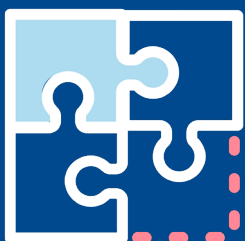


EARLY YEARS WORKFORCE REVIEW

Revisiting the Nutbrown Review - Policy and Impact

Chris Pascal, Tony Bertram, Aline Cole-Albäck
August 2020





About the Sutton Trust

The Sutton Trust is a foundation which improves social mobility in the UK through evidence-based programmes, research and policy advocacy.

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Background

The Sutton Trust commissioned this review, as a contribution to the work of the Early Years Workforce Commission (EYWC), by looking at progress of the sector since the Nutbrown Review was published in 2012, and examining the current landscape in comparison. The Nutbrown Review was a landmark paper which examined the status of early education and childcare qualifications and made practical recommendations to support and strengthen qualifications and career pathways in the early years and childcare sector.

The Early Years Workforce Commission was launched in early March 2020, bringing together voices from across the Early Years sector. These include membership bodies, nursery groups, education charities, awarding organisations and independent research groups. The Commission has been established to undertake a review of the challenges facing the sector and develop comprehensive and workable solutions to address these collaboratively.

This report was written prior to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which the Sutton Trust has explored in detail in its [Covid-19 Early Years Impact Brief](#). During the lockdown, early years and childcare settings, like schools, provided a vital service. The early years workforce became recognised as ‘essential workers’ enabling other ‘keyworkers’ to continue to do their jobs. Despite this, the coronavirus outbreak has caused settings and staff to experience significant challenges which pose on-going risks to the quality and viability of the early years sector, and so the workforce issues identified by this report are now more pressing than ever.

Covid-19 highlighted the role of early years settings as providers of essential ‘childcare’, but their priority is actually supporting children’s wellbeing, development and learning at a vital time in their lives. Workforce quality is key to addressing gaps both in terms of attainment and emotional wellbeing as early as possible, and in improving a child’s long-term life chances and social mobility.

As demonstrated in the Trust’s [Sound Foundations](#) report, a knowledgeable, capable and stable workforce, supported by strong leaders, is crucial in delivering quality provision. However, this report reveals that there is a crisis in recruitment and retention, with more qualified and experienced staff leaving the sector due to poor salaries and conditions, as outlined in a [recent report](#) by the Social Mobility Commission.

This is leading to a downward trend in the number of staff reporting Level 3 (A Level equivalent) as their highest qualification. Recruitment to Early Years Teacher (EYT) courses has dropped dramatically and is not viewed as equal in status to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). There are insufficient funds to recruit and retain higher qualified staff in many early years settings, and CPD has been delivered at minimum levels under austerity funding. The reinstatement of a Leadership Quality Fund could act as an incentive for talented graduates to seek or retain employment in early years education, particularly in the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector.

Workforce quality is key to addressing gaps both in terms of attainment and emotional wellbeing as early as possible, and in improving a child’s long-term life chances and social mobility.

Whilst the report makes for concerning reading in some places, this is a sector which has the potential to attract some of the most passionate, skilful and committed workers. The list of recommended actions, which build on many of Nutbrown's original suggestions, give hope for the future.

Thank you to the members of the Commission for their input, which has been invaluable in ensuring an accurate and holistic view of present circumstances, and to the authors – Prof. Chris Pascal, Prof. Tony Bertram and Aline Cole-Albäck - for their excellent report.

The Early Years Workforce Commission will continue to work, including within the context of Covid-19, to look at what can be done to keep driving progress for the sector's workforce, who make an invaluable contribution to the wellbeing and development of the youngest members of our society.

The Sutton Trust will also continue to focus on early years education as absolutely key for the development of every child, and the bedrock on which the social mobility agenda can be built.

Laura Barbour, Sutton Trust Early Years Lead

Executive Summary

Background to Review

It is now well established that skilled and well-qualified practitioners are a key element of high quality early education and care and make a proven difference to child learning and development, particularly for children from low income and at risk families (Mathers et al 2012, Sylva et al 2014). In 2012 the Nutbrown Report set out the findings from an independent review for government on how best to strengthen qualifications and career pathways in the early years and childcare sector. In the report Nutbrown also emphasised that high quality early education is key to children's learning and development. It also emphasised the importance of having staff with necessary skills, knowledge and understanding for early education and care to have a positive impact, especially on less advantaged children. The review stated that the qualification system and professional development was, at that time, ineffective in producing early years practitioners with the skills and knowledge to deliver the quality on early education and childcare required to ensure all children's development and capabilities were fulfilled. Nutbrown made 19 recommendations to change this and create, over time, a qualification and CPD system for all early years professionals that could deliver quality services, especially for babies and young children. The government response to the review was seen as disappointing by the sector, with only 5 of the 19 recommendations being accepted fully and actioned by the government.

In the years since these changes were introduced there have been a succession of other early years and childcare policy announcements and government initiatives which have impacted further on the early years workforce. As we move into a new phase of policy making and sector development, with a current government focus on social mobility as the gap in educational outcomes for less advantaged children is widening (Hutchinson et al, 2019), it is felt that an audit of the current state of play in relation to the development of a quality early years' workforce is needed. This review therefore sets out to address this need and generate an evidence base which can inform future priorities for the government's early years workforce strategy as they attempt to mitigate the growing inequalities in society.

Scope of the review

The intention of the review was to conduct a quick overview and synthesis of key government policies and changes relevant to the early years workforce from 2012 to 2020. Specifically, this review aimed to:

- Map government policy announcements and initiatives relating to the Early Years workforce since the publication of the Nutbrown Report in 2012;
- Review existing evidence of the impact of these initiatives on the early years workforce;
- Summarise how far workforce policy, post 2012, has addressed the recommendations identified in the Nutbrown Report and identify which workforce issues remain or have emerged over the last 8 years.

Review findings

The evidence is now well established that a professionalised, well qualified and adequately rewarded early years workforce is crucial to securing the high quality of provision required for social and educational progress, especially for the less advantaged or those with additional needs. Since 2012 there have been a plethora of policy initiatives and developments in the early years sector aimed at increasing the scope of government funded places, which has driven increasing service demand and

delivery requirements. These policy changes, many of which have also attempted to improve a fragmented, inadequately qualified, low status, poorly paid and diminishing workforce, have not had the impact of securing Nutbrown's clear vision for the sector. A summary of progress in each of the four aspects of workforce development identified by Nutbrown is set out below:

- ***Entry requirements and initial training***

The Nutbrown Review highlighted the recruitment crisis in the sector. Current evidence indicates that this crisis has worsened over recent years, as funded provision has expanded and demand for early education and childcare has soared at a time of better rewarded employment being available in other sectors of the labour market. The government has shifted its position over entry requirements for the sector, firstly enhancing the requirement for Level 2 English and maths (GCSE grade C or above); and then, in response to sector requests, removing this requirement in order to enable more to enter the profession. Progress towards securing Level 3 as the benchmark qualification level has been limited, especially for those working with under threes, and there is a consequent increase in those working in the sector with low level qualifications. Although it should be noted that more recently there has been some progress on raising workforce qualification levels to Level 3. The apprenticeship scheme has also had limited success in attracting new entrants into the sector. However, those who have accessed higher level training continue to struggle to find posts with adequate acknowledgement of their leadership role and with appropriate remuneration. The push to achieve graduate leaders in all settings has stalled. There is also a need to consider carefully issues of equality within the early years workforce, especially in relation to recruitment from BAME communities and men.

- ***The qualification system***

The creation of the new qualifications of Early Years Educator (EYE) at Level 3 and Early Years Teacher (EYT) at Level 6 with clear 'full and relevant' criteria has not led to a boost in recruitment of higher qualified staff in the sector. In fact, recruitment to early years teacher (EYT) courses has dropped dramatically over the last 5 years, significantly limiting progress towards securing highly qualified pedagogic leaders in all settings. There remains disparity in the perception and treatment of Early Years Professional/Early Years Teacher and Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) staff in the sector. They are not viewed as having equal status as intended, due to differentials in pay, career progression and professional status. The numbers accessing EYE and EYT training routes have been erratic and have not grown significantly. The withdrawal of the Graduate Leader Fund in 2011 also removed the incentive for graduates to be employed in the private voluntary and independent (PVI) sector. There is a case to be made to bring the EYT and QTS pathways together with a new Early Years specialist QTS, along with conversion courses for those already qualified, as promoted by Nutbrown, to achieve equity of status and so attractiveness to the workforce.

- ***Progression within the profession***

The aspiration to provide clear progression routes within the profession which both attract and retain highly qualified staff has not been realised. There is a high level of turnover in the early years workforce, which is losing more experienced and qualified staff, mainly due to low salaries and lack of career benefits. This has led to an increase in staff with lower qualifications in many settings. The significant reduction in funded CPD following austerity measures has led to a lack of funds for staff progression to more advanced training and their consequent retention in a setting. Barriers include accessibility, affordability/subsidy, time and local opportunities. The increase in CPD that has occurred recently has been through a series of targeted initiatives (mostly to support Communication, Language and Literacy

development) and is not flexible to an individual's professional growth, nor has it helped individuals to progress up the qualifications ladder. Over the last 10 years this lack of investment in CPD has led to a depression in qualification levels in many settings and lower access to CPD for those remaining, along with a rise in unqualified staff. There is evidence of an inability to afford, recruit and retain higher qualified staff, especially in the PVI sector, which has a direct impact on the quality of provision. The perceptions of provider managers and their limited financial resources are crucial to the recruitment of more qualified staff and support for access to CPD by existing staff, especially for those working with the youngest children, and more work is needed with sector providers to secure their support for this.

- ***Leadership in the sector***

The distinction between organisational leadership and pedagogical leadership, and the lack of an early years professional leadership qualification, mean that there is no clear career progression route for early years staff with advanced qualifications, and also that many practitioners do not realise their leadership potential. The current EYE and EYT qualifications are not recognised as carrying with them the expected enhanced pay, status and conditions of employment, which means these routes have had limited attractiveness to potential candidates and so limited impact on the quality of leadership in the sector. Higher status and opportunities for progression are key to attracting and keeping new talent.

Current priorities and recommendations

It should be recognised that there remain many routes into the early years workforce and people enter it at different stages in their lives. This diversity of routes and entry points must be acknowledged as we look ahead to the further development of an early years workforce strategy. It should also be recognised that creating a sustainable, high quality early years workforce will require a significant shift in investment to secure better pay and conditions of employment for all early years staff. It is evident that higher qualifications will not be effective if salaries and conditions are not sufficiently attractive to draw high-quality candidates into the profession of early education and care. Nevertheless, the urgency in developing a well-qualified and professionalised early years workforce which has the capacity to transform young lives, especially for those from less advantaged homes, remains.

The many issues facing the early years workforce still remain eight years on from Nutbrown's informed and well received review. Her 19 recommendations remain relevant and those which have not been acted upon should be revisited. In addition, current policy priorities and actions have added additional pressures and demands on the workforce, which this review has highlighted. The evidence on the impact of these policy shifts and initiatives suggests a further set of five recommendations for action, some of which rehearse and reinforce the Nutbrown suggestions for action, and some of which have emerged more recently. These five priorities are suggested as a framework for urgent action if the life chances of our youngest and most disadvantaged children are to be lifted and social mobility enhanced.

A Framework for Action

1. A Vision for the Workforce

There remains a need for a clear vision for the early years and childcare workforce and a restatement of the crucial importance of achieving a well-qualified, high status and better rewarded profession to achieve a world class early years service. The goal for establishing a highly professional and qualified early years and childcare workforce, with a coherent career progression pathway and training structure from entry level, through to Level 3 and then advanced graduate and postgraduate qualifications, should be reinstated. It should also aim to enhance practitioner leadership skills and confidence for both organisational and pedagogical leadership roles, providing sufficient enhancement to pay and conditions of employment to make career progression worthwhile.

2. Access to Benchmark Qualifications

Barriers to accessing entry level (Level 1-3) qualifications, including apprenticeships, should be identified and addressed urgently to encourage new recruits into the sector, e.g. funding, time commitments and workplace requirements. The aspiration to make Level 3 a benchmark qualification for the sector should be revived and incentives to achieve it should be offered. In addition, the benefits of establishing an Early Years specialist QTS route, combining current QTS and EYT routes, and providing conversion courses for existing EYP/EYT graduates should be revisited, along with access to the Early Career Framework. Importantly, equality issues in access need to be addressed through, for example, increasing the number of men in early education and childcare and ensuring BAME representation at all levels in the profession.

3. Access to CPD

Continuing Professional Development (CPD), which follows on from initial training, needs to be a requirement for all staff throughout their careers, and be properly funded, with the current barriers to access addressed. There should be an urgent exploration and extension of more accessible and flexibly offered CPD, with online and face to face options, coupled with more high-quality workplace placements and action projects, with mentoring support across the sector. Mechanisms for providing better financial support to cover costs for training and CPD, linked to career progression, would improve the status and attractiveness of early education as a career.

4. Graduate Leadership

Incentives for graduate leaders to be employed in all early years settings should be reinstated, but especially for those working with less advantaged children and those with particular needs. A targeted re-introduction of a Leadership Quality Fund should be considered, so that higher qualified staff can work as pedagogic leaders in early years provision serving less advantaged communities, with enhanced pay and status. Changes to Early Years Foundation Stage requirements, incentivising funding schemes and offering training for setting managers as part of a requirement for pedagogic leadership in every setting is also required to highlight the critical role of qualifications and CPD for all who work with young children and raise standards across the sector.

5. Pay and Conditions of Employment

The enormous disparities in pay, conditions of employment and status across the maintained and PVI sectors must be addressed if progress is to be made on professionalising the early years workforce and ensuring the sustainability of the mixed economy sector. Financial and career rewards will be needed to incentivise practitioners to progress their professional training at all levels and where appropriate to undertake advanced qualifications and CPD, and then remain in post to enhance the quality of early learning and development, whatever the sector. This should include progression into wider sectoral leadership roles in local authorities, training providers and universities.

Final Comments

There are some key challenges in achieving this ambitious agenda which are sharpened in the current context of a post-pandemic and post-Brexit world. The costs of establishing and sustaining a highly qualified early years workforce are significant, but should be seen as an investment in human capital for future generations and a signal of the importance given to securing social mobility for our left behind young children. Changing government and public perceptions of a sector, which to date has been viewed as providing primarily a childcare function, to a sector which is seen as a highly professionalised and vital foundational element of our educational system, with both the capability and the capacity to drive much needed social and economic renewal, is ambitious but necessary. There has never been a time when the case for investment in this vital sector of our economy has been more needed or more thoroughly evidenced. If not now, when? Generations of much needed talent are being lost through the lack of vision and investment in the early years workforce. We cannot afford to delay any longer.

Part One: Background and Methodology

Introduction

1.1 Context

It is now well established that skilled and well-qualified practitioners are a key element of high quality early education and care and make a proven difference to child learning and development, particularly for children from low income and at risk families (Mathers et al, 2014; Sylva et al, 2014). The Nutbrown Report (2012) set out the findings from an independent review for government on how best to strengthen qualifications and career pathways in the early years and childcare sector. In the report, Nutbrown emphasised that high quality early education is key to children's learning and development, as well as the importance of having staff with necessary skills, knowledge and understanding for early education and care to have a positive impact. The review also stated that the qualification system and CPD was, at that time, ineffective in producing early years practitioners with the skills and knowledge to deliver the quality of early education and childcare required to ensure all children's development and capabilities were fulfilled. Nutbrown made 19 recommendations to change this and create, over time, a qualification and CPD system for all early years professionals that could deliver the quality required, especially for babies and young children. This long-term vision for the early years workforce looked at four areas in particular:

1. Entry requirements and initial training
2. The qualification system
3. Progression within the profession
4. Leadership in the sector.

The government response to the review (DfE, 2013a) was seen as disappointing by the sector, with only 5 of the 19 recommendations being accepted fully (see Appendix 1) and actioned by the government. Key changes to qualifications following the government response were the introduction of Early Years Teachers, enhanced entry requirements to Level 3 qualifications and a stronger Level 3 qualification, as set out below:

- New qualifications at Level 3 to qualify learners to become 'Early Years Educators', introduced from September 2014.
- The Teaching Agency consulted on the revised set of 'full and relevant' criteria and proposals for the Early Years Educator qualifications in spring 2013, publishing the criteria in summer 2013.
- Entrants for the Early Years Educator qualification were required to hold at least grade C in GCSE mathematics and English (since changed).
- Training providers were expected to include a high proportion of practical work experience in Early Years Educator courses.
- Apprenticeships were established to offer a high-quality route to becoming an Early Years Educator.
- From September 2013, the government offered a limited number of bursaries to better-qualified apprentices, who have at least a grade C in GCSE English and mathematics.
- The government introduced Early Years Teachers, who were intended to be seen as specialists in early childhood development, trained to work with babies and young children from birth to five.

- The government stated that Early Years Teacher Status was to be seen as equivalent to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

However, despite these positive initiatives, there was disappointment that the early years teachers (EYTs) proposed by the government did not have QTS (qualified teacher status) nor would they follow a PGCE course so they would not have the same status as school teachers. Many felt that Early Years Professionals (EYPs) were simply being renamed and despite being called teachers, would not be qualified to teach children in Year 1 at school (nor did they count as ‘teachers’ in reception or nursery (as defined by section 122 of the Education Act 2002 and sections 3.37 and 3.38 of the EYFS Statutory Framework) and could not achieve the promotion and pay available to teachers of older children. There was also concern about the weakening of ratio requirements for birth to three-year olds which was introduced to reduce childcare costs for parents.

In the years since these changes were introduced there have been a succession of other early years and childcare policy announcements and government initiatives which have impacted further on the early years workforce. As we move into a new phase of policy making and sector development, with a current government focus on social mobility (DfE, 2017d) as the gap in educational outcomes for less advantaged children is widening (Hutchinson et al, 2019), it is felt that an audit of the current state of play in relation to the development of a quality early years workforce is needed. This review therefore sets out to address this need and generate an evidence base which can inform future priorities for the government’s early years workforce strategy as they attempt to mitigate the growing inequalities in society.

1.2 Scope of the review

The intention of the review was to conduct a quick overview and synthesis of key government policies and changes relevant to the early years workforce from 2012 to 2020. Specifically, this review aims to:

- Map government policy announcements and initiatives relating to the Early Years workforce since the publication of the Nutbrown Report in 2012;
- Review existing evidence of the impact of these initiatives on the early years workforce;
- Summarise how far workforce policy, post 2012, has addressed the recommendations identified in the Nutbrown Report and identify what workforce issues remain or have emerged over the last 8 years.

The four areas which framed the Nutbrown review, as set out above, are the starting point for this review; which will focus on government policies and initiatives introduced since 2012 to date, tracing developments in order to present a picture of changes that have affected the Early Year’s workforce since Nutbrown reported. Literature was examined using the principles of Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA). Search terms, data sources and inclusion/exclusion criteria were established as detailed in the following section.

1.3 Literature search strategy

The review includes literature grouped under the following four headings: website sources, journal articles from the BEI database, sources from reference lists (snowballing) and additional grey literature.

1. *Government and Non-governmental organisation (NGO) websites* were hand-searched such as:

- Department for Education (DfE)
- Education Policy Institute (EPI)
- Early Years Alliance (EYA)
- Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY)
- National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA)
- Association for Professional Development in Early Years (TACTYC)
- Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network (ECSDN)

2. *Peer-reviewed academic sources* from the BEI database were screened using the following base criteria: **full text, peer reviewed articles or grey literature, from England**, relating to the **early childhood workforce (0-8), from 2012 to 2020**.

The electronic database search strategy included the following key search terms, used in combination with AND/OR:

- Early education
- Childcare
- Training
- Initial training
- Requirements(s)
- Qualification(s)
- Progression
- Workforce
- Workforce development
- Leadership

All sources were first screened by title and abstracts, or document summaries screened for content. After cross analysis to account for sources already identified, sources meeting the inclusion criteria were read in full, see Table 1.

3. *Reference scanning:* Reference lists of included sources were searched for additional relevant sources, using the above base criteria and key search terms.

4. *Grey literature:* The grey literature in this review refers to non-academic publications, including publicly available documents such as government reports, working papers, technical reports, policy documents and initiatives that were identified in addition to the literature identified in the other three groups.

In sum, after searching websites, and screening for duplicates, there were 46 documents screened from the listed websites, 147 peer reviewed articles identified, 12 sources from references scanning and 31 additional grey literature pieces that met the study criteria. This gave us a database of 236 publications on which we based this review and analysis.

Part Two: Evidence

Review Findings

The reviewed sources are organised in four sections using the same headings as the Nutbrown review:

1. Entry requirements and initial training
2. The qualification system
3. Progression within the profession
4. Leadership in the sector.

In each of the four sections documents listed on the DfE 'Early Years' webpage were the starting point. The DfE website lists early years documents under seven headings (<https://www.gov.uk/topic/schools-colleges-childrens-services/early-years>):

- i. **Early learning and childcare**
- ii. Information for parents and carers
- iii. **Early years foundation stage**
- iv. Providing childcare
- v. **Standards, qualifications and training**
- vi. Funding for childcare providers
- vii. **Inspection of early years and childcare providers**

The seven sections were screened and the sections directly relevant to this review, listed in **bold** above, are included in their corresponding review sections, as the starting point for each of the four areas scrutinised. Key arguments in the relevant DfE documents were identified and the implication for the early years workforce reviewed with related literature from peer-reviewed articles, selected papers from the references scanning process and other relevant grey literature also included in the discussion.

2.1 Entry requirements and initial training

Under **entry requirements and initial training**, Nutbrown discussed mainly non-graduate requirements at Level 2 and Level 3. The DfE documents in relation to entry requirements and initial training can be found under the third DfE heading 'Early Years Foundation Stage' and the fifth heading 'Standards, qualifications and training' on the DfE website, following the link 'Early learning and childcare'. Relevant documents to this review are in black and other related but less relevant documents are greyed out as illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: DfE and other government documents linked to entry requirements and initial training

Policy and Guidance	Year	Subheadings
Early Years Foundation Stage	2020	Early years foundation stage - General information
	2017	Early years foundation stage statutory framework (EYFS) - Statutory framework for the early years foundations stage
	2012	Relevant related content: - Early Years qualifications: pre-September 2014 criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o DfE 'full and relevant' criteria for early years qualifications started before 1 September 2014
	2016 2020	National curriculum assessments: early years foundation stage - EYFS: assessment and reporting arrangements - EYFSP handbook - Statutory framework for the (EYFS) - Guidance on exemptions for early years providers
	2019	2019 early years foundation stage: assessment and reporting arrangements (ARA) - Assessment and reporting arrangements (ARA)
	2013 2013	More Great Childcare More Affordable Childcare
	2017	Early Years Workforce Strategy (2017-19)
	2018	The Social Mobility Action Plan

Note: The headings in bold are the heading titles as listed on the DfE website.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/early-years-qualifications-finder#early-years-apprenticeships>

In 2012 there were no requirements to hold English and maths qualifications at the point of entry for non-graduate staff; however, the Nutbrown review identified the importance of practitioner literacy and numeracy skills in improving the quality of early childhood education and care. To strengthen the academic ability of new staff entering the workforce, Nutbrown suggested Level 2 English and maths (GCSE grade C or above) should be entry requirements to the profession. This was introduced in 2014 by the coalition government for applicants to Level 3 Early Years Educator courses. However, the government under Theresa May carried out an impact assessment and introduced deregulatory measures that came into effect in 2017 (DfE, 2017a). Their main argument was twofold. Firstly, that they did not deem the skills needed to do the job by Level 2 and 3 staff required GCSE English and maths qualifications at grade level C or above. Secondly, deregulation was carried out to alleviate the recruitment crisis of staff and trainees in the sector, especially ahead of the rollout of the 30-hour free childcare entitlement as set out in the *Childcare Act 2016*. There was a mixed response to this deregulation by the sector, some Local Authorities and nursery classes attached to a primary or infant school would have liked to retain the more stringent entry requirements (ibid.).

However, as the higher entry requirements ended up acting as a deterrent for many applicants, with a resulting recruitment challenge for training providers, this deregulation was welcomed by others. In the scoping study by Osgood and colleagues, on the impact, experiences and associated issues of recent early years qualifications and training in England, the London Early Years Foundation, the largest charitable childcare social enterprise in the UK, reported “an 80 percent drop in recruitment and a 96 percent drop in apprenticeships directly attributed to the requirement for applicants to hold GCSE maths and English grades A-C upon application” (2017: 44). The DfE recognised in the *Early Years Workforce Strategy* (2017c) the negative impact the entry requirement had had since 2014 and changed it to a requirement on entry to employment. Despite the deregulation, the downward trend in staff holding

Level 3 qualifications has continued (Kalitowski, 2018), as discussed further, below and illustrated in Figure 4.

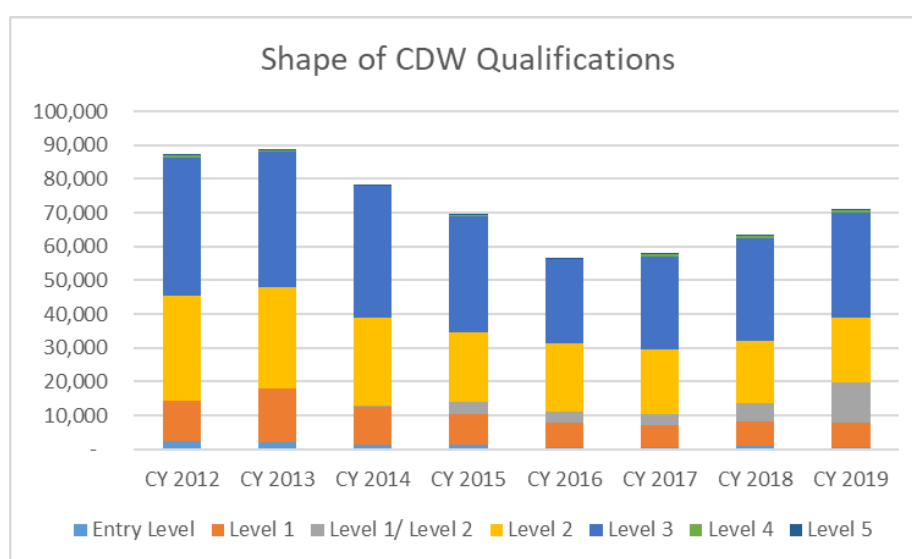
In the revised statutory guidance for the EYFS (DfE, 2017b: 21) full and relevant qualifications required are mentioned and it is recognised that:

“The daily experience of children in early years settings and the overall quality of provision depends on all practitioners having appropriate qualifications, training, skills and knowledge and a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.”

According to Nutbrown’s recommendation the overall quality of provision requires staff with higher qualifications than are currently required. In 2012, she voiced her concern that both the Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications were not enough to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding required to qualify for effectively working with babies and young children, also supported by later research carried out at Oxford University by Mathers and colleagues (2014). Mathers and colleagues also suggested that Level 3 should be the minimum requirement that should be considered, especially when working with for instance two-year-old children from challenging circumstances. Nutbrown further proposed a set of criteria for a new Level 3 qualification, and voiced her aspiration for this new level to be set as the benchmark for the workforce, with clear progression routes. Although the progression map (CACHE, 2018) is clear and shows early years workers (unqualified), early years practitioners or assistants (Level 2) and early years educators (Level 3), as ways of entering and practising in early education and care, Nutbrown’s desired benchmark is not currently required for the workforce.

An additional concern has been the general downward trend in the number of vocational certificates issued in the past 10 years (Hyde et al., 2020), including certificates issued in *Child Development and Wellbeing*. However, recent data show an upward trend in the Child Development and Wellbeing certification since 2017 (Ofqual, 2020), see Figure 1. Hyde and colleagues attribute the V curve for the period 2012 to 2019 to the funding changes and the minimum requirements in English and maths and the following upward trend after *Functional Skills* was reinstated.

Figure 1: The number of Child Development and Wellbeing (CDW) vocational certificates issued between 2012-2019



Source: Hyde et al., 2020

An encouraging statistic, as illustrated in Figure 1, is the increase in Level 4 certification that appears to be a popular progression route for early years educators (EYE) according to Hyde and colleagues. They hope to see a similar upward trend in the level 5 qualification, with the introduction of the CACHE level 5, *Diploma in Early Years Senior Practitioner*.

Other documents, also relevant to 'entry requirements', can be found under the fifth DfE heading, 'Standards, qualifications and training' (DfE, 2020a). They are:

- Qualifications started before September 2014
- Qualifications started after September 2014
- Level 2 literacy and numeracy qualifications
- Early years apprenticeships
- T levels

The DfE guidance given on apprenticeships since 2012 has mainly been in relation to Level 2 or Level 3 EYFS staff to child ratios, such as that during training, the early years apprentices can be included in the unqualified part of the staff to child ratios and those who have achieved their Level 2 or 3 can be counted in the staff ratios at their respective level (DfE, 2020a). In addition to apprenticeships, as of September 2020, a new 2-year early education and childcare T level course will be introduced. Staff with this qualification will count in the Level 3 ratios (DfE, 2020a).

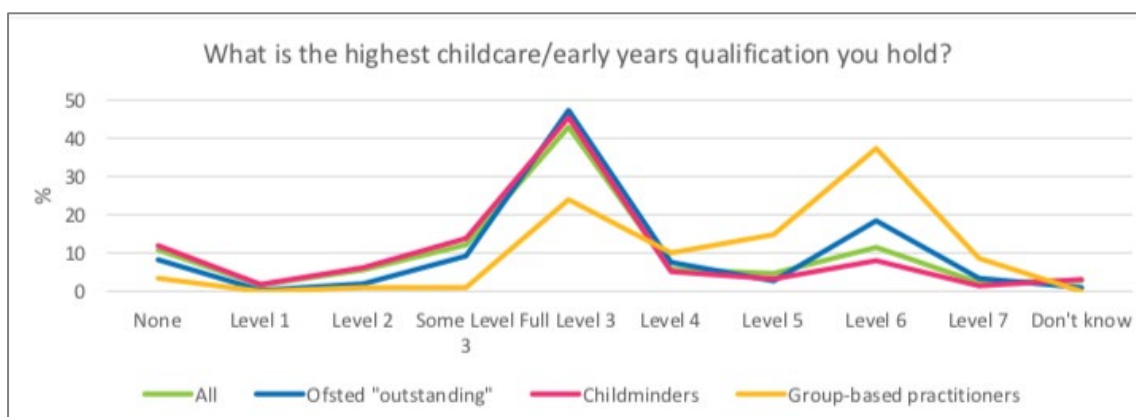
According to Hyde and colleagues (2020) the apprenticeship landscape has changed dramatically in the past eight years with the phasing out of the *Apprenticeship Framework* and the introduction of the *Apprenticeship Standards*. Even before the COVID-19 outbreak, the numbers of trainees were down by an estimate of 140,000 since 2012 (DfE, 2019a). This is a trend across the major apprenticeship areas and is reflected in the volume of the Level 3 EYE standard in 19/20 according to Hyde and colleagues. Despite the drop in numbers, Hyde and colleagues expect to soon see a positive impact on quality within the workforce due to the change to *Apprenticeship Standards* to what they believe is in line with the recommendations of the Nutbrown review. Ceeda (2019) however point out in their workforce survey from 2019 that providers have stated that barriers for recruiting apprentices are: lack of funds, lack of time to support assessment and on the job training, and the need for compliance with the job training requirements. This has potentially serious implications for the workforce.

The BEI database search, using the key words: *early education and childcare AND initial/training/requirements*, generated 76 papers, with none identified as relevant to this heading. A paper generated under the 'qualification system' heading search, brought up a paper by Wild and colleagues (2015). They point out in their analysis of the Nutbrown review and the DfE response to the review, *More great childcare: raising quality and giving parents more choice* (DfE, 2013), how the Nutbrown review and its recommendations seems to interpret quality in relation to children's experiences, in contrast to the DfE response that seems to interpret quality to mean choice and availability of childcare. Wild and colleagues state that they believe the government's market approach "*seems to focus more on the quality of cost- effective provision than quality of learning provision for the children*" (ibid.: 240). The deregulation of required GCSE English and maths qualifications ahead of the rollout of the 30-hour free childcare entitlement could be seen as supporting this interpretation as it allows settings to employ less costly staff (DfE, 2017a).

Although the deregulation could be seen as a 'lowering of standards' and interpreted as something negative, Bonetti (2020) points out in her recent report, the *Early years workforce development in England: key ingredients and missed opportunities*, published by the Education Policy Institute, that it

could be seen as a [temporarily] beneficial step as “*the introduction of the GCSE requirements meant that there were fewer workers available who had high enough qualification levels to meet the staff:child ratio requirements*” (ibid.: 6), at a time when more staff were needed for rolling out the 15 hours entitlement for disadvantaged two-year-olds and the 30 hour entitlement for three- and four-year-olds of working parents (DfE, 2018a). This deregulation took some pressure off the sector; however, even with the repeal of the GCSE requirements there is still a recruitment crisis in the sector and a downward trend in the number of staff reporting Level 3 as their highest qualification (Kalitowski, 2018). Kalitowski also states in the *Building Blocks* report based on an annual sector-wide survey by the Professional Association for Childcare and Yearly Years (PACEY), on the state of the childcare and early years sector in England, that the downward trend was particularly noticeable amongst childminders, down by 3 percent to 45 percent (ibid.) see Figure 2.

Figure 2: Trend in qualification levels



Source: Kalitowski, 2018

According to Bonetti (2020), a clear long-term vision, coherent strategy and support during transition stages is therefore needed to move forward and continue developing a high-quality workforce across the sector in England.

If we look at Wales, in their latest workforce plan, *Childcare, Play and Early Years Workforce Plan* (Education Wales, 2017) which includes the play workforce as well as the early education and childcare workforce, an interesting aspect is the pointing out of the need for accurate career advice to those interested in entering the field, asking us to challenge the perception that childcare and play work is for those less interested in an academic career, pointing out “*it is misleading to present working with children as an easy career*” (ibid.: 13). In fact, this is an issue also recognised by the OECD, in their recent report (2019), as practitioners stated that working with children was harder than they expected.

To address staff shortage, the Welsh government has launched a programme with the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) Cymru called *Childcare Works*, targeting 18- to 24-year-olds and those over 50 currently out of work, to undertake a short term work experience as a way into the childcare sector (Cardiff Times, 2019; Education Wales, 2017). Participants are supported in acquiring the skills and knowledge needed during their nursery placement to then be able to work as nursery assistants and take up a career in the sector. There are also new more streamlined vocational qualifications with clearer progression routes for Level 1-3 qualifications, new qualifications at Levels 4 and 5, as well as routes to continue studies to degree level.

As part of a wider support, the Welsh government has also introduced a new induction framework for all new staff “*to help them understand the importance of child-centred practice and the values that*

underpin work in early years' (Social Care Wales, 2018: 1). The framework also sets out the knowledge and skills staff need to be able to evidence in their first six months of employment. This is not only considered relevant to new entrants to the sector or a setting in general but also for staff undertaking a new role or returning after a career break.

Although the OECD recognises in their 2019 report mentioned above, *Good Practice for Good Jobs in Early Childhood Education and Care*, the importance of a highly qualified graduate-led workforce, they also point out how valuable apprenticeships can be as a way into the sector, especially for younger workers who may not meet the entry requirements for graduate courses, and are looking to work in a support rather than leading role. The OECD therefore suggest entry requirements need to be seriously considered so as not to reduce the pool of available workers. If the entry requirements are low, the ensuing upskilling process that is required to support progression in the profession once in the job is very important to be able to provide for high quality care and education (ibid.). It should be noted that Nutbrown referenced the need to address equality issues e.g. researching the number of BAME staff at different levels. When reflecting on these issues the work of Men in Early Years (MITEY) initiatives should be noted. This programme of work has received some support from government, although perhaps not enough.

KEY ISSUES

There is a recruitment crisis in the sector at a time when the increase in 2-year olds funded places and the 30 hour entitlement require an expansion in the early years workforce.

Deregulation of the requirement of Level 2 English and maths (GCSE grade C or above) as entry requirements to Level 3 courses has not led to more uptake of Level 3 qualifications and there is a downward trend in the number of staff reporting Level 3 as their highest qualification, especially amongst childminders.

Level 3 as benchmark qualification level for the early years workforce has not been achieved or even seen as a sector goal, especially for those working with younger children. This means more practitioners with Level 1 and 2 qualifications are making up the ratios in childcare settings, especially in provision for younger children.

There is a downward trend in the number of early years apprenticeships due to increasing barriers to access.

There has been an increase in Level 4 and Level 5 qualification take up which indicates aspirations and a demand for career progression to leadership positions within the early years workforce, but this is not translating into higher levels of graduate staff in all settings.

There is a need to consider more carefully issues of equality within the early years workforce, especially in relation to recruitment from BAME communities and men.

2.2 The qualification system

In the Nutbrown review issues in relation to the **qualification system** were mainly in relation to graduate staff. The DfE documents relating to qualifications can be found under the fifth DfE heading 'Standards, qualifications and training' on the DfE website, following the link 'Early learning and childcare'. Relevant documents to the graduate workforce are listed in black in Table 2.

Table 2: DfE documents linked to qualification system

Policy and Guidance	Year	Subheadings
Standards, qualifications and training	2013	Early years teachers' standards - Teachers' standards (early years)
		Check Early Years qualifications - Qualifications started before September 2014 - Qualifications started after September 2014 - Paediatric first aid - Early childhood studies (ECS) and related degrees - Qualified Teacher and Early Years Teacher status - Overseas qualifications - Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish qualifications - Nursing qualifications - Qualifications that do not meet the criteria - Level 2 literacy and numeracy qualifications - Early Years Apprenticeships - T levels

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/early-years-qualifications-finder#early-years-apprenticeships>

Note: The headings in bold are the heading titles as listed on the DfE website.

As the DfE (2020) website shows, under the current system, staff can study towards different early years graduate levels:

- Early Childhood Studies degree (ECS)
- Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS), previously
- Early Years Professional Status (EYPS)
- Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)

In the *Early Years Workforce Strategy* (DfE, 2017c), that builds on the *More Great Childcare* policy (DfE, 2013a), Caroline Dinéage, the minister for Women, Equalities and Early Years in 2017, stated her commitment to “*supporting the development of a well-qualified workforce with the appropriate knowledge*” (DfE, 2017c: 4). In 2018, one year on from the publication of the strategy, Freeston recognised progress had been made in the revised Level 2 and SENCO qualifications as well as a publication outlining a clearer career progression map for those entering and within the field (CACHE, 2018); however, the much anticipated amendment to enable those with Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) and Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) to lead nursery classes in maintained settings, as suggested in the workforce strategy (DfE, 2017c) did not materialise. How the various qualification routes have developed in the system has caused some dissent, as it has in effect created a two-tier system with “*a small elite body of teachers in nursery and reception classes, and a much larger body of childcare workers with generally lower levels of training and qualifications*” (Osgood et al., 2017: 7).

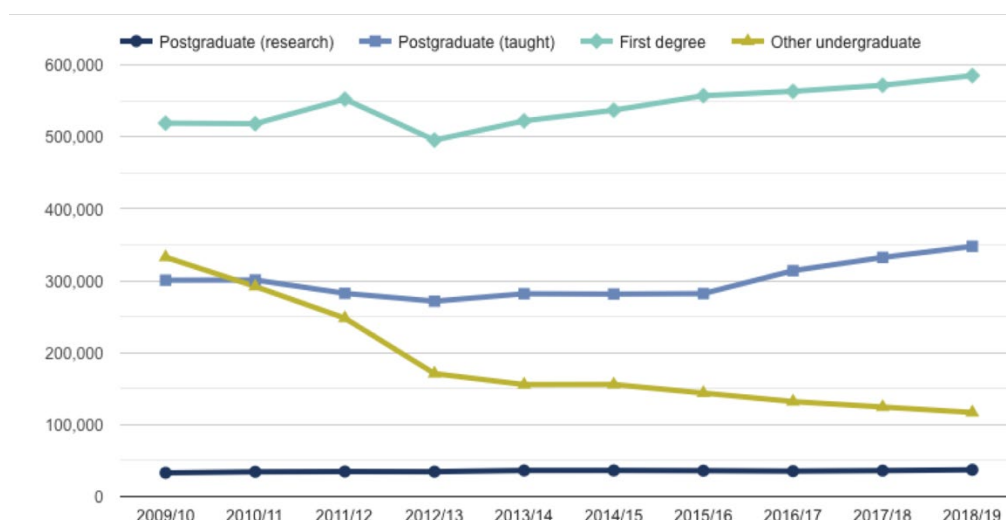
Looking back, Wild and colleagues had in 2015 brought attention to the disparity between similarly highly qualified staff and how, despite Primary Teachers (QTS), Early Years Professionals (EYP), and now Early Years Teachers (EYT), being Level 6 staff, there were not the same career benefits and pay for EYTs compared to staff with QTS. In other words, Early Years Teachers (EYT) had not got the same status as teachers in primary schools with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) even though they received comparable training and were delivering the same curriculum. Kay and colleagues (2019) highlight the clear alignment between EYT and QTS roles, responsibilities and standards that candidates are expected to meet, yet still without equal recognition in pay, career progression or professional status. This is deeply problematic, and this lack of parity can be seen as central to the current recruitment crisis (Elwick et al., 2018; Kay et al., 2019).

Although the coalition government, in response to the Nutbrown review, did recognise that the quality of staff is crucial in delivering high quality early education (DfE, 2013a); successive government policy changes, especially the loss of the previously ring fenced *Graduate Leader Fund* (discussed further in the next section; an incentive for private, voluntary and independent settings to recruit graduates), has seen progress in developing a highly qualified and skilled workforce stagnate, according to Bonetti (2020). In 2018, for instance, May's government decided not to proceed with the proposed amendment to enable those with Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) and Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) to lead nursery classes in maintained settings (Zahavi, 2018). This again, as Wild and colleagues (2015: 242) state, confirms that, “*EYTs are not the graduate-led early childhood workforce with the parity and status of other qualified teachers within the education sector, as envisioned*”.

Lawler (2020) argues that qualification levels have not improved since 2011 and Neil Leitch, chief executive of the *Early Years Alliance*, refers to the time after 2011 when the *Graduate Leader Fund* (2007-2011) ended, ‘*the lost decade*’ (2020). The 2018 *Building Blocks* report referred to above identified a slight increase of five percent in the number of staff with graduate qualifications at Level 6 in group-based settings (Kalitowski, 2018), see Figure 2. As in the 2017 *Building Blocks* report (Kalitowski, 2017), practitioners from Ofsted-graded ‘outstanding’ settings of all types were more likely to hold higher qualifications across the board.

As high quality care and education ultimately depends on qualifications and training (DfE, 2018b), there is according to Archer and Merrick fear in the sector that the “*current funding climate might negatively affect quality in the future through employment of staff with lower level qualifications and cuts to training*” (2020: 9). Furthermore, although there is a general upward trend in the number of students enrolling in first and taught postgraduate degrees in the UK (HESA, 2020), see Figure 3, Archer and Merrick (2020) point out how students registering for Early Years Teacher (EYT) courses have dropped dramatically. There were 2,327 new entrants to early years initial teacher training in 2013 (PACEY, 2018) with the provisional number for 2019 to 2020 at only 354 trainees (DfE, 2019b).

Figure 3: First year higher education by student enrolment by level of study



Source: HESA, 2020

The lack of parity and professional status of other qualified teachers within the education sector is a source of great frustration and resentment in the sector, according to the review by Osgood and colleagues (2017) referred to above. Osgood and colleagues, as did Kay and colleagues (2019), report this as contributing factors to the decreasing number of entrants to EYT courses (Kay et al., 2019). Osgood and colleagues also point out that the array of options and routes to students further complicates matters. In a paper, drawing on the above review, Elwick and colleagues (2018: 515) state interviewees felt “*the current early years training and qualification landscape was perhaps the most cluttered and confusing it had ever been*”.

In a forthcoming review, Campbell-Barr et al highlight the lack of clarity on routes available to obtain an early years or early childhood degree and what the employment outcomes are for early years graduates in England. They initially identified 647 different degree variations available for students in England looking to work in early years and childcare services. Following set inclusion criteria, and specific search terms, an analysis of 320 of these options was carried out. The analysis revealed that the age range of the children and young people covered in the degrees varied greatly. Even though the majority of the courses which stated the age range to be studied in their course description, indicated it was focused on children 0-8, the ranged varied up to the age of 25. The level of practical work experience included in the various degrees also varied. Another important finding was that “*the content of early years degrees is highly fragmented in the range of topics covered*” (Campbell-Barr et al, forthcoming: 23). The above points, the fragmentation of course content and structure, risk undermining the collective quality of early years degrees. Campbell-Barr et al pose the question whether there should be a core content and specific age range to early years degrees. Osgood and colleagues (2017) follow a similar line of thinking as they suggest that regulating the training on offer could be one way of ‘raising the [collective] quality’ of early childhood education and care. Osgood and colleagues (2017: 67) further recommend streamlining and reducing the number of qualifications “*to ensure what is on offer is recognised, reputable and transferable (i.e. holds parity with the statutory sector)*”.

In their review Campbell-Barr et al also analysed data from 1,660 graduate students that revealed only 16 percent received teacher training qualifications. This together with Archer and Merrick’s (2020) data about the decline in students enrolling in Early Years Teacher (EYT) courses is of great concern regarding the upskilling of the workforce. According to Campbell-Barr et al, the demographic of the workforce may be a contributing factor, as 48 percent of students are older (30 and over) for whom part-time courses may be more attractive, see Table 3.

Table 3: Age of early years students when finishing their course

Age	Percentage
20 and under	3%
21-23	33%
24-26	10%
27-29	6%
30 and older	48%

Source: Campbell-Barr et al, forthcoming

In addition, the uneven distribution of courses across England may be a factor in the choice of degree, as the majority of students tend to study and take up employment locally. The importance of geographical proximity to courses is also an aspect recognised in the report by Osgood and colleagues (2017). It will be interesting to see if with the current trend of more courses being delivered online, the identified geographical limitations in choice of degree will have less of an influence and lead to a different uptake

by students in future. In any case, the role Local Authorities could play in workforce development should also be an important consideration according to Campbell-Barr et al.

Looking across to Scotland and their workforce review conducted in 2015 (Scottish Government, 2015), it is interesting to note similarities and differences in the government response to their independent review. The Scottish review was carried out by Siraj and Kingston (2015). Of the 31 recommendations Siraj and Kingston made, 27 were 'accepted', or 'accepted in part' by the Scottish Government. The recommendation to introduce early years specific teacher training at initial and postgraduate levels, was however, not accepted. The Scottish Government does however fund two universities to deliver early years-specific Masters degree courses for primary teachers. In 2015, the Scottish Government stated:

"We do not consider that introducing an early years specific teaching degree is necessary, given the opportunities which already exist for providing teachers with the opportunity to specialize in early years, including the Masters qualifications outlined above, and the joint early years/primary teaching degree which has been offered at the University of Stirling for some years (2015: 20)."

The Scottish Government recognises the possible need for new initial graduate degrees for students looking to lead learning, as recommended by Siraj and Kingston (2015), but Masters degrees are only offered to teachers in the workforce, at Aberdeen or Strathclyde University. It is also noted by Dunlop et al (2016) that there has been a drop in the number of nursery teachers in Scotland and their replacement by graduates of the BA Early Childhood qualification.

Relevant to degrees across the UK but pointed out in the Welsh report, is that in Wales there has historically been a concern that early years and childcare degrees have not contained necessary work based components; however, embedding practical competency into degree qualifications is now part of the 10-year workforce plan (Education Wales, 2017). The ambition is to increase the number of staff at graduate level in the sector, recognising the positive impact they have on children's learning and development.

KEY ISSUES

The decision not to create early years specific teacher training (QTS) at initial and postgraduate levels but rather to create the new qualification of Early Years Teacher (EYT) at Level 6 has not led to a boost in recruitment of higher qualified staff in the sector. In fact, recruitment to Early Years Teacher (EYT) courses has dropped dramatically over the last 5 years, significantly limiting progress towards securing highly qualified pedagogic leaders in all settings.

There remains disparity in the perception of EYP/EYT and QTS in the sector and they are not viewed as equal status as professed by government, due to differentials in pay, career progression and professional status.

The withdrawal of the Graduate Teacher Fund in 2011 removed the incentive for graduates to be employed in the PVI sector, although recent evidence indicates a slight increase in number of staff with graduate qualifications at Level 6 in group-based settings, especially those judged as higher quality.

2.3 Progression within the profession

The DfE documents in relation to **progression within the profession** are grouped under the DfE third heading ‘Early learning and childcare’ on the DfE website, following the link ‘Early learning and childcare’. Relevant documents to progression within the profession are in black and other related but less relevant documents are greyed out as illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4: DfE documents linked to progression within the profession

Policy and Guidance	Year	Subheadings
Early learning and childcare	2018	Early education and childcare - Early education and childcare: Statutory guidance for local authorities
		Supervision of activity with children - Statutory guidance
		Sure Start children's centres - Sure Start children's centres statutory guidance
		SEND: guidance for early years settings - Early years: guide to the 0 to 25 SEND code of practice
		30 hours free childcare: LA and early years provider guide - Early years education and childcare: optional guidance - 30 hours free childcare for children in foster care
	2015	Childcare Bill - Childcare Bill: policy statement - Review of childcare costs - Childcare Bill: impact assessment - Cost of providing childcare review: call for evidence

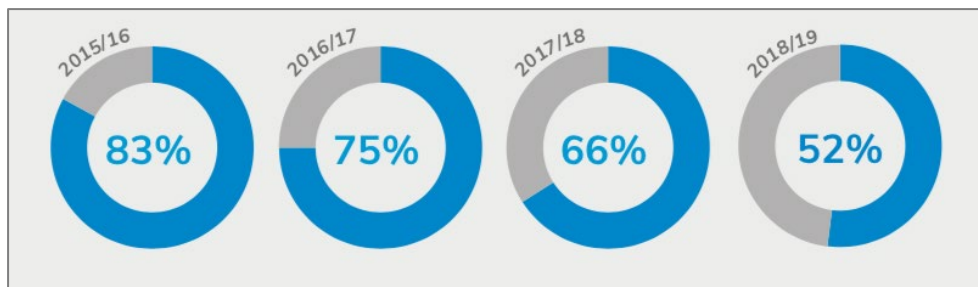
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/early-years-qualifications-finder#early-years-apprenticeships>

Note: The headings in bold are the heading titles as listed on the DfE website.

To help professionalise the early years workforce, the Blair and Brown Labour Governments provided funding through the *Transformation Fund* (TF) and the *Graduate Leader Fund* (GLF). Evaluations of the GLF carried out in 2011 showed that settings with a graduate leader “*made significant improvements in quality for pre-school children (aged 30 months to 5 years) as compared to settings which did not*”, especially if the graduate member of staff worked directly with children (Mathers et al., 2011). This was an indication of an intention to continue this financial support for the rapidly developing sector, including ongoing continuing professional development, to embed and further develop knowledge and skills. However, the ring fenced funding stopped in 2011 and with increasing rollout of free places for two-year olds since 2013 (DfE, 2013b), and recent expanded free provision for two-, three- and four-year olds as set out in the statutory guidance for local authorities in 2018 (DfE, 2018a), the sufficiency of the workforce has come under further pressure. With sufficiency issues and reduced resources, many settings have decreased their support for continuing professional development and upskilling staff teams (Bonetti, 2020).

In the Childcare Bill (2015) the government recognised the importance of a well-qualified workforce as the driver of quality in settings. The government expected in 2015 that qualification levels would continue to increase following the introduction of new Early Years Educator (EYE) qualification criteria (Level 3) and the Early Years Teacher (EYT) route. Data from the NDNA 2018-19 workforce survey show a different picture, see Figure 4.

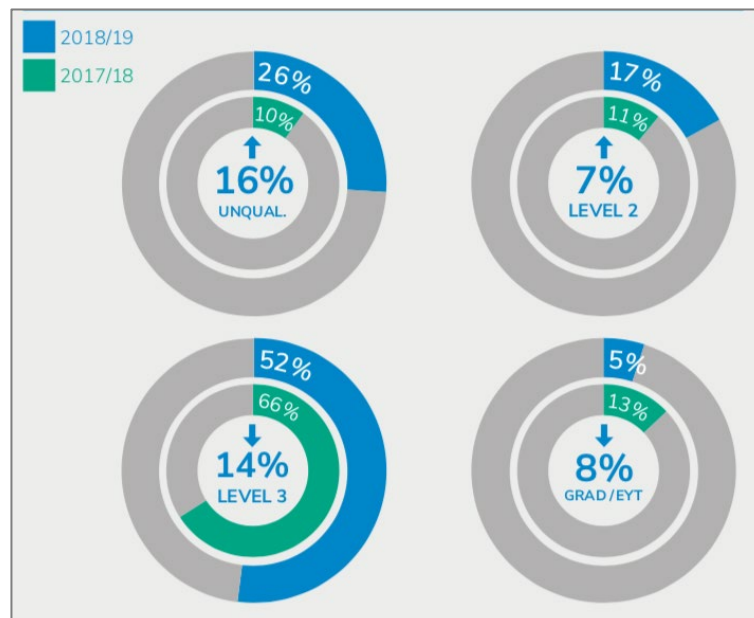
Figure 4: The proportion of Level 3 qualified staff is following a downward trend



Source: NDNA, 2019a

However, Bonetti pointed out in her workforce report from 2019 that the number of Early Years Educators (Level 3) has been erratic since 2013 and although qualification levels have increased marginally, it has been at a very slow pace in the last few years which is a concern to an aging sector. The concern is on two levels. Firstly, according to the NDNA (2019a), staff turnover is well above average compared to UK average employee turnover. Although some turnover of staff is to be expected, at 24 percent for the sector, this is well above the UK average of 15-18 percent. The highest number of staff leaving are Level 3 trained staff, with the main reason given for leaving the profession being low salaries (ibid.). Secondly, with fluctuating numbers of staff training at Level 3 (Bonetti, 2019), together with providers reporting only finding, or being able to afford, younger less qualified staff to replace those who are leaving, the balance of qualification levels in the workforce is being challenged. What is particularly alarming, according to Ziolkowski (2020), Director of Quality and Workforce Development at the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA), is the rising proportion of unqualified staff, an increase of 16 percent compared with the previous year (NDNA, 2019a), see Figure 5.

Figure 5: Changes to qualification level in the workforce



Source: NDNA, 2019a

Considering there were 19,200 vacancies across England (7.6 percent across the workforce) in 2019, and providers relying on agency staff and only being able to afford younger less qualified staff (NDNA, 2019a), together with the ageing of the most qualified in the workforce (Bonetti, 2019), there is a real fear there will not be enough trained staff to replace leaving and naturally retiring staff, and this will

consequently threaten the ability to provide for high quality early years provision in England. The situation is similar in Scotland, with a vacancy rate at 5.4 percent across the workforce (NDNA, 2019b) and 5.5 percent across the workforce in Wales (NDNA, 2019c).

Related to this, what may seem as a surprising initiative in Northern Ireland, the *Investing in the Teaching Workforce Scheme*, encourages teachers over 55 to take early retirement to make space for newer graduates, in an attempt to what they call 'refresh' the workforce (DE, 2018). This can be seen as controversial in that it fails to address the issue of why the workforce needs 'refreshing' and how the impact of the loss of more experienced staff will be managed.

Research in this area, as identified through the BEI database search, using the key words: *early education and childcare* AND *workforce*, generated 31 papers with four identified as relevant to this heading. In 2012 Kendall and colleagues recognised the unprecedented change childcare services in England had been undergoing and the centrality of the *Transformation Fund* (TF) and the *Graduate Leader Fund* (GLF) as drivers towards professionalising the workforce. Although Kendall and colleagues voiced reservations about the underlying 'expert' discourse driving this professionalisation, they recognise how the Foundation degree in Early Years (FDEY) and the Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) had upskilled the workforce and suggested managers play an important role in how "*professional development generally and higher level learning in particular is perceived and valued within a setting*" (2012: 558), and as such encouraged to be undertaken or not. This is an important point in the workforce development process as managers can be seen as gatekeepers to the development of a better qualified and skilled workforce but are often limited by resources and workforce availability. An interesting finding from this small scale study was that the 20 participants did not see themselves as part of a professional community beyond their settings, as their awareness of for instance the 10-year strategy and related policies was limited (DfES, 2004). Participants also had reservations to progression in the field, as it was perceived as possibly taking them away from everyday practice with the children. Kendall and colleagues therefore suggested that training managers to understand their role in continuing professional development, as well as how universities structure learning, is important.

The paper by Hordern (2013) discusses similar issues and points out firstly, that a poorly paid workforce may not be motivated to engage in continuing professional development. Secondly, he sees the disparity between Primary Teachers (QTS) and Early Years Professionals (EYP), now Early Years Teachers (EYT), as amounting to a glass ceiling. Hordern, as Kendall and colleagues, also highlights the importance of engaging with managers and owners of settings in the process of continuing professional development.

Trodd and Dickerson (2019), in a more recent paper, focus specifically on the experiences of 11 participants on a Foundation Degree in Early Years (FDEY) and how this type of degree can support working professionals in building their reflective skills and confidence as professionals to ultimately implement change in their settings. The experiences of the 11 participants were overall positive; however, Bashford (2019), who looked at how six new graduates with Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) or Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) used their newly gained 'graduate' status highlighted how their opportunities to influence practice was dependent not only on their position within their different settings but also very much on being valued by their managers. This is in line with what Kendall and colleagues also pointed out, and how managers can be gatekeepers to development and change, despite the fact that according to Ofsted (2019: 40) expectations for good leaders and managers are that:

"Leaders ensure that they and practitioners receive focused and highly effective professional development. Practitioners' subject, pedagogical content and knowledge consistently builds and

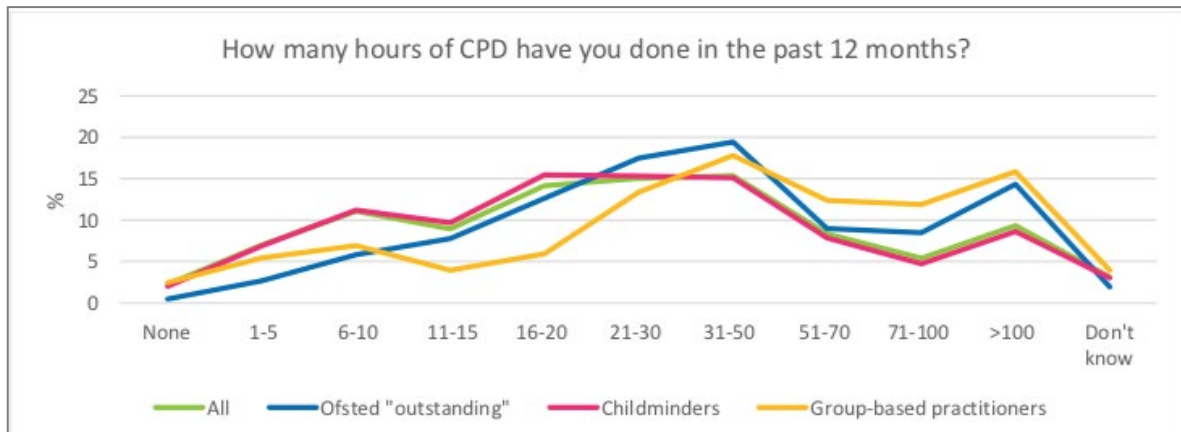
develops over time, and this consistently translates into improvements in the teaching of the curriculum."

However, as previously mentioned, the disparity between degrees and linked career benefits and pay is problematic. Kalitowski (2018: 19), in the 2018 *Building Blocks* report, as Nutbrown, recommends that Early Years Teacher status (EYT) is replaced with a new early years route to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) (for children from birth to seven) with accessible and affordable routes for converting EYTs, and its predecessor EYPS, to QTS. This may be particularly important as Archer and Merrick (2020) pointed out above how students registering for Early Years Teacher (EYT) courses have dropped dramatically. A survey carried out by Save the Children and Nursery World reported on the frustration by EYTs about pay conditions and the inability to find graduate positions. In fact, more than 27 percent of EYTs had not found the qualification valuable for career progression. Archer and Merrick point out that since entry requirements for EYT courses are the same as those for a PGCE leading to QTS, "*there is a strong incentive for practitioners [now] to choose the latter route which opens up opportunities with far better pay and status*" (ibid.: 23). That this may happen was recognised in the DfE workforce strategy (2017c). However, what was not recognised and discussed was that this could mean that staff employed in the early years with QTS may lack early years specialism (Osgood et al., 2017). This is highly relevant since the DfE recognises in the workforce strategy the need for more specialist graduates, especially in disadvantaged areas, to narrow the quality gap between settings in disadvantaged and more affluent areas (2017c).

Linked to this is another disappointing trend in the graduate workforce in England, reported in the *2019 NDNA Workforce Survey*, the overall reduction of graduates in the workforce to five percent of the workforce, see Figure 5. The reduction has been attributed to the lower take-up of Early Years Initial Teacher training places, with universities even withdrawing the programme (NDNA, 2019a). If we look across the border, the picture in Wales is more positive with a fairly stable level of 7.1 percent of the workforce trained at graduate level according to the 2019 NDNA survey but no explanation given as to why this may be the case (NDNA, 2019c). It is also not clear from the 2019 NDNA Scottish survey (NDNA, 2019b) how many of the 15 percent of *lead practitioners* are graduates; however, recent reform in Scotland has seen capital funding directed to the maintained sector, with a real possibility of seeing private and voluntary providers losing experienced staff to maintained providers (ibid.) putting their capacity to maintain quality at risk.

Another aspect of professionalising the workforce is also the opportunity and uptake of continuing professional development (CPD). PACEY takes a broad definition of CPD and defines it as "*anything done to maintain and improve knowledge and skills*" (Kalitowski, 2018: 7). The trend as identified in their latest surveys (Kalitowski, 2017, 2018) is fairly stable with around 46 percent of childminders and 52 percent of group practitioners reported doing over 20 hours per year and only a very small minority not engaging in any CPD (Kalitowski, 2018), see Figure 6.

Figure 6: Hours of CPD per setting category



Source: Kalitowski, 2018

Another trend is that practitioners in Ofsted-graded 'outstanding' settings were more likely to have done more than 20 hours of CPD in the previous year. It is interesting to note that barriers to CPD were give as:

- Accessibility
- Affordability/subsidy
- Time
- Local opportunities

The barriers are particularly interesting to make note of for increasing uptake of CPD across all settings regardless of rating. Archer and Merrick (2020) welcome the increased funding by the DfE for CPD but point out how it has unfortunately been fragmented and focused on specific areas such as language and communication and lacking in long-term strategy or vision for upskilling the early years workforce in general. A good example of recently funded CPD is the Sutton Trust Communication and Language Project (see <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-priorities/early-years/early-years-speech-language-and-communications-project/>).

Ziolkowski (2020) is less positive as she points out that despite a desire and commitment to providing high quality childcare, employers struggle to afford to upskill the workforce, due to successive funding cuts to local authorities who no longer provide free mandatory and practice based training (ibid.). According to the NDNA annual 2017/18 survey, 30 percent of employers limited funding of CPD to mandatory training such as safeguarding and SEND training (NDNA, 2018). In the latest 2018/19 survey, the NDNA reported 39 percent of the respondents said they could only focus on mandatory training. Rising business costs and underfunding of government places are factors mentioned as affecting investing in CPD (NDNA 2019a). Osgood and colleagues (2017) also point out using agency staff to cover vacancies, keeping pace with the National Living Wage and pension auto-enrolment costs as limiting funding for CPD. If this trend continues, it will have major ramifications for the upskilling of the workforce, and ultimately on the ability to deliver high quality early education and childcare (Ziolkowski, 2020). Osgood and colleagues (2017) recognise that larger providers may be able to offer in-house training with clear pathways from Level 2 to 7, as evident in two of their case studies, but typically it is up to staff to identify and fund CPD.

In the report by Pascal et al., (2019) *Getting it Right in the Early Years Foundation Stage: a review of evidence*, they look at evidence from the past 10 years on early learning, pedagogy and curriculum

content, and clearly show how complex the teaching and learning is in the early years where there is a need to recognise the interplay between a well-articulated play-based pedagogy, relational teaching approaches and the curriculum content if we wish for children to develop to their fullest potential, regardless if children are summer born, from diverse backgrounds or experience challenging circumstances. The review indicates that the workforce therefore needs to be highly competent, with the possibility to continue developing their understanding of teaching and learning and their important role in scaffolding this process in. *“Nowhere is it more important than in countries like England, where young people sixteen years and up, children themselves in effect, can work with children with only very basic childcare qualifications”* (Cole-Albäck, 2020: 175).

The desire for opportunities for appropriate training and professional development not only to deepen an understanding of early years pedagogy but also importantly to *“foster confidence in early years practice rather than a misplaced over-reliance on paperwork used to evidence such practice”* (Bamsey et al., 2020: 8) is in fact a desire from the within the profession itself as identified by Bamsey and colleagues in the feedback from a survey of around 3,000 responses from a wide range of settings across the sector. The message from the sector was very clear in their need for appropriate training and ongoing professional development. An additional point made was also the need for improved funding and resources to be able to engage with the wider community including families and other professionals.

The DfE stated in the workforce strategy (2017c: 27) that they are committed to supporting the retention of staff and social mobility within the sector, in other words, enabling individuals to achieve their potential through *“clear opportunities for career progression, which are accessible and result in professional and/or financial benefits”*, however, with limited funding, providers are struggling to do so.

In Scotland, an important point raised in their workforce review, and recommendation made by Siraj and Kingston (2015) that was accepted by the Scottish Government, was to take into consideration the various needs of two-year-olds compared to three- to four-year-olds when increasing free entitlement and how this not only needs to be reflected in initial training courses but also in postgraduate courses and CPD. The Scottish Government also accepted the recommendation of compulsory training on effective early years pedagogy for Primary headteachers who have nursery and P1 classes in their schools (Scottish Government, 2015). This is particularly relevant since the Scottish Government, as mentioned above, do not intend to introduce early years specific teacher training at initial and postgraduate levels. Related is also the recommendation to create, based on locally identified needs, conversion and upskilling courses for existing teachers not confident in teaching younger children. At the end of 2019 to support CPD, the government agency Education Scotland (2019) launched a new website called *Glow*. *Glow* is a professional online learning community with support materials and the possibility to engage face to face, fostering collaborative learning across the workforce and keeping the workforce up to date with the latest professional knowledge. The Scottish Government have also recently funded the development of free online training modules by the OU and the University of the West of Scotland for early years practitioners.

In their review on quality of early childhood education and care for children under three, Mathers and colleagues (2014) also emphasised the importance of CPD but suggested it is most effective if linked to actual practice. In other words, supporting staff in applying their knowledge on-site through coaching rather than through taught sessions which practitioners are then expected to adapt to their own contexts (ibid.: 41). Mathers and colleagues further draw attention to the value of (simply) setting aside time to engage in professional conversations with colleagues. This is an interesting consideration in austere times where spending on upskilling the workforce or CPD in England is expected to go down according to the NDNA survey (2019a). The picture is more positive in Scotland and Wales where a large majority

(73.8 percent) expect to spend the same or more on CPD this year. The Welsh Government suggest using their new induction framework in CPD as a tool for managers to evidence which learning outcomes have already been met by staff that can be noted in accompanying workbooks (Social Care Wales, 2018). The Welsh Government state their ambition is for the workforce to be highly regarded as a profession and as a career choice.

For the workforce to be highly regarded as a profession and as a career choice, with the ability to provide for high quality early years provision, well qualified staff and the possibility for continuing professional development are key. However, in the OECD 2019 report, *Good Practice for Good Jobs in Early Childhood Education and Care*, they soberly point out that, in addition to the possibility for in-service training and access to CPD, to retain staff, current barriers need to be acknowledged such as low wages and limited benefits, lack of status, challenging working conditions such as ratios and group sizes, and limited opportunity for professional development. A major challenge identified by the OECD when it comes to in-service training and CPD is encouraging and incentivising staff to enrol, as touched upon above. The OECD has in a previous report suggested in-service training and CPD should be mandatory, but they recognise that when this has happened it has been more common for graduate staff than non-graduate staff (OECD, 2012). Financial support to cover costs for training, cash or career incentives are other alternatives identified across OECD countries. All in all, one important message in the 2019 OECD report is that, “*countries must engage in efforts to improve the status and attractiveness of ECEC as a career*” (14).

KEY ISSUES

There is a high level of turnover in the early years workforce which is losing more experienced and qualified staff, mainly due to low salaries and lack of career benefits. This has led to an increase in staff with lower qualifications in many settings.

With the expansion in funded places (via the 2 years old funding and 30 hours entitlement) there is a need for more qualified staff across the sector, but the removal of the Graduate Leader Fund in 2011 and the reduction in funded CPD following austerity measures has led to a lack of funds for staff progression to more advanced training and their consequent retention in a setting. Over the last 10 years this has led to a depression in qualification levels in many settings and lower access to those remaining for CPD, along with a rise in unqualified staff.

There is evidence of an inability to afford, recruit and retain higher qualified staff, especially in PVI sectors which has a direct impact on the quality of provision.

The numbers accessing EYE and EYT training routes have been erratic and have not grown significantly. There is a case to be made to bring the EYT and QTS qualification pathways together with a new EY specialist QTS and conversion courses for those already qualified to achieve equity of status and so attractiveness to the workforce.

The perceptions of provider managers and their limited financial resources are crucial to the recruitment of more qualified staff and support for access to CPD by existing staff, especially for those working with the youngest children.

CPD is seen as important but access to it is mixed across the sector. The evidence indicates significant reductions in access since LA reductions in CPD funding under austerity. Barriers include accessibility, affordability/subsidy, time and local opportunities. The increase in CPD that has occurred recently has been through a series of targeted initiatives (mostly to support Communication, Language and Literacy development) and is not flexible to an individual's professional growth.

2.4 Leadership in the sector

The Ofsted document in relation to **leadership in the sector**, as illustrated in Table 5 below, can be found on the DfE website following the link ‘Early learning and childcare’.

Table 5: DfE documents linked to leadership in the sector

Policy and Guidance	Year	Subheadings
Inspection of early years and childcare providers		Being inspected as a childminder or childcare provider - Early years inspection handbook (2019)

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/early-years-qualifications-finder#early-years-apprenticeships>

Note: The headings in bold are the heading titles as listed on the DfE website.

In her report, Nutbrown makes a distinction between ‘organisational leadership’ and ‘pedagogical leadership’. Of interest to Nutbrown was pedagogical leadership, although both are important for different reasons. Nutbrown stated that, “*all early years practitioners can aspire to be pedagogical leaders*” (2012: 7). Her vision of a pedagogical leader was an individual with “*extensive knowledge and understanding of child development, of play, of individual needs of children and their families and how to support them all*” (2012: 56). Nutbrown identified these individuals as graduates with:

- Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)
- Early Years Professional Status (EYPS)
- Degree qualifications, for example in Early Childhood Studies

Nutbrown however recognised that although staff with Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) have had a positive effect on the sector, the expectation of greater status and improved pay and conditions have not materialised. Nutbrown suggested that because of the disparity between graduate qualifications as mentioned above, what was needed was an early years specialist route to QTS, in time replacing the EYPS. This recommendation was partially acted on in 2013 when Early Years initial teacher training was introduced (DfE, 2017c). Early Years Teachers are trained to deliver the EYFS curriculum for children from birth to five but without the full status, pay and conditions that primary school teachers with QTS hold, and this as mentioned above has been problematic. The DfE recognise it has been difficult for employers to attract and/or retain graduate staff, possibly because their role is currently restricted in maintained settings, as regulations do not allow them to lead nursery or reception classes, and so currently there is little evidence that they are going on to train for QTS. There is also a wider issue about pedagogic leadership in the sector outside settings and schools, which used to be provided primarily by local authority early years teams, where specialist pedagogic leaderships have been much eroded by cuts. Also, the development of MATs and Teaching Schools has fragmented the structures for system leadership, so that although Early Years Teaching Schools are now an alternative source of support to LA early years teams, the system is not universal or joined up. This is relevant in terms of career progression as well as sector support.

Developing graduate professionals as pedagogical leaders, with or without QTS, is important in the process of professionalising the early years workforce, as discussed in the paper by Murry and McDowell Clark (2013). The BEI database search, using the key words: *early education and childcare AND leadership* generated 11 hits with one relevant to this heading, the paper by Murray and McDowell Clark (2013). Murray and McDowell Clark point out that leadership models have historically been based on business or school-based understandings with limited application to early education and childcare. Their research revealed that early years graduates prefer a more social and relational, participatory model of

leadership, fostering learning in a social context “*drawing people in, empowering broader agency and the exercise of leadership in community*” (2013: 295). The pedagogical leader may or may not be the organisational leader; however, as pointed out above (Bashford, 2019), this may depend on the staff’s position within their setting and staff being valued by their organisational leader. Mathers and colleagues (2014) also make the link between the quality of a setting and the attributes and approaches of their leaders. Osgood and colleagues highlight how creating ‘learning communities’ are key in inspiring staff:

“Being part of a community of practice, with ample opportunities to learn with and from peers has clear benefits for the identification, pursuit, and the successful completion of continuing professional development opportunities. This rests upon the vision and actions of supportive management – whether in a single setting or part of larger organisation – early years teams need to feel valued and supported throughout their careers (2017: 101).”

In the inspection framework in England (Ofsted, 2019) only organisational leadership is referred to under the heading ‘Effectiveness of leadership and management’. For an ‘outstanding’ rating leaders are supposed to help staff develop their subject, pedagogical content and knowledge over time, that improves the teaching of the curriculum. However, as Hordern (2013) pointed out, a poorly paid workforce may not be motivated to engage in continuing professional development and the additional responsibilities pedagogical leadership roles bring.

It is interesting to note that in England the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) is no longer sponsored by the government and its functions were in 2018 moved to the DfE and the Teaching Regulation Agency (DfE, 2020b). A more general agency for public services was created instead in 2018, the National Leadership Centre (NLC, 2020). The loss of the NCTL as a standalone teacher training agency can be seen as either positive or negative, as it on the one hand aligns DfE policy and delivery but without a designated agency for teaching and leadership there is a real risk system leadership and improvement will not be maintained (NCTL, 2018) in the early years. In particular, this has been evidenced with the loss of continuing leadership and professional development through, for instance, the abandonment of the *National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership* (NPQICL) programme.

In Scotland, through the government agency Education Scotland, headteachers of Scottish primary schools with an early learning and childcare setting can enrol in leadership training (Education Scotland, 2020) to develop their ability and greater confidence in leading early years learning. There is however no mention about other graduates having the possibility to train to lead practice as a pedagogical leader as recognised in the Nutbrown review (2012). The Scottish Government also seems focused on organisational leadership. In the Scottish review, the government stated that the First Minister had announced in October 2015 that:

“From 2018, all nurseries in deprived areas should have an additional graduate with early learning and childcare expertise working with young children. The expectation is that this will be either a teacher or a holder of the BA Childhood Practice degree, in recognition that both of these professionals can effectively support young children’s learning and development (Scottish Government, 2015: 15).”

There is however only reference to supporting young children’s learning and development, not about organisational or pedagogical leadership.

In Wales, the long-term plan is for managers of all settings to aspire to reach Level 5, through a clear progression route via a Level 4 leadership and management route (Education Wales, 2017). From the description of the *Leadership and Management in Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development* course, it appears to be mainly about organisational leadership even though one topic area is on promoting the rights of children to provision, protection and participation (Qualifications Wales, 2018).

A topic that did not come up in the documents read and webpages searched was that of the gender diversity of the workforce. In the workforce strategy, the DfE recognised that “*the recruitment and retention of men is a challenge for the early years sector*” (2017c: 25), as childcare is [still] seen as predominately a female profession. The DfE recognises that this not only limits the recruitment pool for employers but also state limits the opportunity for children to have men as role models. The ‘men as role model’ argument is however problematic according to Davies (2019) from *Men in the Early Years* (MITEY), as it can in effect perpetuate gender stereotypes such as women being more caring and men more outdoorsy and playful. Davies believes it is more about building a representative workforce and questioning if it is open to and inclusive of men as well as women. At the moment only 3 percent of early years staff are men in England and Wales, and 4 percent in Scotland, figures that have remained fairly constant in the past 20 years (Fatherhood institute, 2019), yet 15 percent of the primary school workforce, 14 percent of social workers and 11 percent of nurses are men (Davies, 2019). To recruit more men, the Fatherhood Institute received a grant in 2019 from the DfE for £30,000 to fund a national conference to promote early years careers to men and to create resources to challenge stereotypes around men's role in early education.

To conclude, there is no longer any doubt that a highly skilled, graduate led early education and childcare sector can have a positive long term impact on children's learning, development and future outcomes (Mathers et al., 2011, 2014; Sylva et al, 2014); however, it is worrying that only 11 percent of respondent in the 2019 NDNA Workforce Survey “*could see themselves in childcare for the next 10 years or more*” (NDNA, 2019a: 11). Just as Nutbrown stated in 2012, a new long-term vision is needed for the early years workforce, and eight years on Bonetti (2020) has reiterated this arguing that we still need a clearer long-term vision, coherent strategy and support during transition stages, to move forward and continue developing a high-quality workforce in England. As stated in the 2019 OECD Report, *Good Practice for Good Jobs in Early Childhood Education and Care*, the issues addressed in this report are not specific to England alone but align with problems and issues many OECD countries face.

KEY ISSUES

The distinction between organisational leadership and pedagogical leadership, and the lack of an early years professional leadership qualification, mean that there is no clear career progression route for early years staff with Level 5, 6 or 7 qualifications and this means many practitioners do not realise their leadership potential.

The current EYE and EYT qualifications are not recognised as carrying with them the enhanced pay, status and conditions of employment expected. This has led to what Nutbrown has called a “*two-tier status for teachers*” and means this initiative has had limited attractiveness to potential candidates and limited impact on the quality of provision sector wide (though it has impacted in individual settings where the graduate is employed).

Part Three: Progress and Priorities

Nutbrown Review Recommendations and Responses

In her review Nutbrown (2012: 5) stated:

“High quality early education and childcare can have a positive long term impact on children’s later learning and achievements, a fact reflected in Government investment over the last two decades in particular. Quality is the key to that positive impact, and staff with the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding are a crucial element of that quality.”

It is now widely accepted that a professionalised, well qualified and adequately rewarded early years workforce is crucial to securing the high quality of provision required for social and educational progress, especially for the less advantaged or those with additional needs. Since 2012, there have been a plethora of policy initiatives and developments in the early years sector responding to a context of increasing service demand and delivery requirements. These policy changes, many of which have been aimed at increasing the supply of a diminishing early years workforce, have not had the impact of securing Nutbrown’s (2012: 10) clear vision for the sector where:

- Every child is able to experience high quality care and education whatever type of home or group setting they attend;
- Early years staff have a strong professional identity, take pride in their work, and are recognised and valued by parents, other professionals and society as a whole;
- High quality early education and care is led by well qualified early years practitioners; and
- The importance of childhood is understood, respected and valued.

It is therefore timely to assess what progress has been made in securing this vision and what actions are needed to make further headway.

3.1 Reflections on progress

Entry requirements and initial training: The Nutbrown Review highlighted the recruitment crisis in the sector and current evidence indicates that this crisis has worsened over recent years, as funded provision has expanded and demand for early education and childcare has soared. The government has shifted its position over entry requirements for the sector, firstly enhancing the requirement for Level 2 English and maths (GCSE grade C or above) and then amending this requirement to Functional Skills as an alternative to GCSE, in order to enable more to enter the profession. Progress towards securing Level 3 as the benchmark qualification level has been limited, especially for those working with under threes, and there is a consequent increase in those working in the sector with low level qualifications. The apprenticeship scheme has also had limited success in attracting new entrants into the sector and it is too early to know what the impact of the introduction of T levels will be. Those who have accessed higher level training continue to struggle to find posts with adequate acknowledgement of their leadership role and with appropriate remuneration. The push to achieve graduate leaders in all settings has stalled.

The qualification system: The creation of the new qualifications of Early Years Educator (EYE) at Level 3 and Early Years Teacher (EYT) at level 6 with clear ‘full and relevant’ criteria has not led to a boost in recruitment of higher qualified staff in the sector. In fact, recruitment to both early years teacher (EYT) and Early years Educator (EYE) courses has dropped dramatically over the last 5 years, significantly

limiting progress towards securing highly qualified pedagogic leaders in all settings. There remains disparity in the perception of EYP/EYT and QTS in the sector and they are not viewed as having equal status as professed by government, due to differentials in pay, career progression and professional status. The withdrawal of the Graduate Teacher Fund in 2011 also removed the incentive for graduates to be employed in the PVI sector. The numbers accessing EYE and EYT training routes have been erratic and have not grown significantly. There is a case to be made to bring the EYT and QTS pathways together with a new EY specialist QTS and conversion courses for those already qualified to achieve equity of status and so attractiveness to the workforce.

Progression within the profession: The aspiration to provide clear progression routes within the profession which both attract and retain highly qualified staff has not been realised. There is a high level of turnover in the early years workforce which is losing more experienced and qualified staff, mainly due to low salaries and lack of career benefits. This has led to an increase in staff with lower qualifications in many settings. The significant reduction in funded CPD following austerity measures has led to a lack of funds for staff progression to more advanced training and their consequent retention in a setting. Barriers include accessibility, affordability/subsidy, time and local opportunities. The increase in CPD that has occurred recently has been through a series of targeted initiatives (mostly to support Communication, Language and Literacy development) and is not flexible to an individual's professional growth, nor has it helped individuals progress up the qualifications ladder. Over the last 10 years this lack of investment in CPD has led to a depression in qualification levels in many settings and lower access to those remaining for CPD, along with a rise in unqualified staff. There is evidence of an inability to afford, recruit and retain higher qualified staff, especially in PVI sectors which has a direct impact on the quality of provision. The perception and attitude of provider managers is crucial to the recruitment of more qualified staff and support for access to CPD by existing staff, especially for those working with the youngest children, and more work is needed with sector providers to secure their support for this.

Leadership in the sector: The distinction between organisational leadership and pedagogical leadership, and the lack of an early years professional leadership qualification, mean that there is no clear career progression route for early years staff with advanced qualifications, and also that many practitioners do not realise their leadership potential. The current EYE and EYT qualifications are not recognised as carrying with them the enhanced pay, status and conditions of employment expected which means these routes have had limited attractiveness to potential candidates and limited impact on the quality of leadership in the sector.

3.2 Current priorities and recommendations

It should be recognised that there are many routes into the early years workforce and people enter it at different stages in their lives. This diversity of routes and entry points must be acknowledged as we look ahead to the further development of an early years workforce strategy. It should also be recognised that creating a sustainable, high quality early years workforce will also require a significant shift in investment to secure better pay and conditions of employment for all early years staff. It is evident that higher qualifications will not be effective if salaries and conditions are not sufficiently attractive to draw high-quality candidates into the profession of early education and care. Nevertheless, the urgency in developing a well-qualified and professionalised early years workforce which has the capacity to transform young lives, especially for those from less advantaged homes, remains. The many issues facing the early years workforce still remain eight years on from the Nutbrown's informed and well received review. Back in 2012 Nutbrown commented:

“There is an urgency, and though some improvements will not be immediate, others of my recommendations can, and should, happen quickly. Longer term commitment will be needed to arrest a decline in the standards of qualifications and enhance their quality for the future. However, there cannot be compromise on quality and we must be unrelenting in our insistence on improving experiences for all babies and young children. They must have the best (Nutbrown, 2012: 3).”

Her 19 recommendations remain relevant, and those which have not been acted upon should be usefully revisited. In addition, current policy priorities and actions have added additional pressures and demands on the workforce which this review has highlighted. The evidence on the impact of these policy shifts and initiatives suggests a further set of five recommendations for action, some of which rehearse and reinforce the Nutbrown suggestions for action, and some of which have emerged more recently. These five priorities are suggested as a framework for urgent action if the life chances of our youngest and most disadvantaged children are to be lifted and social mobility enhanced.

- 1. A Vision for the Workforce:** There remains a need for a clear vision for the early years and childcare workforce and a restatement of the crucial importance of achieving a well-qualified, high status and better rewarded profession to achieve a world class early years' service. The goal for establishing a highly professional and qualified early years and childcare workforce with a coherent career progression pathway and training structure from entry level, through to Level 3 and then to more advanced graduate and postgraduate qualifications, should be reinstated. It should also aim to enhance practitioner leadership skills and confidence for both organisational and pedagogical leadership roles, providing sufficient enhancement to pay and conditions of employment to make career progression worthwhile.
- 2. Access to Benchmark Qualifications:** Barriers to accessing entry Level (1-3) qualifications, including apprenticeships, should be identified and addressed urgently to encourage new recruits into the sector e.g. funding, time commitments and workplace requirements. The aspiration to make Level 3 a benchmark qualification for the sector should be revived and incentives to achieve it should be offered. In addition, the benefits of establishing an Early Years Specialist QTS route, combining current QTS and EYT routes, and providing conversion courses for existing EYP/EYT graduates should be revisited, along with access to the Early Career Framework. Importantly, equality issues in access need to be addressed through, for example, increasing the number of men in early education and childcare and ensuring BAME representation at all levels in the profession.
- 3. Access to CPD:** Continuing Professional Development (CPD), which follows on from initial training, needs to be a requirement for all staff throughout their careers and be properly funded and the current barriers to access addressed. There should be an urgent exploration and extension of more accessible and flexibly offered CPD, with online and face to face options, coupled with more high-quality workplace placements and action projects, with mentoring support across the sector. Mechanisms for providing better financial support to cover costs for training and CPD, linked to career progression, would improve the status and attractiveness of ECEC as a career.
- 4. Graduate Leadership:** Incentives for graduate leaders to be employed in all early years settings should be reinstated, but especially for those working with less advantaged children and those with particular needs. A targeted re-introduction of a Leadership Quality Fund should be considered so that higher qualified staff can work as pedagogic leaders in early years provision

serving less advantaged communities, with enhanced pay and status. Changes to EYFS requirements, incentivising funding schemes and offering training for setting managers as part of a requirement for pedagogic leadership in every setting, is required to highlight the critical role of qualifications and CPD for all who work with young children and raise standards across the sector.

- 5. Pay and Conditions of Employment:** The enormous disparities on pay, conditions of employment and status across the maintained and PVI sector must be addressed if progress is to be made on professionalising the early years workforce and ensuring the sustainability of the mixed economy sector. Financial and career reward will be needed to incentivise practitioners to progress their professional training at all levels and where appropriate to undertake advanced qualifications and CPD, and then remain in post to enhance the quality of early learning and development, whatever the sector. This should include progression into wider sectoral leadership roles in local authorities, training providers and universities.

Final Comments

There are some key challenges in achieving this ambitious agenda which are sharpened in the current context of a post-pandemic and post-Brexit world. The costs of establishing and sustaining a highly qualified early years workforce are significant but should be seen as an investment in human capital for future generations and a signal of the importance given to securing social mobility for our left behind young children. Changing government and public perceptions of a sector which to date has been viewed as providing primarily a childcare function, to a sector which is seen as a highly professionalised and vital foundational element in our educational system, with both the capability and the capacity to drive much needed social and economic renewal is ambitious, but rightly so. There has never been a time when the case for investment in this vital sector of our economy has been more needed or more thoroughly evidenced. If not now, when? Generations of much needed talent are being lost through the lack of vision and investment in the early years workforce. We cannot afford to delay any longer.

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Appendix 1: Progress towards Nutbrown Review (2012) Recommendations 2012-2020

	Nutbrown Recommendations 2012	Government response 2013	Current State of Play 2020
Recommendation 1	The Government should continue to specify the qualifications that are suitable for staff operating within the EYFS, and the Teaching Agency should develop a more robust set of 'full and relevant' criteria to ensure qualifications promote the right content and pedagogical processes. These criteria should be based on the proposals set out in this report.	Accepted. Teaching Agency will consult on revised set of 'full and relevant' criteria and proposals for the Early Years Educator.	Achieved There are now EYE and EYT qualifications as specified routes for ECEC settings with a set of 'full and relevant' criteria detailing the content and pedagogical processes in line with the EYFS
Recommendation 2	All qualifications commenced from 1 st September 2013 must demonstrate that they meet the new 'full and relevant' criteria when being considered against the requirements of the EYFS.	Accepted in principle but timescale changed to September 2014. The Teaching Agency's 'full and relevant' consultation will state that we will ensure that new Early Years Educator Level 3 qualifications will be in place from 2014.	Achieved (See above)
Recommendation 3	The previously articulated plan to move to a single early years qualification should be abandoned.	Accepted. The Teaching Agency's 'full and relevant' consultation will state this plan will not happen.	Achieved There remain different pathways and routes to an early years qualification
Recommendation 4	The Government should consider the best way to badge qualifications that meet the new 'full and relevant' criteria so that people can recognise under what set of 'full and relevant' criteria a qualification has been gained.	Accepted. The 'Early Years Educator' title will offer a recognised badge of quality for qualifications which meet the new 'full and relevant' criteria.	Achieved (See above)
Recommendation 5	The EYFS requirements should be revised so that, by September 2022, all staff counting in the staff:child ratios must be qualified at Level 3.	No development	Not achieved (There continues to be no requirement for all staff counting in staff:child ratios to be qualified at Level 3).
Recommendation 6	The EYFS requirements should be revised so that, from September 2013, a minimum of 50 percent of staff in group settings need to possess at least a 'full and relevant' Level 3 to count in the staff:child ratios.	No development	Not achieved (see above)
Recommendation 7	The EYFS requirements should be revised so that, from September 2015, a minimum of 70 percent of staff in group settings need to possess at least a 'full and relevant' Level 3 to count in the staff:child ratios.	No development	Not achieved (see above)

Recommendation 8	Level 2 English and mathematics should be entry requirements to Level 3 early education and childcare courses.	Accepted in principle. The Teaching Agency's 'full and relevant' consultation will set out that entrants to Level 3 Early Years Educator courses will be expected to have secured at least a C grade in GCSE English and mathematics. We will consult on proposals on how this might be made a requirement, including by inserting a requirement for English and maths GCSEs into the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework, in due course.	Achieved and then modified (This was put in place and then modified after recruitment shortage to Functional Skills as an entry requirement).
Recommendation 9	Tutors should be qualified to a higher level than the course they are teaching.	Accepted in principle. DfE will work across Government (i.e. with BIS) to help Further Education and other post-16 providers to promote good practice in this area.	Not achieved Although recommended there is no requirement for trainers to have a certain level of qualification.
Recommendation 10	All tutors should have regular continuing professional development and contact with early years settings. Colleges and training providers should allow sufficient time for this.	Accepted in principle. DfE will work across Government (i.e. with BIS) to help Further Education and other post-16 providers to promote good practice in this area.	Not achieved Although recommended there is no requirement for trainers to have a certain level of qualification.
Recommendation 11	Only settings that are rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted should be able to host students on placement.	Accepted in principle. DfE will work across Government (i.e. with BIS) to help Further Education and other post-16 providers to ensure that placements are normally only in settings that are rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted.	Not achieved Students are regularly placed in settings not ranked as good or outstanding.
Recommendation 12	Colleges and training providers should look specifically at the setting's ability to offer students high quality placements.	Accepted. DfE will work across Government (i.e. with BIS) to help Further Education and other post-16 providers to promote good practice in this area.	Not achieved (see above)
Recommendation 13	The Department for Education should conduct research on the number of BME staff at different qualification levels, and engage with the sector to address any issues identified.	Keep under review. The Teaching Agency's 'full and relevant' consultation will seek views on whether or not the proposals for the content and standard of new qualifications have	Some progress Fatherhood Institute's network to support male workers and DfE cooperation with sector bodies around equality

		equality implications, and we will consider including questions in future Childcare and Early Years Provider surveys.	issues has seen some progress made.
Recommendation 14	Newly qualified practitioners starting in their first employment should have mentoring for at least the first six months. If the setting is rated below 'Good', this mentoring should come from outside.	Accepted in principle. Settings should consider how they can put mentoring arrangements in place for new front line staff.	Not achieved Although recommended there is no requirement that all newly qualified practitioners starting their first employment should have mentoring other than for those with QTS.
Recommendation 15	A suite of online induction and training modules should be brought together by the Government that can be accessed by everyone working in early education and childcare.	Accepted in principle but no action by Government. Rather the sector/settings should seek to draw this together.	Not achieved This has been left to the sector and has not materialised.
Recommendation 16	A new early years specialist route to QTS, specialising in the years from birth to seven, should be introduced, starting from September 2013.	Not accepted. We agree with Professor Nutbrown that there is a need to transform the status of the profession and we want more high quality graduates to consider a career in early education. We do not, however, consider a route to the award of QTS is necessary to do this. We will introduce Early Years Teachers who will be specialists in early childhood development trained to work with babies and young children from birth to five. The training route and the new Teachers' Standards (Early Years) will build on the strengths of the EYPS programme. Early Years Teacher Status will be seen as the equivalent to QTS, therefore entry requirements to Early Years Teacher training courses will be the same as entry to primary teacher training. This change will give one title of 'teacher' across the early years and schools sectors which will increase status and public recognition.	Not achieved The creation of EYT status was seen as preferential to an Early Years QTS route but in reality is not perceived by the sector as of equal status to QTS as hoped.

Recommendation 17	Any individual holding Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) should be able to access routes to obtain QTS as a priority.	Not accepted. Those with EYPS are graduates already trained specifically to work with babies and children from birth to five years. Existing Early Years Professionals will in future be seen as the equivalent of Early Years Teachers. Early Years Professionals will therefore not need to obtain QTS to increase their status, although routes are already available to QTS if they wish to take them.	Not achieved Routes to QTS from EYPS are available but are a considerable added demand and cost for EYPS graduates.
Recommendation 18	I recommend that Government considers the best way to maintain and increase graduate pedagogical leadership in all early years settings.	Accepted. We will introduce Early Years Teachers to lead the further improvements in quality we want to see. We will set out funding arrangements for Early Years Teachers in due course.	Achieved The EYTs are trained in pedagogical leadership but the cost or status means they are often not recruited, or rewarded financially, to carry out this role in PVI settings or nursery or reception classes in schools.
Recommendation 19	I am not recommending that the Government impose a licensing system on the early years sector. However, the Government should consider supporting a sector-led approach, if an affordable and sustainable one emerges with widespread sector support.	No action for Government	Not achieved This has not been acted upon.

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