

**ACP response to the Tickell Review of the Early Years Foundation Stage  
30 September 2010**

**Questions for practitioners, owners/managers, schools, academics, sector representative bodies, training providers, local authorities etc.**

**12 Many people have views about the EYFS. Many think that it has been very successful and would like it to remain unchanged. Others think parts of it need changing, or that there shouldn't be a mandatory framework at all. What is your overall view of the EYFS?**

The ACP welcomes the Early Years Foundation Stage as providing a coherent and consistent universal framework that supports young children's learning, development and emotional well being.

Parents and families can expect the same standard of education and care for their children, whether they attend a children's centre, PVI setting, reception class or are cared for by a childminder. The EYFS ensures that all early years settings and services are working within the same overall statutory framework and standards, which we believe is important.

Children learn best when they are engaged in play and real activities – playing, talking and thinking with adults and other children. **It is only in the context of a relationship that babies and young children will learn.** For example, if we think of a toddler who is happily playing while his mother is there, once she leaves the room, play is abandoned as he cries or rushes after her. The EYFS emphasis on the key person approach and an attachment relationship is crucial for young children.

**13 Do you think there should be a framework that covers both welfare requirements and learning and development requirements? If you have views on the content of the welfare or learning and development requirements, note there are specific questions on this later on in the questionnaire.**

The ACP believes that there should be one single framework, covering both emotional well being and learning and development requirements, for all young children. This reflects the fact that for any child the emotional and the cognitive are not easily separated and encourages practitioners to think about the child as a whole.

The ACP believes that how practitioners implement the EYFS is critical. All practitioners need to have a good working knowledge of child development to develop effective practice. Children learn in a variety of ways, but it is crucial that they have a significant relationship with a practitioner to help them understand their own experiences and the world around them. **This can only be achieved by a practitioner being in close and reliable touch with a child's experiences and thoughts.**

We are supportive of one integrated framework.

The ACP is not supportive of Ofsted as regulators. From our considerable work with Children's Centres and Nurseries anecdotal evidence suggests that Ofsted regulation has in moved the emphasis away from children's emotional development. This maybe because it is easier to measure health and safety and children's cognitive development and the fact that the assessors come from an education institutional culture.

**14 Some providers argue that they should not have to deliver the learning and development requirements of the EYFS - for example, independent schools, parts of the play sector/out of school care, and some childminders. What are your views on moving away from a single framework and having different or lighter touch requirements for some types of provider?**

**What providers, if any, do you think should have fewer learning and development requirements?**

The ACP strongly believes that there should be one single framework for all providers that work primarily with children aged birth to five. However, we would propose developing lighter touch for settings catering mainly for children over 5 – specifically outdoor play provision, after school clubs and extended services.

We also think that there should be ongoing and effective communication between all settings that children attend, as well as between and with their parents and practitioners, to ensure continuity of care.

**16 It could be argued that if providers receive government funding - for example for delivering free nursery education for 3 and 4 year olds - then they should be required to deliver the things that Government thinks are important and sets out in the EYFS. What are your views on this?**

The ACP thinks that for each child the most helpful focus is on providing what is best for each individual child.

**17 Do you have any other comments you'd like to make?**

### **The themes and objectives of the EYFS**

**18 The EYFS is currently based around four themes that are designed to provide a context for the EYFS requirements, and describe how practitioners should provide good quality and consistent support for the learning, development and care of young children. These themes are:**

- **A unique child**
- **Positive relationships**
- **Enabling environments**

- Learning and development

Would you take a different approach to these themes and underpinning principles? If yes, please specify what approach you would take.

19 The overarching aim of the EYFS is to improve children's developmental outcomes and to reflect that it is every child's right to grow up safe, healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and with economic wellbeing. Do you think the EYFS should have a different aim? If yes, please specify what aim you would have.

These themes, principles and overarching aims have the ACP's support.

20 a) Underneath this overarching aim, the objectives of the EYFS are to:

- Objective 1: Set the standards for early years providers
- Objective 2: Provide for equality of opportunity
- Objective 3: Create the framework for partnership working
- Objective 4: Improve quality and consistency
- Objective 5: Lay a secure foundation for future learning.

Do you think these objectives are the right ones? If no, please specify what you think the objectives of the EYFS should be.

20 b) Which of these objectives do you think is the most important of all?

X Objective 1	X Objective 2	X Objective 3
X Objective 4	X Objective 5	

21 Do you have any other comments you'd like to make?

**Enjoying, learning and developing**

22 The six areas of learning and development are well established areas that are intended to provide a structure for young children's development and learning. Do you think they achieve this? If no, please specify what structure you think should be used.

X Mostly yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
--------------	-----------------------------	-----------------------------------

23 One of the aims of this review is to identify the knowledge and skills that are most important for young children to develop and thrive, particularly so that when they move into Year 1 they will continue to make good progress and achieve well in later school life. What do you think are the most important skills,

## knowledge, attitudes and dispositions that children need to develop from birth to five years?

All of the current six areas of learning

A subset of the six areas of learning - please specify

Other - please specify

The EYFS is the foundation for children's development through life. Children in their earliest years need to have the opportunity to develop: social skills including confidence and self esteem; the ability to build relationships and friends; a positive attitude; curiosity; and an inclination for learning in its broadest sense. As we have said earlier all learning and play begins in the context of a relationship with a significant adult, whose presence and capacity to hold the child in mind allows a young child to explore with out feeling overwhelmed.

The ACP is concerned by the focus on school readiness as an overall aim for early education. Early years should not purely be seen as a precursor to school but as a vital stage of learning and development in its own right. Being ready for schools means different things to children, parents and practitioners. Nurseries and schools need to attend to individual children to ensure smooth transitions and have good communication with both parents etc. For children it is important they feel secure enough and trust the adults that they will help the child to manage the uncertainty and the unknown. To believe this the child has to have had enough good experiences of this happening before, to now be able to hold this in his mind when faced with uncertainty.

Feeling secure internally allows the child to feel relaxed enough to play. In the beginning of life play is a crucial part of a child exploring his world and the relationships he has in it. Play has long been known to have a significant role in building communication and social skills, aesthetic appreciation, creativity and problem solving.

Relationships and the emotional environment have a direct impact on how a child's brain physically develops in the first three years of life. These first significant relationships in any child's life form the templates of all later attachment relationships. It is essential that we give children the best possible foundations for their adult emotional well being and mental health.

**24 Currently, the EYFS says that children should be supported to develop equally across all six areas of learning at all ages. Neurological evidence suggests that there are some things it's important for young children to learn when they're very young - for example emotional control - and other things that they can pick up at an older age - for example peer social skills. Should the areas of learning be tailored for specific ages and stages?**

Yes

No

x Not Sure

The ACP believes that this question phrasing is unclear; **neurological evidence must be considered not in isolation. This is because of the interplay between the emotional and the physical in the early years**, for example anxiety in a baby can often be expressed as a physical symptom. **The brain's physical development is dependent on the emotional environment in the early stages of life such as the nuances of intimate relationships.** For example it has been shown that abused or neglected children have up to 30% smaller sized brains. The brain has enormous plasticity in these first few years and when patterns of relating are established, they then form the templates for all later intimate relationships. This is why good enough early relationships are so crucial to later mental health.

It is also important to recognise that every child is an individual and should be encouraged to develop at his/her own speed. While agreeing that children should be supported to develop equally across all areas of learning, children develop at different rates. Guidelines in terms of the skills level a child should reach by a particular age should be purely a suggestion. This will then prevent practitioners from asking children to undertake activities that are inappropriate for them at a specific chronological age. **Development does not move in a linear progression, but children can and do regularly regress at points of stress or of a developmental difficulty. This is part of ordinary development and must not be misunderstood.**

An in depth understanding of a child is much more important than superficial coverage of an aspect of learning.

**25 The early learning goals (ELGs) set out the things that most children should be able to do by the age of 5. The goals provide a structure for early years practitioners to work towards, but some people have told us that there are too many goals, with some duplication, and that some of the goals are too hard for some 5-year-old children. Do you think there should be a structure for practitioners to work towards?**

Strongly agree

X Partly agree

Neither agree or disagree

Partly disagree

Strongly disagree

The ACP believes that 69 early learning goals is too many for any practitioner to work with effectively.

**26 If you think there should be a structure for practitioners to work towards, what do you think this should include?**

Practitioners should receive high quality training at an appropriate level, both initial and in CPD. The ACP is supportive of the methodology for practitioners outlined in ‘The Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundations Stage’.

Practitioners should:

- make systematic observations and assessments of each child's achievements, interests and learning styles;
- use these observations and assessments to identify learning priorities and plan relevant and motivating learning experiences for each child;
- match their observations to the expectations of the early learning goals.

However, in the ACP’s anecdotal experience of how these are used and implemented is very unhelpful. For example, observations are often made while playing with the child and are then written down immediately by practitioners in case they are forgotten and often without warning to the child. This has the effect of interrupting the practitioners play with the child and the emotional contact between them. This type of practitioner behaviour has been seen across many nurseries. This then cuts across the explicit intention of the key person approach which is to provide continuity and reliable care.

**By the end of the EYFS, significant gaps in development emerge between the most disadvantaged children and their peers from more affluent families, and this gap widens as children grow older. One of the aims of this review is to identify what practitioners could do to help narrow this gap.**

**27 What do you think are the most important areas to focus on to support disadvantaged children to progress? Please tick your most important 3.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Personal, social & emotional skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Communication, speaking & listening skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Reading & writing
<input type="checkbox"/> Problem solving & numeracy	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge to make sense of the world	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical development
<input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities to explore creativity	X Other - please specify	

The EYFS was developed for all children and works for all children. Developing skills across all 6 areas of learning is important for all children, irrespective of whether they are disadvantaged or not.

**28 Parents have the biggest influence on their children's learning and development. Do you think there's a role for early years practitioners to work with parents to help improve children's learning and development at home?**

X Yes

No

Not Sure

We strongly agree that developing strong working relationships between practitioners and families has a positive impact on young children's learning and development, both within settings and the home learning environment. It is already part of the EYFS.

Many researchers have evidenced this over the last few years:

Ball (1994)<sup>1</sup> – 'parents are the most important people in children's lives. It is from parents that children learn most, particularly in the early months and years.'

EPPE (2004)<sup>2</sup> – 'what parents do is more important than who they are'.

Sutherland (2006)<sup>3</sup> – explored the long-term effects of child / parent interaction on the brain.

**Learning and development in the early years is complex. Do you have any further comments on the current six areas of learning and development, ELGs and educational programmes in the EYFS?**

### **Assessing children's progress**

**30 It's an integral part of caring for young children that practitioners should, on an ongoing basis, observe and understand what children are capable of and enjoy, and tailor what play and activities they do with them to reflect this. This cycle of observation and assessment, known as formative assessment (or**

---

<sup>1</sup> Ball, C (1994) Starting Right: The importance of early learning. London: Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Arts.

<sup>2</sup> Sylva, K et al. (2004) The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education Project. London: DfES

<sup>3</sup> Sutherland, M (2006) The Science of Parenting. London: Dorling Kindersley

**'Listen, Look and Note') informs or guides everyday planning. What do you think of this approach?**

The ACP believes that assessment during children's earliest years should be based on a cycle of observation, reflection and planning. By observing and actively listening to young children, practitioners can tune into children's individual needs and plan activities which suit them best.

In our experience, as we have previously noted, observations are often made while also playing with the child, they are then written down immediately by practitioners in case they are forgotten and often without warning to the child. This has the effect of interrupting the practitioners play with the child and the emotional contact between them. This pattern of behaviour by practitioners has been seen across many nurseries. It then cuts across the explicit intention behind the key person approach which is to promote attachment relationships by providing continuity and reliable care.

The method of observation used in nurseries is not one that would be used in mental health or in observation of parent-child interactions by those working in mental health. The method used in nurseries is to take short ( eg 5 mins) snapshots of children and is often looking at just one particular aspect -such as how many numbers can a child count up to. The Tavistock clinics method of observation widely used across mental health professional settings sets out to think about the child from a more holistic point of view. It is concerned with the emotional and cognitive interplay and the experiences of the child. This provides a more in-depth picture of the child's functioning and hence a better assessment.

In conjunction with Roehampton University the Tavistock-style of observation has now been used in 10 pilots across the country and has been met with universal excitement and approval in all the educational depts. The type of observation used, in our view, could be helpfully reviewed.

We believe that the duty for each child to have a key person should be retained and not slip back to being merely guidance. The role of the key person is to undertake most of a young child's daily physical care and to help each child feel secure, understood and responded to by a well known and trusted practitioner. It is through the repeated daily tasks that attachment relationships begin to become established. When a key person is working with a small group of children and their parents then there is a greater likelihood that they may form professionally intimate relationships that are attuned to a family's race, culture, home language, abilities and preoccupations and equally that the worker's will be more emotionally available.

**31 Summative assessment is a summary of all the formative assessment done over a long period and the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) is a way of capturing this at the age of 5. It is intended to provide Year 1 teachers with each child's level of learning and development as they reach the end of the EYFS, so that they should be able to tailor learning to individual children's abilities, and to inform parents/carers how their child is**



**developing.. However, some practitioners tell us that this takes up too much time, and that not all Year 1 teachers find the EYFSP useful. What are your views on the EYFSP?**

<input type="checkbox"/> I like it as it is	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I think it should be slimmed down - please specify how	<input type="checkbox"/> I think it should be non-statutory
<input type="checkbox"/> I think it should be got rid of completely - please specify why		

**32 a) Young children go through a number of transitions. As well as the transition from early years provision to Year 1, other examples of transition are between different early years providers, and into nursery classes in schools at the age of 3. Do you think there should be a summative assessment of a child's learning and development to help inform parents and to help support transition?**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
---	-----------------------------	-----------------------------------

**32 b) If yes, when do you think this should take place?**

We would suggest that a brief summative report takes place when a child leaves the early years setting where they spend the most time.

**33 If you think there should be a summative assessment of a child's development, what do you think this should cover? Please tick your most important 3.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Personal, social and emotional development	<input type="checkbox"/> Communication, speaking & listening skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Reading & Writing
<input type="checkbox"/> Problem solving, reasoning & numeracy	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge & understanding of the world	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical development
<input type="checkbox"/> Creative development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other - please specify	

This should be a short report detailing current abilities and interests based on practitioner's observations and engagement with the child. This would help the child's key worker at their new setting to best plan for their arrival. Written reports should not replace conversations between parents and practitioners, which is the best way to ensure a smooth transition for the child.

**34 Adults who work with young children are uniquely placed to recognise and understand how children are developing. Many practitioners work closely with**

**other agencies to help to identify children with special educational needs (SEN) before they reach compulsory schooling in Year 1. Do you think that identification of possible SEN could be integrated more explicitly into the cycle of early years observation and assessment? If yes, how do you think this should work?**

Yes

No

Not sure

Yes in principle but not in practice

While children might have very different SEN, a change in the method of observation as outlined above (30) could be very helpful in earlier identification of emotional needs and difficulties, which often play a part in learning difficulties in its broadest sense.

**35 Do you have any other comments you'd like to make?**

**Safe, happy and healthy children**

**36 The welfare requirements in the EYFS currently cover a lot of things, from child protection, to supporting children's health, to the safety of premises and equipment. The five areas under which the welfare requirements are grouped are safeguarding and promoting children's welfare, suitable people, suitable premises, environment and equipment, organisation, and documentation. Which of the welfare requirements do you think are essential?**

**37 Some providers have told us that certain welfare requirements are overly burdensome, and that there's too much paperwork and box ticking included in the EYFS. Do you think any of the welfare requirements should be removed or simplified? If yes, please specify.**

Yes

X No

Not Sure

**38 Currently, the EYFS sets out only very high level requirements on supporting children's health - for example it says that children should be given nutritious meals and snacks, but doesn't include nutritional guidelines. What do you think the EYFS requirements should be in relation to children's health?**

**39 The staff to child ratio and qualification requirements are included within the welfare requirements. How have you found implementing the ratio and qualification requirements?**

**40 Do you have any other comments you'd like to make?**

Good mental health in adult life is largely dependent on the attachment relationships made in children's early years. These early attachment relationships form the template for all future relationships and directly affect the physical make up and size of the brain. Children's Centres, Nurseries and Early Years settings have an enormously important role to play, as children spend increasingly amounts of time in such settings.

Babies and young children's states of mind engender strong feelings in adults especially when the children are feeling overwhelmed and needing help to manage. For staff to continuously remain responsive to young children they need on going support and training, otherwise it is all too easy to become detached.

The figures show that 50% of the workforce within a setting can be unqualified which is not adequate for such an important task. We need a well-qualified diverse early years workforce to provide the best start in life for all children. There needs to be a commitment to ongoing national monitoring, including recruitment, retention and career development. From a mental health perspective, training courses should include compulsory modules on child development and working with parents and children's emotional development. **Most importantly staff need regular work discussion groups (Tavistock Clinic model) to help them make sense of some of their experiences in the nursery which will in turn help them to understand the children.**

It is only through the provision of high quality early education that we will be able to improve children's outcomes, particularly those children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. Daycare Trust estimates that the government currently spends around £4 billion on early childhood education and care (plus additional spending on Sure Start Children's Centres), compared to £30.1 billion on secondary schools in England.