently high quality. Relatedly, there has been an ongoing debate in Scotland as to the relative roles and contribution of GTCS-registered teachers and other EYWs in ELC settings, particularly in relation to leadership and management and to how workforce composition impacts on the performance of ELC settings and outcomes for children.

In their report for EIS, Dunlop et al (2016) highlight the drop in teacher numbers in nursery education services in Scotland to a ratio of 1 GTCS-registered teacher to every 84 children, and raise concerns over how this has and might impact on the quality of services. This ratio was used to highlight their concerns about the further attrition of teaching personnel in ELC and their replacement by other EYWs.

“In some local authorities, the nursery teacher’s role is being reduced and in some cases, despite the Scottish Government requirement for nursery children to have ‘access’ to a GTCS-registered teacher, such teachers are no longer employed. Many respondents believe that recent and planned funding and staffing changes will be detrimental to the early years workforce and to the quality of education that children receive, now and in the future.” (Dunlop et al, 2012).

“With the small numbers of teachers employed in early years pre-school settings further attrition is not an option if policy objectives are to be achieved.” (Dunlop et al, 2012).

Overall teacher numbers in Scotland have dropped over the past decade by almost a third (30%) against a 4% reduction in the numbers of children. As the Education Scotland (2012) research highlighted, there are significant variations in GTCS-registered teaching input in nurseries. Yet although educational research has consistently highlighted the importance of GTCS-registered teachers in nursery education, there is little evidence that the quality of services has diminished in Scotland as teachers’ presence has declined. In CI quality ratings, a picture emerges of an ELC workforce comprising teaching and early years professionals delivering high quality services. This persists where teacher management is not present, as illustrated in the quality performance figures for Children and Family Centres.

The EIS commissioned report argues that teachers make a unique contribution to ELC, and while it contains data only from teachers, there is at least an inference by Dunlop and colleagues that replacement or substitution of GTCS-registered teachers with other EYWs is problematic in some way. This cannot be substantiated, however, through the methods adopted in their report, nor indeed in any research - including this report - that narrowly focusses only on one occupational or professional group. More significantly, competing occupational or professional narratives are likely to obscure the importance of diverse expertise, complementary skills and partnership working in ELC settings.

EYWs are now better qualified than ever before following the introduction of new qualifications up to degree level. Teacher numbers are falling nationally, and a well-qualified ELC workforce provides options for local authorities in expanding capacity and provision, not least in meeting the demands of working parents in single and dual income households for extended hours of ELC provision. While UNISON Scotland members

work closely with their GTCS-registered teaching colleagues, they also believe that part of this wider debate sometimes undervalues the contribution their members make to ELC. A previous report (Findlay et al 2005) reported the views of EYW's and of few/no significant differences between their work and those of GTCS-registered teachers.

This Report updates and develops the previous research in a different context. One of its central themes is to explore and make visible the contribution of EYW staff in providing high quality ELC services, delivering the Scottish Government's flagship '*Curriculum for Excellence*' programme and reducing the attainment gap amongst Scotland's children.

4. WORKING ROLES IN ELC

The aim of this section is to give an indication of the qualifications profile of EYWs, an outline of what EYWs do in their current roles and how they perceive they contribute to children’s education and care. While job descriptions exist for EYWs in all local authorities, these rarely reveal the extent to which their designated activities are actually undertaken. There are variations within local authorities and in managerial arrangements in different establishments. Our survey data, however, enables us to present a picture of the specific and diverse range of activities undertaken by EYWs and the frequency with which they conduct core and other tasks.

Qualifications

We asked respondents about their qualifications (those they had and those they were currently undertaking). We present their highest qualification levels below (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Highest Qualification Held (%)

| <i>Qualification</i> | % |
|--|------------|
| Relevant Postgraduate Degree | 1 |
| Degree level Qualification relevant to Early Years Education and Childcare | 13 |
| Other relevant Degree | 1 |
| Non-relevant Degree | 2 |
| SVQ 4 Early Years Care and Education | 3 |
| PDA in Childcare and Education | 10 |
| SVQ3 EYC and Education (formerly Childcare and Education) | 11 |
| HNC Supporting Special Learning Needs | 2 |
| Other relevant Sub-Degree | 2 |
| NC/HNC Childcare and Education | 30 |
| SNNEB | 20 |
| SVQ2 Early Years Care and Education (formerly Childcare and Education) | 1 |
| NQ Higher EYC and Education | 4 |
| Base (n) | 466 |

The responses are indicative of a highly-qualified workforce, which is unsurprising given the increasing professionalisation of working in ELC. The data includes EYWs at different career stages (e.g. clusters around the SNNEB qualification are primarily held by those aged over-45, the NC/HNC level are primarily held by those aged under-45 as is the PDA in Childcare and Education and at degree level.

The proportion of degree-level graduates qualifications is low in the top two age bands (54+) and is fairly evenly spread across all of the younger age bands suggesting an upward trajectory on qualification levels over time. A very small number of people held postgraduate qualifications.

As an indication of future prospects for the qualification levels of this workforce, we looked at planned qualifications. There was a significant group (18%) currently studying for a variety of qualifications, 74% at degree level, and above. Those currently studying

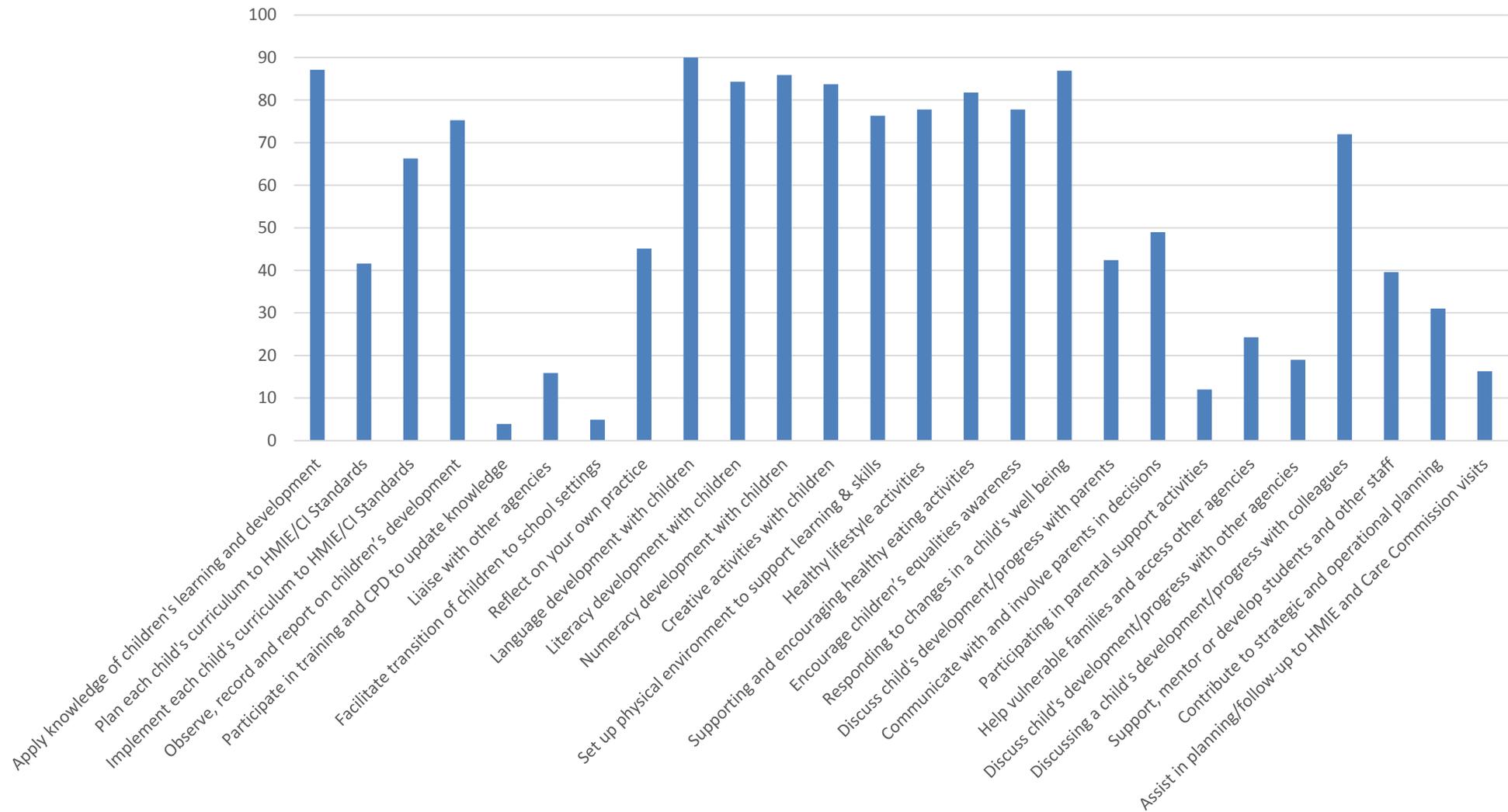
for a degree are spread fairly evenly across the 25-54 age range with a smaller number at either end of the range.

Not surprisingly, there was a strong relationship between job role and qualifications. There was a significant and increasing likelihood of holding a degree moving up the occupational hierarchy (from Early Years Support Worker (Category 2), through Early Years Practitioner (Category 3) to Depute Head of Centre (Category 4) and Head of Centre (Category 4): 54% of ELC deputies and heads have an undergraduate or higher degree, with most having a relevant child-related degree. In summary, across all job roles, 17% hold degree-level or above qualifications and a further 14% are currently studying for a degree. Looking to future qualification profiles, there is no significant difference across job roles in terms of who is currently studying for a degree.

EYW Tasks & Hours

Figure 4.1 presents data on those activities undertaken daily or most days in ELC settings.

Fig 4.1: EYW Activities Undertaken Daily/Most Days (%)



The figures are interesting for a number of reasons:

- The range of role-related tasks is relatively wide with a very consistent and regular emphasis in working roles on the application of education and training in child development
- The focus on CfE-based learning activities (developed through play) ranged from individualised curriculum planning and implementation to developing emergent skills in literacy, numeracy, language and creativity. All of these role-related activities were reported by around 90% and above of respondents
- Curriculum activity also includes the facilitation of children in transition to school settings
- Tasks based on child development and emergent learning were those most likely to be undertaken daily or most days
- Supporting positive lifestyles in health and well-being in children, and communication with parents, means involving both in decisions and offering ongoing support for vulnerable families
- The work roles encompass a contribution to strategic and operational planning, and to regulatory inspection bodies, alongside working with professional staff in other agencies, mentoring other staff or students.

In terms of whether EYWs undertake these activities, the availability of teachers in the ELC establishment appears to have little impact. When a teacher is available, EYWs are slightly more likely to report weekly training and CPD, though this may reflect the practice of in-service training in some schools. For other activities, teacher presence had no significant impact for most EYWs. In addition, times allocated to discrete activities appeared to be unaffected by teacher presence.

We asked respondents about the average hours and the percentage of time that they worked completing various tasks in their roles (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Average Weekly Hours and Weekly % Time on Tasks

| Task | Average Hours (mean) | Average Hours (median) |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Weekly Contract | 31 | 35 |
| Preparation (outwith contracted time) | 5 | 3 |
| | Average % (mean) | Average % (median) |
| Working with children | 66 | 70 |
| Preparing for sessions | 7 | 5 |
| Administration (child related) | 12 | 10 |
| Administration (other) | 6 | 5 |
| Reflection/ Training/ Study | 3 | 0 |
| Supervisory/ Management | 5 | 0 |
| Other | 1 | 0 |

In looking at each task, there are different relative merits of using mean and median values. For example, while there was an average of 31 hours per week reported across the respondents, the median (mid-range) value (which is not affected by outliers) tells us

that the average EYW worked 35 hours per week. Similarly, although the average number of hours spent in preparation for sessions with children beyond contracted time was 5, the removal of outlier's gives and average respondent an additional 3 hours per week beyond their contracted hours. Looking at time spent in direct child-related activities as a proportion of contracted hours the relevant workforce spend an average of 86% of their time in contact with children.

Management/ Supervision

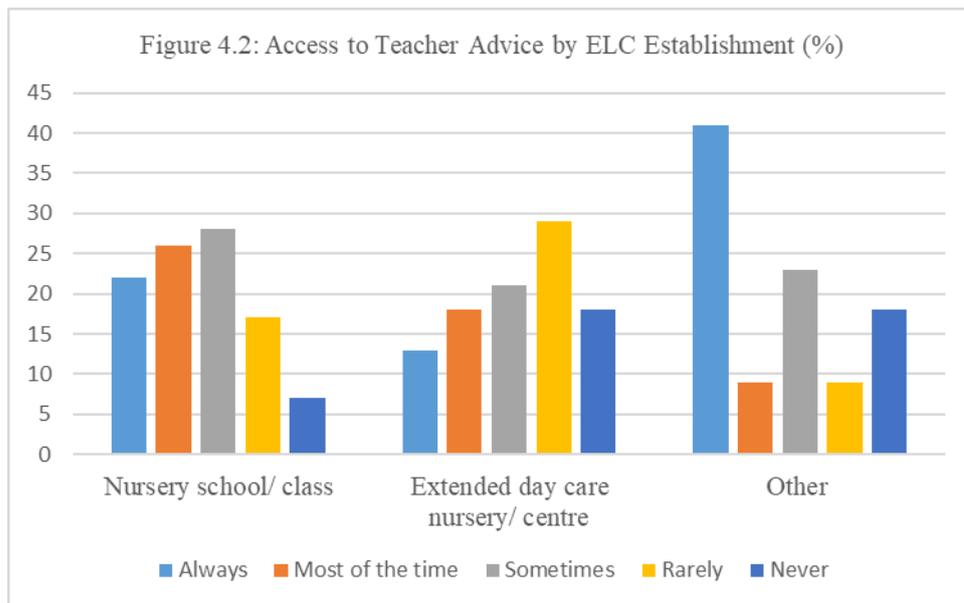
We asked respondents about the background of their head of establishment, whether their work was directed by a GTCS-registered teacher and if so, their levels of contact (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Management, Direction, Contact & Advice (%)

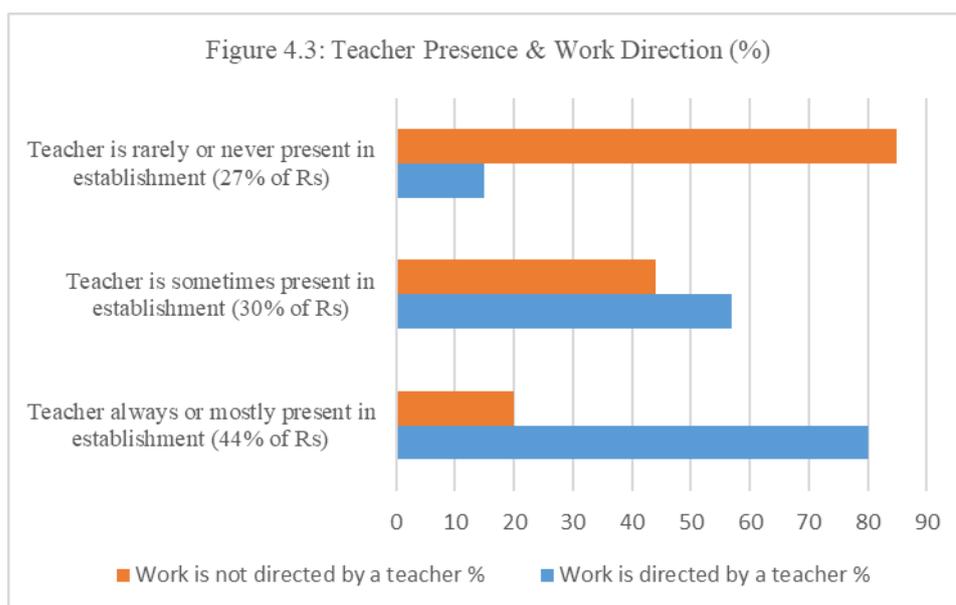
| Head of Establishment | % |
|---|------------|
| Early Years Professional | 29 |
| GTCS-Registered Teacher | 71 |
| Base (n) | 379 |
| Work Directed by Teacher | |
| Yes | 56 |
| No | 44 |
| Base (n) | 399 |
| Frequency of Teacher Presence | |
| Always | 20 |
| Most of the Time | 24 |
| Sometimes | 30 |
| Rarely/ Never | 27 |
| Base (n) | 416 |
| Frequency of Advice from Teacher | |
| Always | 22 |
| Most of the Time | 24 |
| Sometimes | 26 |
| Rarely/ Never | 29 |
| Base (n) | 419 |

These figures show that while 71% of respondents worked in establishments managed by a Head Teacher, only 56% of EYWs reported that their work was were directed by a teacher (by implication the remaining 44% of these EYWs were either in senior positions or whose work was directed by another EYW). In terms of teacher presence in establishments, 44% of respondents reported teacher presence all or most of the time; just under one third (30%) worked in establishments where the teacher was present some of the time, and 27% reported rare or no teacher presence. Teacher presence is not, however, the same as access to advice. Respondents reported variations in access to advice ranging from all/most of the time (45%), and some of the time (25%) to no or rare access (30%). These figures most probably reflect variations on the peripatetic management and supervision arrangements of teachers in ELC settings.

These peripatetic influences were further evidenced in data on the frequency of advice from a teacher by ELC establishment (Figure 4.2) and looking at the association between the presence and direction of a teacher (Figure 4.3).



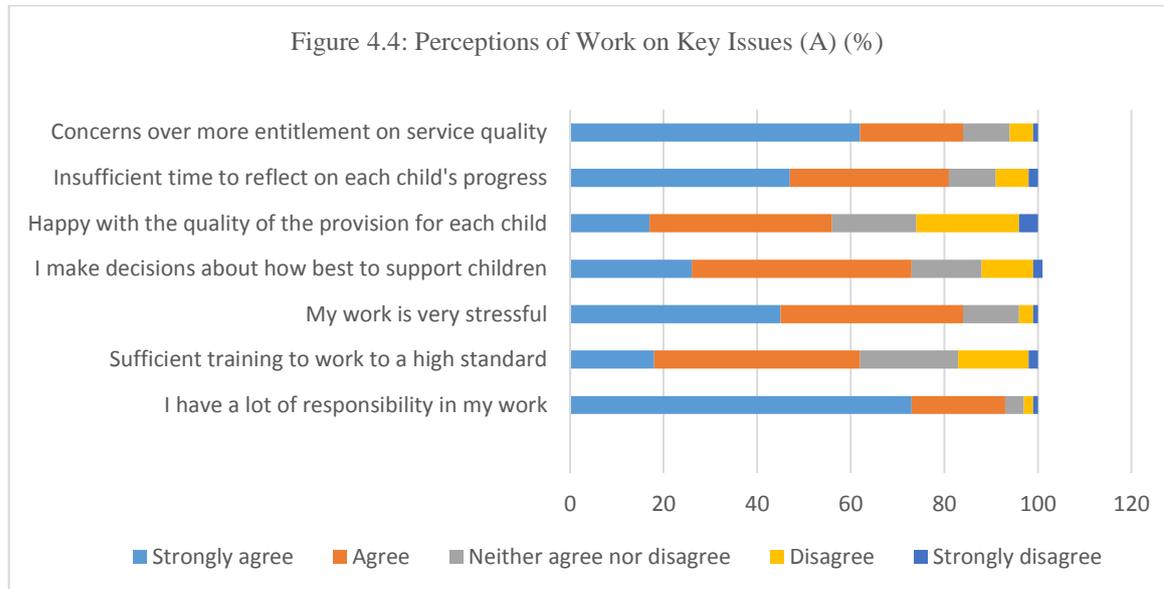
This figure shows that nearly half of respondents in extended day care settings only accessed advice from a teacher either rarely/ never: and nearly a fifth never accessed any advice (18%). Conversely, while we may think that advice was simply a function of proximity to an ELC setting, only 48% of respondents in nursery school settings had access to advice all or most of the time. The slightly surprising finding, however, was that in nursery school settings, nearly a quarter of respondents reported that they rarely or never had access to advice from a teacher (24%).



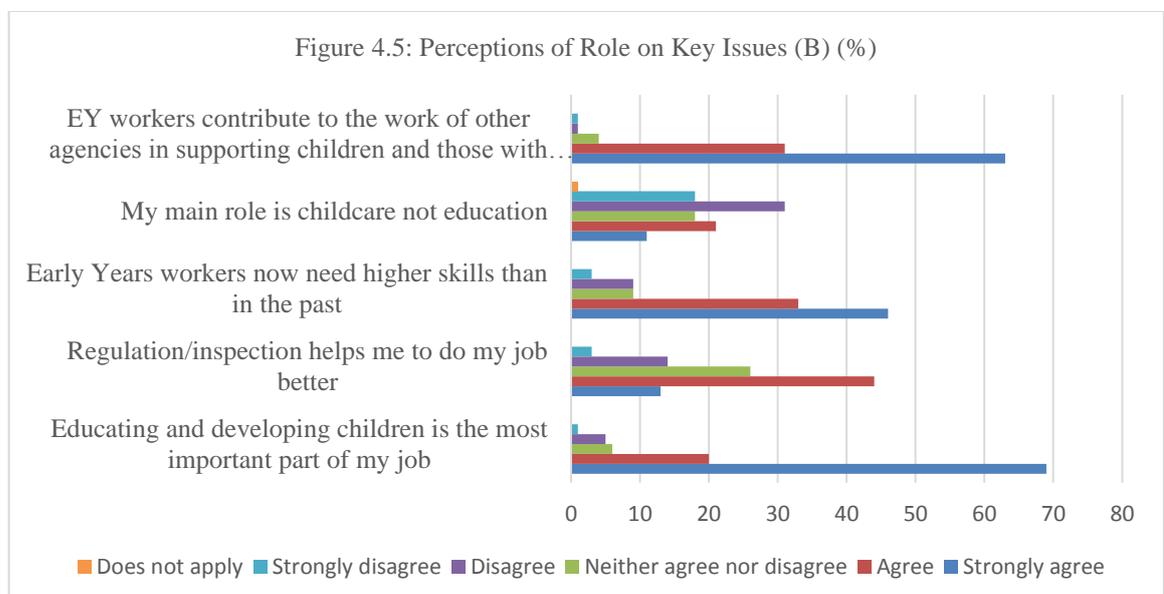
From Figure 4.3, although we can see that where teachers were not or rarely present, 15% of these respondents still had their work directed by a teacher; where they were sometimes present, most had their work directed (57%); and where teachers were always or mostly present, 20% of these respondents did not have their work directed by a teacher. In other words, presence of a teacher did not necessarily mean that they directed the work of EYWs. The data make clear the variety of configurations of teacher presence and responsibilities for work directions across the sector.

Key Role Issues

We also asked respondents a series of attitudinal statements about various contemporary issues related to key aspects of their current and future working roles in ELC (Figure 4.4 and Figure 4.5).



Most agreed that they had sufficient time to reflect on the progress of children (81%), autonomy to make decisions about how best to support children (73%), sufficient training in their role (62%) and that they were happy about the quality of provision in their establishment (56%). Alongside this, almost all respondents highlighted the level of responsibility in their role (93%), that their work was very stressful (83%) and that they had concerns about the impact of expanded entitlement on the quality of service they provided (84%).

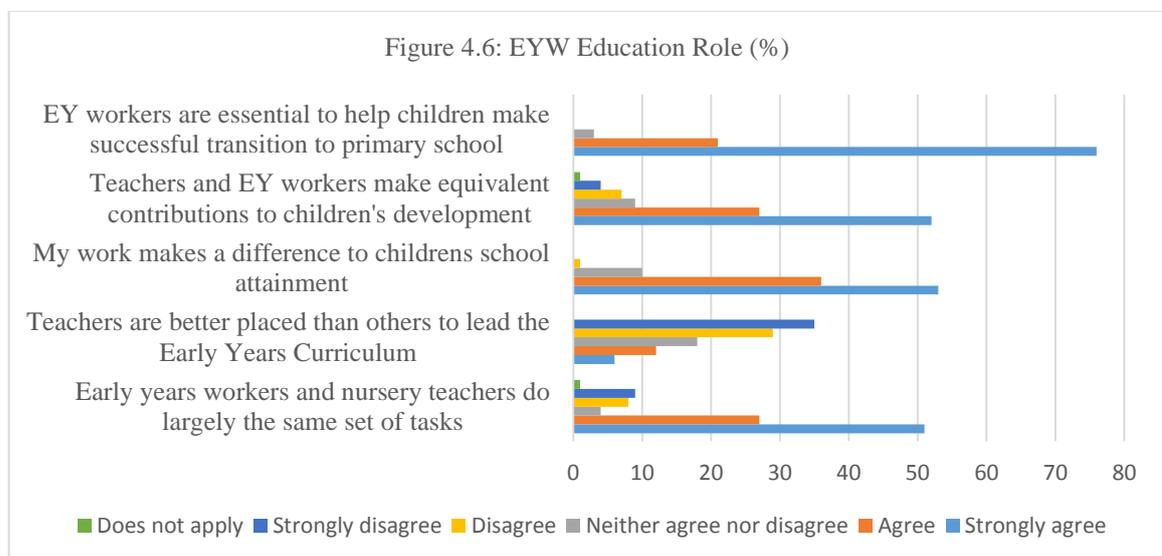


Most agreed that in their role they contribute to the work of other agencies in supporting children with additional needs (93%), that educating and developing children was the most important part of their role (89%), that EYW had higher skills than in the past

(79%) and that regulation and inspection helps them do a better job (57%). Alongside this, it was notable that nearly a third of respondents saw their role as childcare and not education (31%), though EYWs with a degree were significantly more likely than those without to emphasise their role as educators rather than carers. One explanation for the apparent paradox in the figures between ‘education’ and ‘childcare’ roles is that some respondents felt that they were getting less opportunity to engage in education-related activities because the current volumes of work and children puts more of a focus on child caring activities (see Section 6 - Increased Hours).

As the above figures show, for EYWs, their role reflects their involvement in delivering a national curriculum and actively contributing to child development. The findings offer a strong counter to any view that EYWs are simply engaged in the provision of ‘basic childcare’. By any of our measures EYWs appear to employ a range of skills that represent an integral part of the necessary learning and development of children outlined in CfE. To highlight the focus, variety and responsibility of early years tasks in a more stark way, it is worth noting that less than a tenth of respondents never carried *any* of these tasks either daily or most days (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.6 outlines the perceptions about how their education role compared with that of teachers in ELC.



Most EYWs agreed/strongly agreed that their role was essential to helping children make successful transitions to primary schools (97%/76%) and agreed/strongly agreed that they made a difference to children’s school attainment (89%/53%). There was however, a very strong convergence in their views on their role compared with teachers: 79% either agreed or strongly agreed that teachers and EYWs made *equivalent contributions* to child development, 78% thought that both groups did largely the same sets of tasks in ELC and only 18% thought that teachers were better placed to lead the Early Years Curriculum (explanations for these views can be found in Section 5 - Partnerships with Teachers).

There was little significant variation in response to these questions, with a few exceptions. Those with a degree were more likely to strongly agree that teachers and EYWs do the same set of tasks and to strongly disagree that teachers are better placed to lead the early years curriculum.

All of the issues above were raised in the focus groups where participants discussed their roles in CfE, the preparation of children for school settings and children's wider development. Participants in all groups strongly highlighted the child-centred nurture approach taken in ELC settings with the primary emphasis on progressing individual child development through play. Participants stressed the time invested in children (as individuals and in group activities both indoors and outdoors), observing and identifying their learning interests through different play settings (using standardized recording and assessment tools such as profiles/portfolios and journals for every child, to document and track their progress and developmental stages either in hard copy or electronically), and using a responsive approach to develop these interests to build future motivation and interest in learning. The following quotes provide helpful examples of this process: from observing children and their interests (and identifying problems early), regularly planning curriculum-based activities (week-to-week), to conducting them and then reviewing their efficacy as part of reflective practice. These were common themes across all of the groups.

"We deliver CfE ... but at our level the curriculum is everything they're (children) doing, putting on their own shoes, toileting, social development, emotional development, their speech and communication. We're observing all that stuff and progressing it all the time"

"Every child is an individual so you try and work with them as much as you can to get the best out of them. You start with their interests and you build on that. We want to get away from the 'well she did this, she did that' (observational) approach. When you write up their profile we want to sit with them and ... find out what they like and know and build on that. We 'scaffold' the children, try and find out what stage they are at and build on this in play"

"You have learning outcomes but intentions within that so we work to the four capacities (CfE) ... we build these through these intentions to get learning outcomes"

"You have planning in place to know what outcomes you want and how to get them. Planning is the first step"

"We use responsive planning. So we observe a child doing something then plan how to move that interest forward and extend that the next day so that they learn through their interests"

"The children reflect on their learning experiences ... at the end of a plan we ask them what they've done, what they've learned and we build their (learning) Profile and Journal ... We will ask them what else they would like to do and find out about. They might have seen something or watched something so you can plan other experiences around that so that they contribute to what they learn"

"We reflect on our practice ... you change things, you think well that worked, that didn't, how can we make it easier"

Participants were clear about the benefits and outcomes of quality ELC provision for children, parents (across all socio-economic groups and styles of parenting) and schools. This covered issues such as developing children to learn and their curriculum capacities, early socialisation to learning settings and identifying emergent problems (for those involving children with additional needs, see the section on working with other professionals). For example:

"(ELC) is giving the kids the tools so that they can learn at school. Allow them to be curious, allow them to inquire, then by the time they go to school they already have the tools to learn, rather than just imparting knowledge on them"

“When you see the progress, when you see a child with behaviours that are potentially challenging and when you see them a year down the line and their progress ... being able to see the difference you’ve made (to them)”

“Children come from all different social backgrounds and we’ve got to make sure they get all the same learning experiences. Some of the kids we have getting lots of support at home - emergent writing, reading, map making skills – but there’s lots of children who don’t get that and they wouldn’t get it if they weren’t with us. Some children are just not supported at home and so we fill those cracks and make sure that they get something and exposure to early learning skills”

“Children have come from chaotic environments – no bedtimes, they may have eaten a chocolate bar and Irn Bru for their breakfast. By the time that child leaves nursery the progress is immense”

“The social side of nursery is ... important. They learn about rules and boundaries ... to take turns, share and negotiate”

“If it wasn’t for our provision some kids wouldn’t get spoken to from one day to the next ... we have loads of parents who just don’t speak to their children from one day to the next ... not because they don’t like them, they just don’t know how to engage ... parents who don’t know how to parent...We’ve got some very needy parents, who probably haven’t been parented properly themselves ... very needy, immature”

“The child that comes through the door (at school) is an unknown quantity and needs an awful lot of support. If that child just turned up at 5, the schools wouldn’t be able to cope with that ... its early intervention and we give the child a better start than they would have had because the number of children that turn up at 3 (in ELC settings) that have never been to a health visitor or seen anyone else is big”

“We teach them from when they come in at 3, the routine of a day. The children would be crying their eyes out in P1 without anything in early years (once) ... they’ve had (ELC) ... the routine (for school) is embedded in them”

“We get feedback and teachers can tell those who’ve been to nursery and those who haven’t ... their behaviour, how they learn in class”

Not surprisingly, all of these tasks and responsibilities were typically described as time and resource-intensive. Participants consistently highlighted the pressures and stresses on their time presented by involvement in meeting multiple and sometimes competing demands and expectations. For those working in large and relatively busy ELC settings, they used terms such as ‘hectic’ and ‘chaotic’ in describing the volumes of children ‘coming and going’ throughout the ‘morning’ and ‘afternoon’ shifts of their working day. They used terms such as ‘struggling’ and ‘firefighting’ to describe the pace of work with its associated competing demands on their time and resources.

Typically, all of these terms featured in descriptions of their working roles in relation to:

- the expanding roles of EYWs consistent with an expanded workforce, career pathways and professionalisation, alongside cuts and changes in other childcare and educational workforces, such as the reduced numbers of nursery teachers in schools
- increased childcare flexibility for parents arising from the expansion to 600 hours in August 2014, which many participants associated with greater numbers of

children, extended hours, pressures on facilities, whilst still maintaining the quality of ELC settings

- working as a ‘team’ with children ‘on the floor’ in group activities to dealing with individual needs (e.g. toileting, medication and additional needs), with widely acknowledged difficulties in getting time ‘off the floor’ in the course of a normal working day to complete other tasks
- managerial, supervisory and ‘team’ arrangements for shifts, rota, maintaining staff/child ratios and lunchbreaks, alongside supporting/ covering other team members and mentoring new ELC entrants
- weekly planning reviews of activities and children
- administrative, practice and regulatory demands (changes and variations in this over time and across supervisors and managers) in ELC settings such as recording the developmental progress of children, regularly updating their profiles and journey documentation, identifying stages of development and the capacities of children, particularly in relation to their transition to primary schools, or completing documentation to support other agency referrals for children with additional needs
- taking work home and completing documentation and planning activities either after work or at weekends, or, for part-time staff, managerial expectations that they work ‘unpaid hours’ to attend meetings
- working alongside other agency professionals involved in the care and support of children (e.g. health and social work) and their learning (i.e. teachers)
- working alongside parents, carers and families.

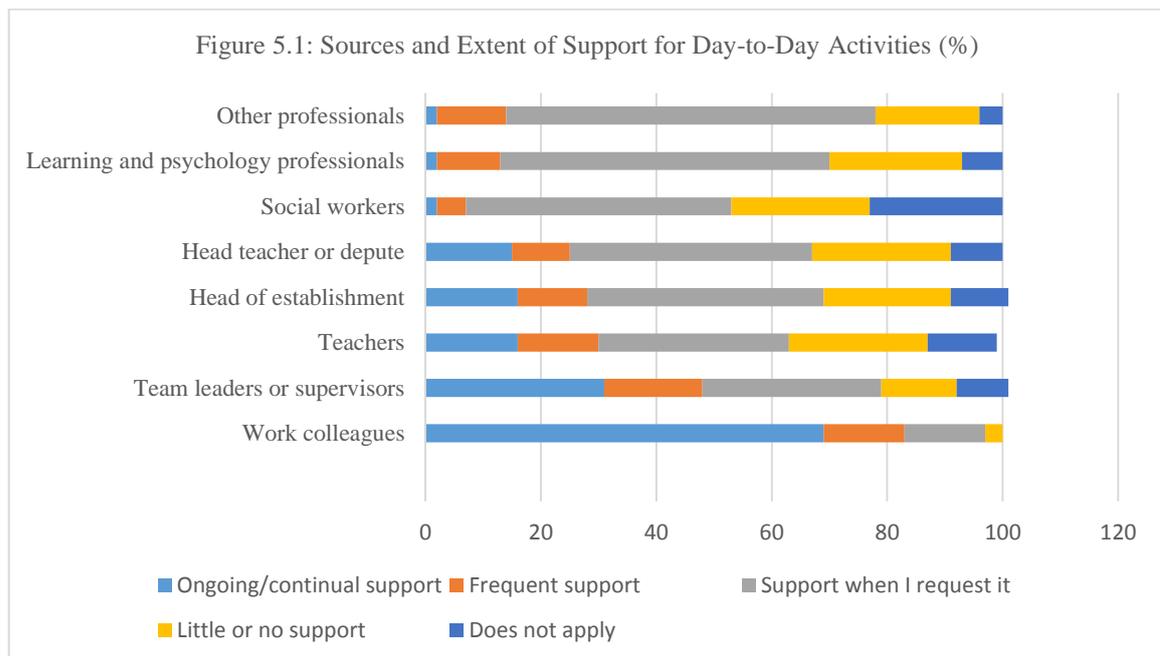
As we highlight in other sections, many of these issues are played out in the themes that emerged from the focus groups, highlighting both the rewards and satisfactions of the role, but also the challenges in delivering the role. In the following section, we present additional data and develop our analysis of partnership working in ELC, which has the potential to exacerbate many of these challenges but which, appropriately handled, might also help to ease pressures.

5. PARTNERSHIPS & VALUE

A critical component of working roles in ELC is the ability to engage with other professionals. We explored this dimension in the survey and focus groups by looking at the value that EYWs attached to this aspect of their roles and their interactions with different professional groups.

Role Supports

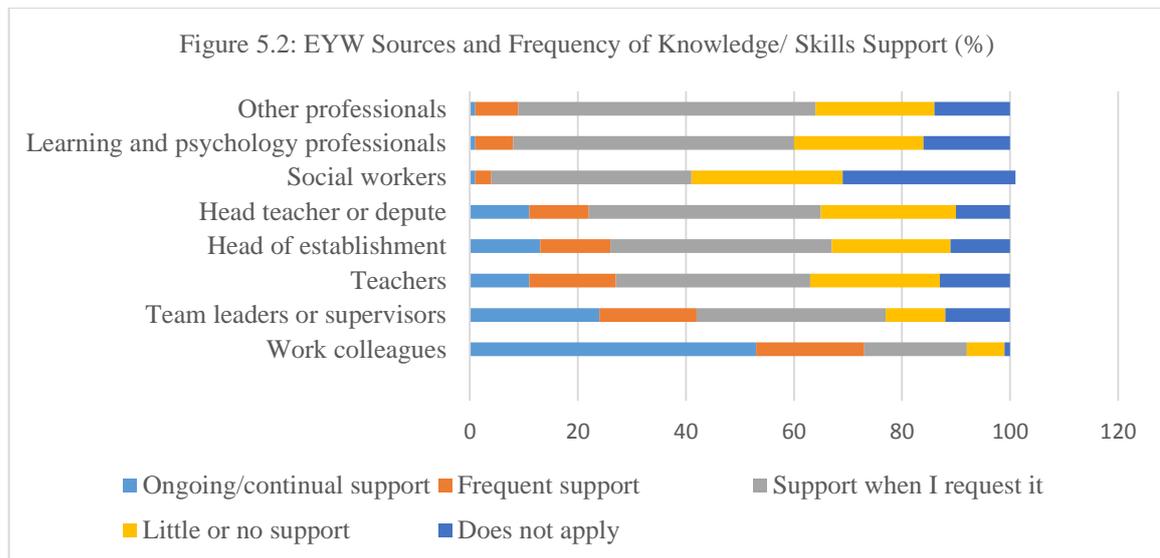
Figure 5.1 outlines the sources and extent of daily support for EYWs⁵⁶.



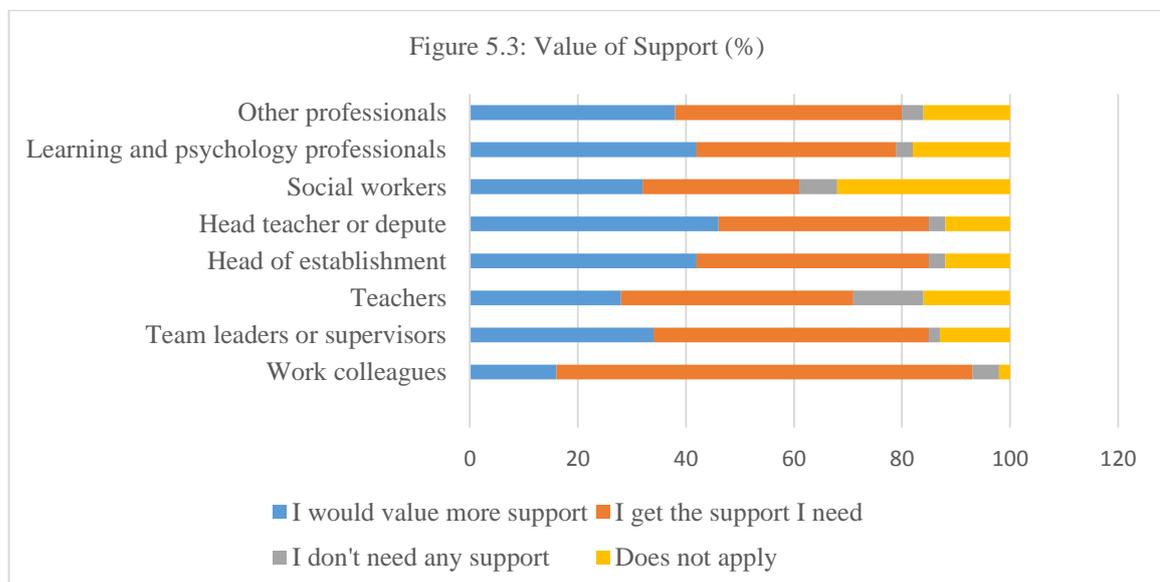
Not surprisingly, the greatest support in day-to-day activities came from EYW colleagues (69%) who were significantly more likely to offer support than team leaders/ supervisors (31%). Other sources such as teachers (16%), heads of establishments (16%) and head teachers or deputies (15%) were significantly less likely to offer frontline support.

A similar pattern was evident when we asked about sources of support for knowledge and skills (Figure 5.2). Again, other EYW colleagues were over twice as likely to offer these types of support (53%) compared to their team leaders or supervisors (24%), and around five times as likely as teachers (11%).

⁵⁶ In all of the figures in this section we have not excluded those for whom the question did not apply. While there may be arguments in favour of these, we have presented this information to give an indication of where EYWs have least contact. This does not damage the analysis as, in most cases, the 'does not apply' category is small (i.e. mostly well below 5% in most categories). The exception is the data on involvement with Social Work where around a third of EYWs reported that it did not apply to them, which will underestimate the actual proportions who report the right level of support from social workers.

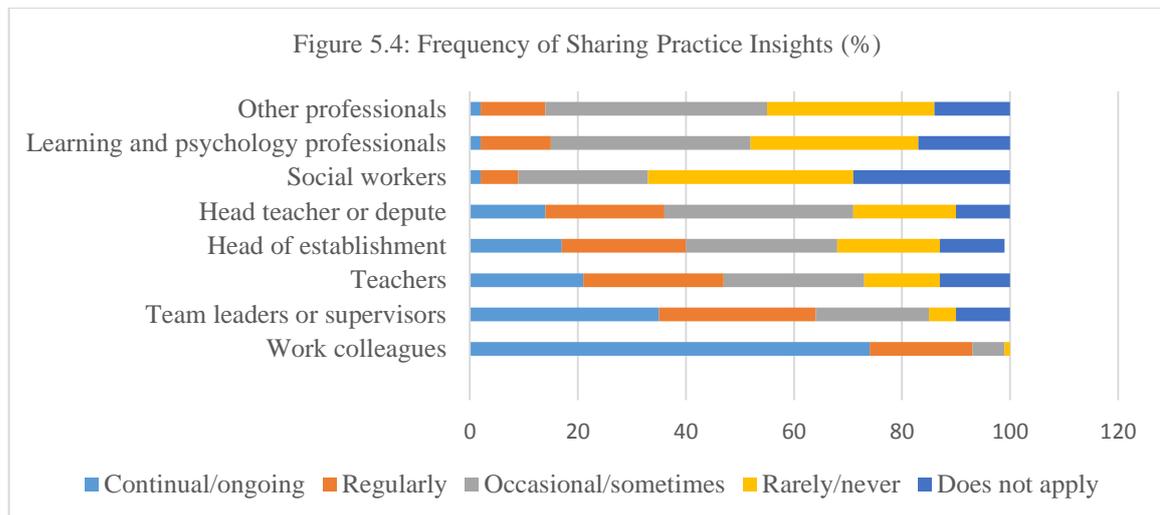


We also asked respondents about the value of the support for their working role that they received from different staff or related professionals in ELC (Figure 5.3) and the frequency with which they shared or reflected on good practice with these professionals (Figure 5.4).



Not surprisingly, most EYW respondents thought that they got the level of support that they needed from other ELC colleagues (77%) and team leaders/ supervisors (60%). Only 16% of respondents would have liked more support from their colleagues compared to over a third who wanted more support from their team leaders or supervisors (34%). Nearly half wanted more support from their head teacher or depute (46%), or from their head of establishment (42%). The desire for more support from learning and psychology professionals (42%), other professionals (42%) and social work (32%) probably reflects difficulties managing some children (and/ or families) with additional needs.

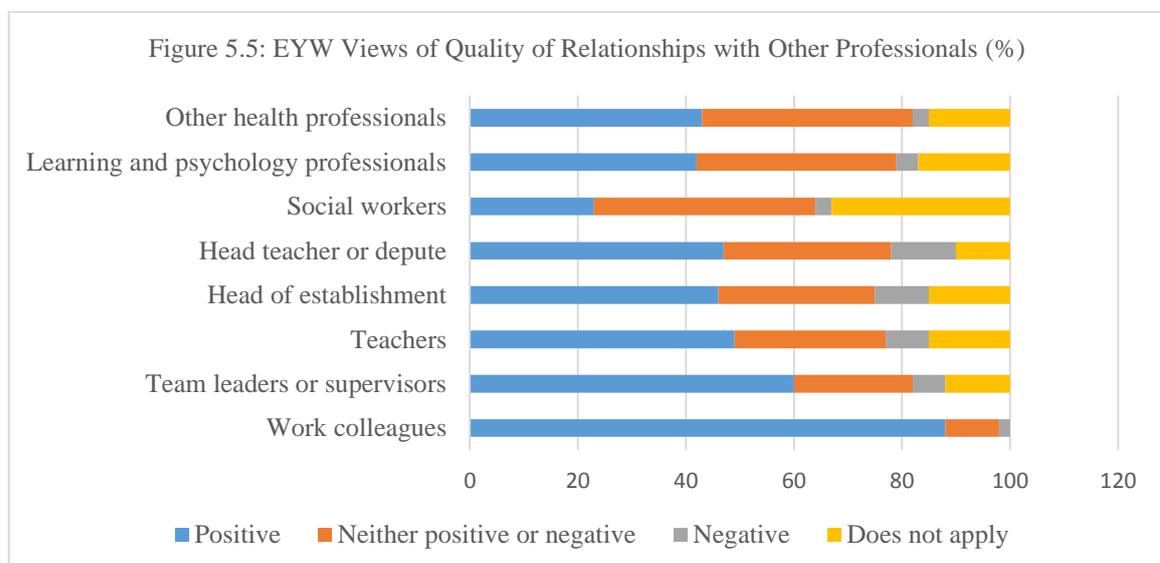
Figure 5.4 outlines how often respondents shared practice insights with other professionals.



EYWs - again unsurprisingly - were much more likely to share practice with their colleagues continually or regularly (93%) and with team leaders/supervisors (64%) than with other groups with whom they had less direct contact, including teachers, for whom less than half (47%) reported continual or regular contact, with EYWs with lower qualifications even less likely to share insights with teachers. Figure's 5.1-5.2 are strong testaments to the prevailing working cultures in ELC: in all of the focus groups, team working with other EY colleagues was a prominent embedded theme, covering the planning and the organisation of play and learning activities, the management of shift and rota arrangements, and the supervision/ mentoring of newly qualified ELC staff and 'work experience' entrants to ELC.

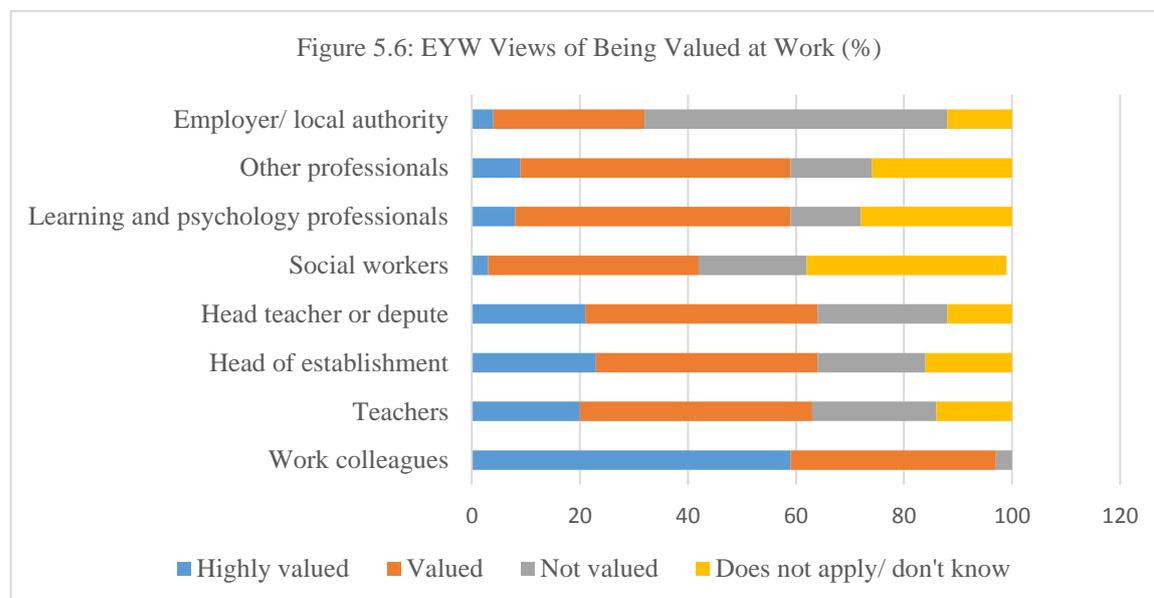
Quality of Partnerships

We also asked respondents about their perceptions of the quality of these working relationships with other ELC professionals (Figure 5.5) and how valued they felt by these groups (Figure 5.6) and by wider society (Figure 5.7).



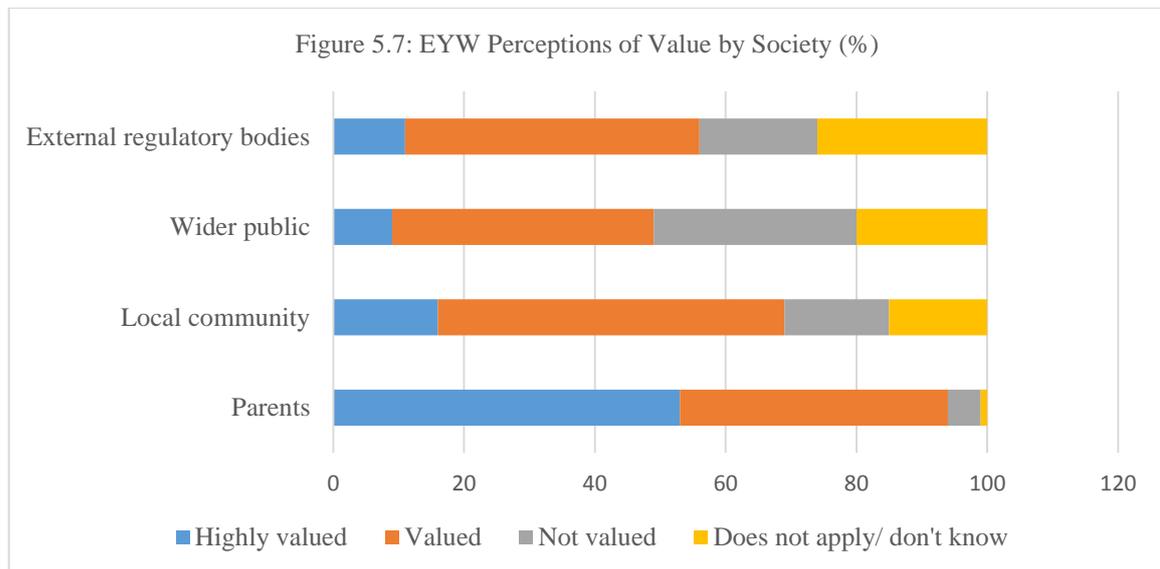
The strongest positive working relationships were with other EYW colleagues (88%) and team leaders/supervisors (60%). These relationships were significantly more positive than those with others teachers (49%), head teachers (47%), ELC management (43%),

professionals in health (42%) and learning support (42%). Although working relationships with social workers were less positive (23%), this may be explained by the fact that a third of respondents had no contact with these professionals (as described previously). Less than 10% of working relationships with all of these groups were described as negative with the exception of relationships with head teachers (12%).



Consistent with their closest working relationships, EYWs more significantly more likely to think they were highly valued/valued by their colleagues (97% - 59% felt highly valued), team leaders/ supervisors (64%), ELC heads of establishment (64%), head teachers (64%), teachers (63% - 20% felt highly valued), other professionals (59%) and learning support professionals (59%). Notably, only 4% felt highly valued by their employer with only 32% feeling valued at all.

A strong contrast is in Figure 5.7 where EYW felt that they were significantly more highly valued/valued by parents (94% - 53% felt highly valued) and their local community (69%) than by external regulatory bodies (56%) or the general public (49%). The interesting figures here concern parents and the local community: respondents felt more valued by these groups than most of the groups they worked alongside in ELC, including teachers. They felt just as valued and 'highly' valued by parents as they did by their own work colleagues.



In the focus groups we explored relationships with other professionals, teachers and parents in more depth.

Relationships with Other Professionals

All of the focus group participants discussed (positively) inter-professional working relationships. Excluding teachers, the most commonly cited agency groups were: speech and language therapists and health and social work professionals. These were all discussed in the context of providing support for young children with either special health needs or medical conditions (e.g. language development, cognitive and physical disabilities, autism and ADHD) or parenting issues in the home environment (e.g. vulnerable parents with ‘chaotic lifestyles’ and/ or dependencies). In all of the groups, many of the participants highlighted that:

- EYWs were often the first point of contact for many young children outside of the home and experienced and qualified EYWs were able to identify potential developmental problem issues in children ‘quickly’ and ‘early’
- the frequency of contact with other professionals had generally reduced in recent years as the numbers of these staff have diminished in local authorities
- the reduction in the numbers and availability of these professionals in recent years meant that some aspects of the EYW role had been expanded to cover those ‘gaps’ in professional support. This involved EYWs directly in the referral process of children to other agencies: typically described as time and resource intensive (i.e. observing the child, identifying a problem, discussing this with other colleagues and management, collating the evidence to make a referral and then managing the practical outcomes of the referral for children and their families).

The following quotes from the groups provide typical examples of these points:

“It’s not the Speech and Language Department that is upskilling the parents (overcoming problems in children), it’s us. Same with Occupational Health and Physiotherapy work. It’s us. Parents don’t see Health Visitors, it’s we (EYW’s) who pick up the speech problems or if there is something not quite right about their (children)

learning, their eyesight, maybe not walking properly, then you speak to a manager and get the parents in to discuss it”

“We have a standard five page document that we need to complete for a Speech and Language referral. For example, it asks about what sounds they (the child) are missing, you’ve got to follow them about and identify the missing sounds and then put it in for a Speech and Language referral”

“We work very closely with health and social workers, educational psychologists, health visitors, anybody that comes in the door. At times there’s just not enough of them. We used to have Speech and Language Therapists that you would ask to observe particular children. That’s all gone now because they have been taken out and we’ve taken up the slack, and now Speech and Language Therapists leave you with a whole load of things to do. The parents can’t deal with these issues if they have issues themselves so we deal with it ... we are not qualified Speech and Language Therapists but we do it. They leave the strategies (to work with the child) and we put them in place ... you have to take the time away to work with that child and we seem to encompass everybody’s job within our role profile ... you don’t have designated time for that”

Relationships with Teachers

In Section 4 we saw that most respondents worked in establishments managed by a Head Teacher and most had their work directed by a teacher. These relationships featured heavily in the focus groups where there was a general consensus about the value of teachers in ELC settings alongside an awareness of an older divide in occupational status between the two groups. This was evident in some of the language used to characterise the input and management style of some teaching staff: for example, terms such as such as ‘off the floor’ or ‘in the building’ were used to describe the perceived lack of input, engagement and presence in ELC nursery school settings by some teaching staff. The key issues for many of the focus group participants related to:

- changes in the ELC service model in recent years consistent with CfE, with a recognition that this had involved a shift in the culture of ELC settings that suited the emergent child development nurture approach of EYWs
- the growth in qualifications and ‘professionalism’ of the early years workforce with access to designated pathways that allow individuals to improve and progress an ELC career, allowing EYWs to step into roles that would once have been mainly or exclusively held by teaching staff
- perceptions by respondents that their training, experience and expertise in ELC working roles gave them a more informed understanding of child development issues and the relevant stages, capacities and needs of individual children
- considerable variation in teachers input in ELC settings, with participants highlighting the value of teachers’ input (either those they currently or previously had worked directly alongside) but only where they perceived teachers to be ‘actively contributing’ as part of a ‘whole’ nursery team
- concerns that despite EYWs engaging in learning roles in ELC, EYWs were not ‘paid’ at the same level as teaching staff.

A number of participants outlined what they saw as the differences in focus between EYWs and teaching staff in ELC, the value of teachers with experience and who positively contributed in nurseries, the similarity in tasks between EYWs and teachers and the capabilities of an emerging professional early years workforce in lead practitioner-led nursery settings. Examples of the first three of these points are outlined below:

“They’re (teachers) better qualified for the primary (school) age group because of their degree. Not Early Years. I’m doing an Early Years degree at the moment but it doesn’t make me a primary teacher”

“Teachers focus more on assessment not development and the stage of a child, and getting them ready for school”

“EYWs training is all nursery, with teachers that nursery part is minimal. Over the years I’ve worked with teachers who dotted in with no nursery training. The EYWs led the teacher in these cases”

“I usually work with a Principal Teacher and ... we (EYWs) collectively decide what we would like her to do ... it might be that she’s done some nursery training that she wants to share with the staff (EYWs), maybe something from an Action Plan, so she’s quite hands-on ... she’ll jump in with whatever we decide, she’ll support the staff and the children, take groups and she’s bringing knowledge and skills from other places because she’s going round different nurseries and she’s sharing that with us”

“She’s (Principal Teacher) based on the floor working with the whole nursery team ... she does bring a bit more extra to the team but that depends on your teacher”

“It all comes back to who you’re teacher is ... Ours is quite happy to do the learning experiences with children, type them up share it with the key workers and she’s really good at going through it or she will cover an area to let the staff do it (i.e. the learning experiences)”

“We are doing the Rights of the Child with my group on Monday and on Sunday I’ll have to update myself where we are with that and plan what we are doing next. I know we talk about teachers, their planning for work and all their marking but I have to tell you that we have those roles as well. We plan for lessons, we review lessons, we’re doing the Planning Cycle as well and that has to be done at the weekends because we cannot do that on the floor”

“The expectations associated with teachers in nursery settings are now placed on our shoulders and you’re finding that the role we’re playing now is more like a teacher than ever before”

While there was a value attached to the peripatetic model where Principal Teachers support a cluster of nurseries attached to their school, there was also a recognition of the growing professionalisation of EYWs and that they could conduct the roles and tasks of teaching staff in ELC settings. For example:

“You will see the teacher spend a bit of time with the children who needed more support in numeracy or literacy – or maybe those who weren’t where we wanted them to be pre-school ... they have learning at one-to-one time. If we had that (i.e. the time to do it) we could do the same”

“I have a degree, I’m a qualified person to deliver a curriculum ... and that is recognised in my establishment (nursery school) because I’m left in charge but in other places you’d be left under a teacher just because they are a teacher”

“My Child Development Officer’s (CDOs) do as good if not better a job as the teacher I work with, only she does it off-the-floor and my CDOs just don’t get that. In my opinion, she’s not as good as my CDOs”

“I don’t think it matters whether there is a teacher in the nursery or not. You have professionals in these settings with the right knowledge and skills, and are continually adding to that so I don’t feel that because there’s a teacher with a teaching degree, that it makes a difference to anyone else. We’ve got a lot of people in our nursery who are professionally-driven trying to provide the best outcomes for children and when you have a team like that you don’t need someone with a teaching degree”

In one of the groups there was also strong contrast between two lead practitioners working in a school nursery who had taken on the day-to-day nursery role of teachers (with short term ‘block’ access to a Principal Teacher) and two practitioners in a teacher-managed nursery who were directly managed by school teaching staff. While the former described positive aspects of the changeover to practitioner-led nurseries with reduced teacher input, the latter were critical of their management. Examples of the views of the former respondents were:

“Its (changeover) been a positive change. Within the nursery we work more as an equal team, although there are lead practitioners, it feels like more of an equal team”

There was however, among these participants a recognition that switching over from teacher to ‘lead practitioner-led’ nurseries had in their previous experience led to concerns among some parents about the quality of ELC settings:

“When teachers were taken out of nursery education there wasn’t enough information for parents ... I was working at another school at the time and there was uproar from parents. She had been the nursery teacher for 11 years and parents were worried that we (EYWs) weren’t up to the standard of a teacher, we weren’t able to provide the same set of learning experiences and there would probably be regress not progress. That’s because of a lack of information about what our role is: what we do and why. It was part of a move to get primary teachers back into schools but it wasn’t the only reason. It was to give (EYW) staff an incentive to do more and actually take more responsibility. We know what we are doing”

“It was a big shock for staff who had never done the teacher paperwork but I was always involved in that. For us it was a very smooth transition because we were doing the work anyway ... the teacher only worked part-time ... this is the first full year that we’ve had lead practitioners in place. Such a positive year with parents. We’ve been recognised in the cluster for what we’ve done. Fantastic year”

“We’ve done the induction for new term parents – usually the teacher has done that ... (now its) the lead practitioners (and) we’ve put a focus on what we do and why, what they (children) use in play and what the children learn from it. We educate the parents at induction so they’re prepared but it takes a bit to change the minds of parents if it wasn’t this way for them when they were part of a playgroup”

In contrast, there were very critical views among two participants who worked in a teacher-managed nursery school, who complained of variable levels of input and support from management in their school, attributed to pressures on teachers in schools, of the priority they gave to the nursery school and a feeling of isolation in the school setting. Examples of their comments are given below.

“At one time we had a Principal Teacher and a nursery teacher coming in once or twice a week to see you.(Now) our Deputy Head gave us a list of dates at the start of term for when she would be in, ‘dedicated block-off time’ to support us. We’ve not seen her yet. Things come up in the school, they take priority and we are sidelined”

“The Deputy Head oversees the learning for 11 children and making sure it is up to standard. None of us (Early Years Practitioners) are teachers, we’re not trained teachers ... not been to Uni. Childcare and development is our area of study but we’re expected to teach these children going up to P1 ... they’re quick enough to come back to you in P1 and tell you ‘that group you sent up were horrendous, can’t do this or that’ but we get very little feedback to tell us what they are looking for”

“The Deputy Head should be ... making sure it (learning) is carried out to the standards she expects, giving us direction in the best ways to do that”

“In our setting it’s the lack of SMT (Senior Management Team) or teacher support that’s ... our biggest problem ... we’ve needed that but its ad-hoc and not consistent at all”

“Our P1 teacher is new and she’s been really good ... she just wanted a simple tick list of things of what each child can do (in transition to P1) ... Prior to that it was non-existent but our new P1 teacher works a lot more with us ... we have teaching to do but we don’t get the pay for it. We do things wrong but that’s because we don’t ... get any support, so you’re kind of floundering and you think I’ll just do what I think is right ... they’re quick to cast it up if it isn’t right”

The latter quote highlights an underlying theme raised in every focus group about the sometimes greater chances of receiving negative (than positive) feedback from teaching staff regarding the abilities and behaviours of children coming into P1 settings. For example, the response of one respondent was typical of this view:

“We get feedback if the kids have problems. That sums it up. They come and seek us out if they’ve a problem with a certain child. Apart from that we don’t get much feedback at all”

In all of the groups there was a recognition that some children did struggle to make the transition to more formal learning settings in schools. Participants generally balanced this issue with the view that considerably more children would struggle in these P1 settings without the input of ELC provision and the work of EYWs. Five participants mentioned that teachers did positively comment to them about being able to tell the difference (e.g. in their ability to sit in class, work in groups and their approach to learning) between those children who had attended ELC settings before school and those who had not. In one group, the respondents outlined the value of synergy roles between ELC and P1 teachers which involved EYWs being based in P1 settings in some schools as part of expanded working roles to smooth the entry to school for young children.

“At the moment in (Location) ... they are now putting Child Development Officers (CDO’s) into P1 because they realise that there is a dip when they (children) leave nursery and begin school ... Our CDOs work in partnership with teachers”

“This year I’ve been put in P1 ... the teacher ... was so happy to have a nursery officer because she’s never worked at that level before ... In P1 if the teacher steps out of the room I take the class, the curriculum, the handwriting, maths, so in every area I teach but I don’t get the money to go along with it. We also deal with behaviours and the teacher will step back, they don’t know how to deal with that or medication (for children with additional medical needs). Not a teacher in our school deals with that but they leave it to the three nursery officers”

Relationships with Parents

We know from Section 4 that daily or most days, nearly half of EYWs communicated with parents and involved them in decisions, around a quarter offered support for vulnerable families and just over a tenth engaged in parent support activities. We also know that most felt as highly valued by parents as their own work colleagues. The focus group participants highlighted that working (i.e. establishing relationships characterised by trust and rapport) with parents and families was a core part of their role. All participants generally stressed the overwhelmingly positive feedback that they received from parents about the development and care of their children. As a consequence, EYWs were able to gain a fuller understanding of the individual children in their care (i.e. through understanding their home environment), influence expectations of their child's experiences in ELC settings and identify and address any 'missed', 'undiagnosed' or emerging problem issues (i.e. cognitive, behavioural and socio-emotional) for children. They were also able to understand and support in relation to problem issues at home, particularly for 'vulnerable' parent groups where problems in the family home appeared to be having an adverse effect on the child. In all of the groups, the participants highlighted a number of common themes in relation to working with parents:

- that ELC settings (unlike schools) were fully accessible to parents who wanted to discuss their child with their key EYW, with participants generally keen to stress that establishing 'trust and rapport' between EYWs and parents was a process that was built over the time that children spent in their ELC setting
- that parents had a very wide range of expectations of their child's experiences in ELC settings. At the extremes of this range, while some treated ELC settings as a form of daily 'childcare' (with typically relatively low engagement with EYWs and ELC activities), others were more fully involved in their child's development within an ELC setting (with typically higher levels of engagement with EYWs and activities within these settings (e.g. parents evenings and consultations)
- that parents with higher levels of involvement tended to be those with higher expectations of their child's development and looked at ELC as a developmental (i.e. educational) preparation for primary school.

The following quotes from the groups were typical examples of these points:

"Our relationships with our parents are very positive ... you get to know them, they confide in us and in some cases that can help get better support in for them at home, or you just support them by chatting to them really"

"You give support to families – you're a doctor, nurse, counsellor, you ... establish a high level of trust with parents"

"The two-year olds parents use it (ELC) as a drop-off ... free childcare for them ... One asked if we were open at weekends! We've got quite a few of them, they don't want to give anything back, they're not interested to upskill (parenting) ... or to go to any parenting group, we really are a drop-in for them"

"Our parents will turn all turn up to all the parent consultations, all the evenings that you hold, they all like to talk about the curriculum, there is always a bum on every seat. They respond to all your surveys"

“Parents ... expect that their 3-4 year olds should be doing school work”

“A lot of them are still in the mindset that we are getting them ready for school...a lot of parents, who come the end of term ask whether their child can write their name or whether they can count to this or that number. It’s still an issue, not as much as before because the information that comes with ELC puts the emphasis on development through play ... that information is coming through more, the parents are more accepting. Before nurseries used to be quite structured but they are now more child-led. Especially with parents who’ve had children in the nursery in previous years, they’ve seen a big change ... there is still a lack of information for parents on how nurseries do education now. If there was more information for parents - information sessions - it wouldn’t be such a transition for these parents”

Where concerns with parents were mentioned in the groups, these tended to focus on issues with those who either had very high expectations of their child’s educational development in ELC settings and did not understand aspects of the development approach in CfE (as described above), to more serious issues for those parents (and children) from ‘vulnerable’ social groups who needed more support than others. Examples of these points are outlined below:

“They (parents) can be quite intimidating if you don’t know them. They don’t like strangers. A lot of them have never left the local area ... quite territorial and can sound quite aggressive. You need to be able to stand up to them but be professional, use the right words and let them know if things are not acceptable ... there is not any point in banging on to them about why their child doesn’t have trainers with them ...they’re vulnerable, maybe having money problems at home ... They need somebody who knows them, understands them and can maybe help. They take up an awful lot of our time as well but we have to be accessible to parents all the time”

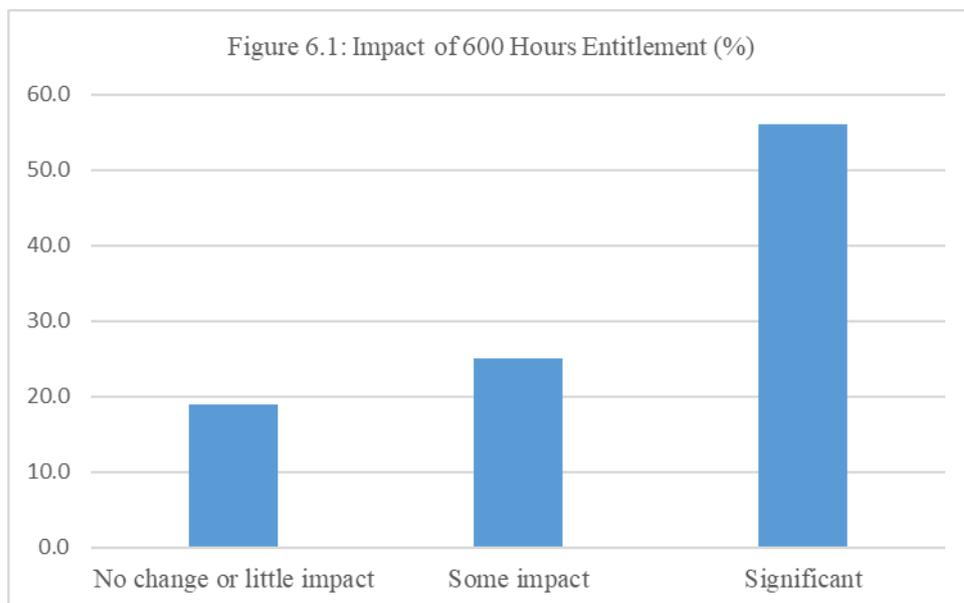
This section has addressed a range of issues arising from cross-professional partnership working in ELC settings. It paints a picture both of complex and developing inter-professional relationships and of the challenges arising from the diminution of professional staff with whom EYWs interact, with consequences for extensive role stretch. It also paints a picture, however, of the benefits of effective cross-professional working, a point we return to in Section 7.

6. POLICY IMPACTS

The ELC sector has and is undergoing significant change with a planned expansion in children's entitlement hours and the deployment of additional graduate-level staff in establishments in deprived areas by 2020. We asked respondents about these proposed changes and their responses are outlined below.

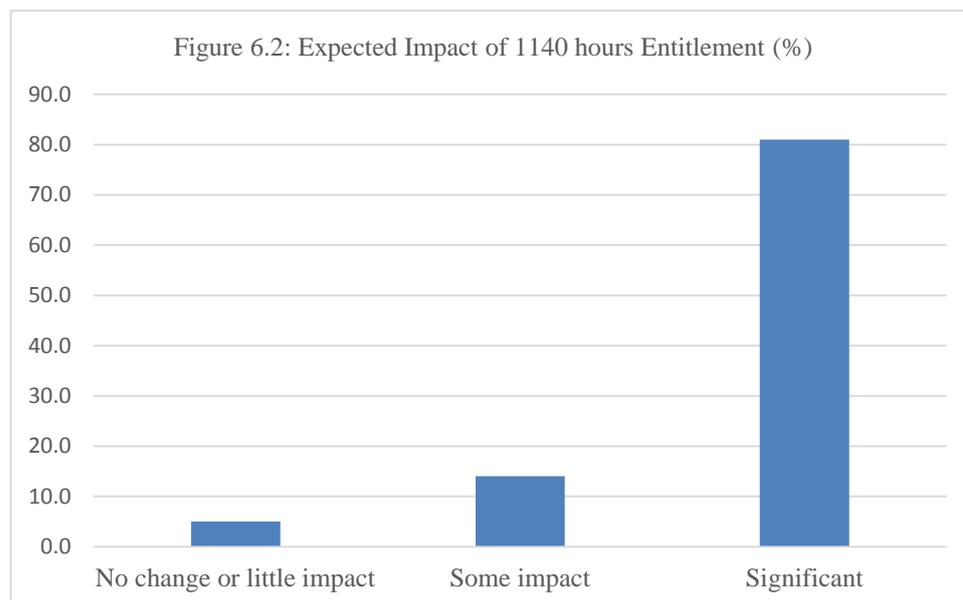
Increased Hours

Most respondents thought that the impact of the 600 hours increase in children's entitlement in 2014 in ELC had made a significant impact on their working role (56%), with just less than one fifth telling us that this change had made no impact at all (19%) (Figure 6.1). Not surprisingly, these proportions increased and decreased respectively when respondents were asked about the proposed increase of children's entitlement in ELC to 1,140 in 2020. Over four-fifths of respondents thought that these hours would have a significant impact (81%). Only 5% thought that it would have no impact at all (Figure 6.2).



In the focus groups, participants were clear that the increase in children's entitlement to 600 hours had a number of positive and negative impacts. On the positive side, there was a recognition that this increase had brought greater volumes of children into ELC settings for more extended hours, with benefits for children and working parents. These views were balanced by concerns about the increased volume of work for EYWs (where the increase meant a greater volume of children, increased administration tasks, increased numbers of new staff that needed mentoring and extended working hours for ELC settings), increased the pace of work (with less possibilities of finding time 'off the floor' during busy periods) and structural problems finding 'space' and resources for play and learning at times of peak demand. While some participants felt that increased hours had positively benefitted working parents, others felt that it had impinged on 'family time' and meant that some children had to experience a longer day (at a younger age) compared to school hours. They also questioned the ability of some children to cope with sometimes 'chaotic' daily and weekly childcare arrangements - being shuffled around a mixture of ELC settings, childminders and family members.

These issues were all amplified and extended in relation to the increase in children's hours to 1,140. Almost all respondents (96%) expected this to have a 'significant impact' and the vast majority of the responses expected this impact to be very negative. The main concerns were over additional administrative and working pressures on staff (25%), the pressures on children coping with long days and the loss of family and parenting attachment time (21%) and the potential reduction of EYWs to 'childcare' roles with less time to emphasise learning and diminished quality of service and standards (18%). Other issues raised related to pressures on space, buildings and the availability of places for children (17%) and the need for more new staff (12%) to support this entitlement extension. We present a representative selection of the range of these responses below.



In the survey, this issue attracted a number of written positive and negative responses and we present a representative selection of these below.

“No time for anything other than childcare. I would like to know where all those children will be going as we will require double the amount of spaces. Are new nurseries going to be built?”

“Already the stress levels are sky high with ever growing demands on EYP’s. Soon the nursery children will be in longer than the school level children. Nurseries are turning into glorified childminders”

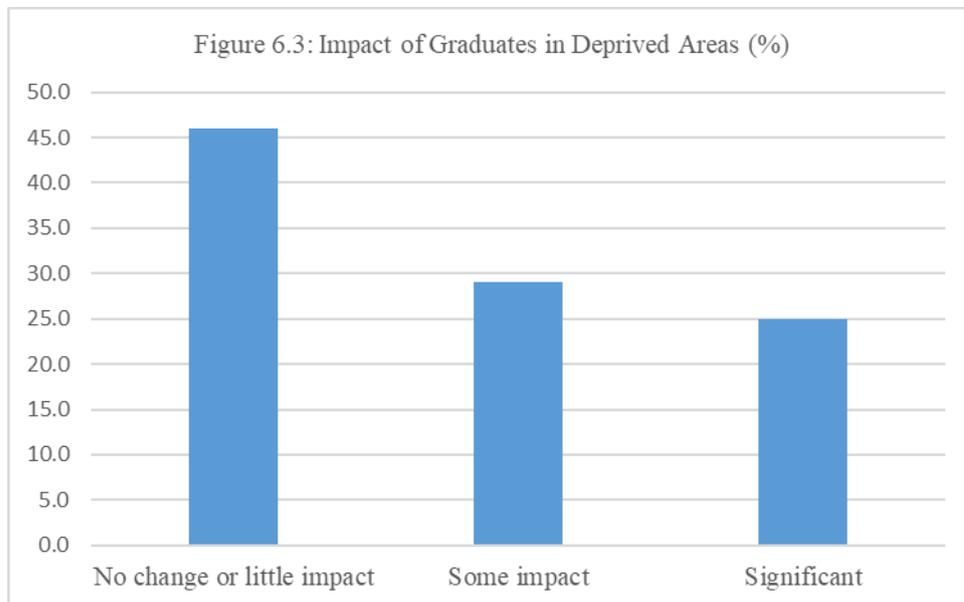
“It will mean more time with the children and greater demands trying to produce paper evidence while carrying out care and education with children. Teachers get 12 hours non-contact time per week. We get nothing”

“This equates to a six hour day, this means only one session can be accommodated each day, reducing our capacity. Suggestions have been made to include our outdoor space so that we can accept more children. All very well if children choose to go out, overcrowding of indoor space if not”

“Children are not coping with 600 so they will not cope with longer. Classes have no space for all children to eat or rest ... children need to spend more time with their parents and carers and spend more time with their family rather than in establishments with different adults and children”

Additional Graduate-Level Support

Despite the value that may be attached to having higher qualified staff working in deprived areas, almost half of respondents (46%) thought that graduate-level support would have little impact on children's outcomes, while 29% thought it would have a slight impact. The remaining quarter thought the impact would be significant (Figure 6.3).



While the focus group participants generally welcomed and recognised new career pathways in ELC up to graduate level, and the utility of having better qualified staff to shape existing practice for staff and by extension, outcomes for children, there was also appreciable uncertainty about their utility. Participants tended to emphasise earlier intervention to support working with vulnerable families; a desire that graduate progression came within the existing ELC workforce (as opposed to GTCS teaching staff); and ensuring that better qualifications were balanced by experience working in the sector. Some also linked degree-level qualifications to questions of whether there would be comparable rates of 'professional' pay in the sector. However, more positively, participants generally welcomed the chance of additional staff support and that better qualified staff could contribute to staff development, raise quality standards and improve learning outcomes for children. These were also strong themes in the survey responses, where 86% of 'significant impact' responses were very positive. We present a representative selection of these below.

"Higher quality interactions from practitioners that have a better understanding of child development"

"Degree level practitioners will have a greater knowledge that will enhance children's learning while enabling the sharing of good practice to upskill staff ... help reduce the attainment gap in early years"

"Greater understanding of child development, integrated working and working with families leading to higher attainment"

"This will be a benefit to the local community as some of the graduates will come from similar backgrounds and have the skills and knowledge to ... take forward changes in their local establishments"

“It will allow more knowledge to be spread in staff teams”

7. CONCLUSIONS

Our findings present an interesting and wide ranging snapshot of the views of EYWs in a developing and expanding sector in Scotland. EYWs managed a relatively wide set of working roles embedded in the CfE and there were strong reported perceptions of a trend towards ‘upskilling’ in the sector which bodes well for EYWs, children and families in terms of the present and future quality of ELC provision. Quality is a key issue for a service central to children’s future attainment and especially so for an expanded service. The ELC workforce is central to that quality of provision.

EYWs had a very strong identification with the ELC service, the nurturing and educational development of children, alongside accessibility for parents and the provision of support for families. In the data, EYWs had a strong sense of their expertise in pre-school age groups: where children were allowed to develop, early problems were identified and managed (with support from other services), families were offered support and children were prepared for schools through emergent skills in language, literacy, numeracy and creativity. Occupationally, they identify themselves as the primary workforce for the care and education of pre-school children - the only group trained specifically for the pre-school sector. They reported considerable autonomy in their roles to make decisions in the best interests of children. Given this, appropriate qualifications, training, development, work relationships and professional support are of huge importance.

Evidence of ‘upskilling’ was reflected in our data and possibly signals emerging quality from within the current workforce. Degree level pathways provide opportunities for career development and attracting high quality recruits into leadership and management roles in the sector. However, ‘upskilling’ also creates challenges for the sector in matching pay to increasing workforce qualifications and skills. There is also a need for greater recognition that the working roles of EYWs are increasingly complex and challenging, notwithstanding the high levels of intrinsic satisfaction that many derived from their role in helping young children develop.

The findings point to the complex, multi-faceted nature of EYWs roles. They undertake a variety of tasks: the demands of managing children (both in groups and individually, and particularly for those with additional needs and living in vulnerable families and communities) alongside necessary administrative tasks can be considerable and competing. High quality early learning and care is time and resource intensive. It is highly responsible and stressful work. It is carried out by workers who feel valued by their colleagues and by parents, but who feel very under-valued by regulatory bodies, the public and particularly by their employers. Proposed changes to ELC provision need to be made with proper understanding of these roles in mind.

One particular concern arising from the findings is an increase since the 2005 survey in the numbers of EYWs who disagree that their role is about education rather than childcare. Focus groups responses suggested that this may reflect the increasing demands of the jobs, with time pressures impacting on the balance between childcare and educational activities. This could risk rolling back some of the gains made over last decade or so in terms of professionalisation and may be exacerbated by further increases in capacity that are not matched by expansion of the workforce at the appropriate level of quality.

Distinct from new career pathways (and the uptake of responsibilities that were once held mainly or exclusively by teachers), there was a very real concern about EY roles expanding to take up tasks that were previously done by other professional staff (e.g. speech and language), not least because of demands on the services of these professional groups. In addition, EYWs face a different kind of role stretch generated by providing increasing capacity in establishments. While new roles may be a reflection of their knowledge of and access to children and families, there is a need to be careful about both vertical and horizontal ‘role stretch’ that adds to the challenges of working in the sector.

Role stretch has the potential to impact on relationships with other professional groups. High quality inter-professional relationships are likely to be essential to high quality ELC provision. While the survey reported very good relationships with colleagues, and decent with other professionals, a significant minority wanted more support from management and other professionals.

Turning specifically to teachers, the perceived pattern of their involvement in EYWs work is variable and shifting, and it is difficult to discern a standard pattern of interaction between teachers and EYWs. There is no evidence from quality ratings on differences between teaching and EYW-led establishments, highlighting that EYWs are currently delivering high quality pre-school education and care. The survey data were clear in indicating that the presence or otherwise of a teacher was unrelated to the range and frequency of activities carried out by EYWs. EYWs whose work was not directed by a teacher were significantly more likely to report autonomy in how they supported children and delivered the early years curriculum. More than three quarters of EYWs agreed that EYWs and teachers in ELC carried out largely the same tasks, including more than three in five of those EYWs who report that their work is directed by a teacher.

What appears to be of particular consequence is the quality and nature of the relationship between teachers (where present) and EYWs. Where teachers are ‘on the floor’ and participating as full members of the team, EYWs spoke positively of the relationship and of how their respective expertise and skills align. But where teachers are not perceived to be playing a full team role, EYWs could not identify many differences between their job and those of teachers in ELC.

Leaving individual differences to one side, it is perhaps unsurprising, given the increasing professionalisation of work in early years and the role of CfE in aligning all staff to the same purpose, that distinctions between the input of different professional groups are challenging to identify and measure, and that high quality outputs are delivered by both groups, separately and together.

These latter points raise an interesting and potentially important issue about the focus of practice and research in the ELC sector. To date, much of that focus has been on the role, contribution and impact of specific occupational groups with distinct qualifications profiles. Yet ELC establishments are dynamic, highly socialized workplaces, and the role of work teams is of particular significance. A focus on the composition of teams, and their effectiveness, may prove more fruitful in practice and in research, than a pre-occupation with ‘competing’ professional priorities.

The sense of increasing challenge in the ELC sector was also reflected in EYW views on new entitlements for children’s hours and the deployment of additional graduate staff in areas of deprivation. The survey and the focus group responses gave considerable insight

into the reflective and thoughtful consideration given by EYWs to possible impacts - both negative and positive - on children, parents and staff, with two thirds of the survey respondents taking the time to write comments on their views.

While there was general understanding of the rationale for planned expansion of entitlement in the sector, the proposals to increase entitlement, however, were treated with considerably more caution and skepticism. A range of concerns were raised about its impact on work roles, intensity and stress, and capacity limitations in relation to buildings and space. At the heart of these anxieties was a concern for the quality and integrity of the service provided, and the need to ensure that expansion would not jeopardise the quality of existing staff or provision, not least because these would defeat the objective of investing in ELC to reduce the poverty attainment gap.

On a more positive note, while many respondents thought that new graduate level staff would make little or no difference, there were still reasonably strong levels of support for this policy, although there was also uncertainty about what it may actually mean in practice. There was a recognition that more staff would be required and a desire that new graduate level staff came from within EYWs.

The coming years will be of considerable importance in terms of advancing our understanding of the potential of ELC to drive real social change in levels of attainment. Understanding the processes by which well-qualified, well trained and motivated EYWs and other professionals combine to deliver high quality learning and care provision that in turn deliver measurable outcomes for children is crucial.

UNISON Scotland have both supported an expansion of ELC and the increasing professionalisation of EY work over the last decade or so, and have championed the provision of ELC in the public sector. Our findings suggest that these developments, while largely positive, have involved role stretch for EYWs. While role stretch as upskilling can be beneficial for workers, role stretch as work intensification is a concern. At a time of significant expansion, protecting the professionalism and the work experience of EYWs, will bring challenges. From our research, we believe that the key to ensuring quality of provision - crucial to improving children's outcomes and to having any chance of reducing the attainment gap - will be protecting the conditions that allow EYWs to deliver both high quality education and care.