Integrated and Universal Early Childhood Services: Using Data for Improvement

A Case Study of the English Early Childhood Education and Care System

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The Early Advantage

Executive Summary
Integrated and Universal Early Childhood Services: Using Data for Improvement is part of an international comparative analysis of ECEC systems in six countries/jurisdictions (Australia, England, Finland, Hong Kong, the Republic of Korea, and Singapore). Ground-breaking in intent, scope, and findings, the overall study, tells the story of each country, probing the nature of services provided to young children and their families from the prenatal period through age 8, as well as the country’s unique approach to the burgeoning field of early childhood education and care (ECEC). In doing so, each country’s story is unique, revealing, and contributes to the global understanding of promising and innovative approaches to ECEC policy, practice, and service delivery.

This is the amazing story of England, one that focuses on the integration of policies and services that support families and young children in the earliest stage of development. Children’s education, health, and welfare are at the heart of coherent policies and services that aim at a good start in life for every child, across the country and across different social groups. Health services are free, beginning before birth, and ECEC services are free from the age of 3 until entry to Year 1 of primary school. There is a public commitment to the early years as the first phase in lifelong education. The development of every child is monitored by the ministries of Health and Education, and this information is used at both the national and local levels to plan efficient, universal services and targeted intervention when needed. The ECEC system is subject to continuous improvement, with new policies and services brought on stream in response to routinely collected data on children’s development and the services that support it.

Two Tiers of Government: How Early Childhood Services are Planned and Funded

England has one of the most highly centralized systems of government in Europe. Like Germany, it has a high-performing economy, and like France, it has a large and complex system of national public services. Taxes are not as high as in Scandinavia, but their location in the “midrange” for Europe allows England to sustain many universal public services such as free childcare for every parent who wishes it after their child has
turned 3 years old. ECEC is the responsibility of a single ministry, the Department for Education, although there is much cross-departmental collaboration with the Department of Health and the Department of Work and Pensions.

There are two main tiers of government: the top tier of central government where Parliament sets policies and the ministries (e.g., Education, Health, Work and Pensions) implement them, and the lower tier of 152 “Local Authorities” who receive funds from the national Treasury to run the services on the ground, using money primarily raised through national taxes. While responsibility for education has been devolved to each of the four nations of the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales), health services are provided by a single organization—the National Health Service—which applies to the whole of the United Kingdom. This case study is confined to the country of England, the largest of the four countries in the United Kingdom.

**A Single Ministry Leads ECEC, and Coordinates Cross-Departmental Initiatives**

Interdepartmental collaboration is always fraught with difficulties, so locating ECEC within one central department makes for efficiencies and for “joined up” policy. It is important, however, to coordinate policies and services that reside in different ministries and are cross-cutting by their very nature. Children’s health is mainly the responsibility of the Department of Health, but inter-departmental task forces have been set up, for example, to work on the Healthy Child Initiative (Department of Health, 2009). The Department for Education contributed substantially to this important policy initiative, which has transformed health services for children, making them more accessible and more equitably situated around the country. The Department for Education also contributes to the Healthy Child Initiative through its school/preschool health curriculum and the routine safeguarding procedures carried out in all ECEC settings. Thus, the single lead ministry for ECEC leads to efficiency, but the system of cross-departmental task forces assures cooperation and the inclusion of education goals and practices in policies developed by other ministries.
The Key ECEC Policy Document

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS; DfE, 2017a) is the central policy document for ECEC in England. Compact, this document was laid forth as an Act of Parliament and sets out “the standards for learning, development, and care for children from birth to five” (DfE, 2017a, p.1). It “is mandatory for all early years providers in England…maintained schools; non-maintained schools; independent schools; all providers on the Early Years Register; and all providers registered with an early years childminder agency” (p.3). Although the EYFS is updated often, its main outlines were laid down more than a decade ago.

The EYFS sets out the curriculum for children aged 0-5 years, the main pedagogical approaches for early care and education, the training required for the early years workforce, statutory ratios for center-based as well as home-based care, and the requirements that must be followed to ensure the safety and welfare of all children in “care” or “early education” (or most commonly, in a seamless combination of both). The EYFS is broad in its curriculum and pedagogy, and gives clear guidance (along with justification) about regulatory inspections, routine assessments of children, and the importance of working/sharing with parents. Thus, the EYFS specifies the structural quality characteristics that are required by law (e.g., ratios, physical space, and staff qualifications). The government is explicit and public about its policies and the “shape” of services it funds and/or regulates. The system is completely transparent, with hundreds of detailed documents on central and local government websites, with many aimed at parents or local government officials.
Regulatory Procedures Ensure EYFS Requirements are Met and the System Improves

If the EYFS is the specification of “how ECEC services should operate,” then the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) is the country-wide agency that monitors “how ECEC services actually operate.” A cycle of inspections ensures that all requirements, including those attendant to both structural and process quality, are met in daily practice. Ofsted carries out a cycle of inspection visits to centers based on a standardized framework for management and practice that is scrutinized in a one-day visit by one or more inspectors. Inspections focus on observation and document scrutiny, all with very short notice; this means that centers have to keep up-to-date, ready for a snap inspection. Each center is inspected at least once every four years, with more frequent inspections for those who have been judged as inadequate or needing improvement. All inspection reports are published on the internet, and Ofsted makes an annual report to Parliament on the current state of ECEC provision. This powerful (and costly) agency has responsibility for setting the standards for operational quality, and regularly consults with practitioners, government officials, researchers, and parents. The regulatory mechanism is not as popular with practitioners and the public as is the EYFS, and it is not surprising that the inspection process can cause anxiety.

It is important that the criteria for inspection are amended regularly through wide consultation because just one agency defines and judges quality. The Childcare Act 2006 established Ofsted as the sole judge of quality in ECEC provision and it has a responsibility to recommend strategies for improvement. Local Authorities then provide support for improvement, although “austerity budgets” in the last few years have led to Local Authorities charging fees for professional development support, for example, to private centers. Until 2006, Local Authorities made quality assessments and followed them with free-of-charge professional development and training. Thus, inspection and improvement were conducted in a “local” context and the process was more informal and more suited to local circumstances. However, the government
decided that there was too much local variation in standards and support, so it changed
to a single national inspection system carried out by Ofsted.

**A Broad ECEC Curriculum Centered on Seven “Areas of Development”**

The EYFS curriculum framework supports an integrated approach to early learning and care. It gives all professionals a set of common principles and commitments to deliver quality early education and childcare experiences to all children.

The areas of learning are:

- communication and language
- physical development
- personal, social, and emotional development
- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design

EYFS specifies the curriculum for all children between birth and entry to Year 1 (which is the start to the National Curriculum for Primary Education). The first three areas of learning are “core” and pertain to development from birth to entry into Year 1. The next four areas are “specific” and pertain to children's learning from age 3 to entry into Year 1. All children enrolled in ECEC services receive care and education in accordance with this curriculum, wherever they live, and whatever type of formal service caters to them. The workforce fully endorses the core framework document, partly because it was devised after long and broad consultation with stakeholders such as practitioners, teacher trainers, parents, local government officials, and professional bodies.
Assessment of Children According to the Goals Set Forth in the EYFS

Children’s development and progress are reviewed when they are 2 years old by a health visitor, often working with an early years practitioner. These assessments contribute to the national database on the developmental profile of all 2-year-olds in the country, which is maintained by the Department of Health but available to those working in the Department for Education. Any child found to have special educational needs will be offered ECEC provision to address those needs. When children approach or turn 5 in the Reception class (i.e., kindergarten), their teacher carries out the second national child assessment, which assesses every child against the statutory early learning goals of the national preschool curriculum. This then becomes part of the national pupil database, which tracks children’s development until they leave school.

An Evidence-Driven ECEC System

Since the middle of the last century the government has been committed to collecting information about the developmental status of all pupils in statutory schooling. National tests are currently taken by all pupils at ages 11, 16, and 18. The first national assessments at ages 2 and 5 (discussed in the previous subsection) do not consist of formal tests, but are a combination of observed tasks and interview data from parents and ECEC providers. Early in this century, these two became part of a national pupil database. Each child has a unique pupil number, and datasets of children’s profiles at ages 2 and 5 allow Local Authorities to target resources to those individuals or neighborhoods most in need.

In addition to collecting information about the development of every child, the regulatory agency Ofsted provides annual reports to Parliament and the Department for Education about the quality and effectiveness of its ECEC services. It does this by reporting on those areas of management and practice that are inspected, broken down by region and also by type of provision, e.g., state or private, center-based or home-based.
Finally, a national census of all childcare (and education) providers is carried out each year to monitor take-up of free places. This is used to identify groups who might not be electing to take advantage of free early care and education, and allows campaigns to encourage enrollment, especially of vulnerable groups. The annual, national childcare census also collects information about staffing levels and staff qualifications in each center.

**A Sustainable ECEC System that is Equitable and Efficient**

The government is committed to providing education and health services for all. Since many services are statutory (i.e., free “entitlements”), the Treasury has to provide funds to support them. However, in times of austerity, this can lead to lower quality. For example, though government-funded ECEC provision is available to all 3- and 4-year-olds, providers may not be able to afford professional development for their staff and salaries might be so low that lower-trained staff are employed. Thus, in reality, there is a tension between coverage and quality, which is heightened in times of austerity.

The qualifications and salary of the ECEC workforce is a continuing challenge for England. In the state (i.e., public) sector, each room is required to have a university-educated teacher, whereas no such requirement exists in the private sector. The state sector is able to subsidize ECEC provision when it is located in primary schools because these schools tend to be well-resourced, and therefore able to share space and professional resources and top-up for salaries for ECEC teachers. Yet because most expansion in the system in this century has occurred in the private sector, the quality of the workforce is a continuing challenge.

A major component in the government’s strategy towards equity in education is the ECEC system. However, lower socioeconomic groups have proved harder to reach, and have slightly lower rates of enrollment in ECEC. The current government’s strategy is to support child development in disadvantaged groups through the curriculum specified in the EYFS, which is broad and inclusive. ECEC centers receive a “poverty
supplement” for each child they serve who comes from a disadvantaged background. The government further promotes equity by supporting parental employment through offering more government-funded hours of ECEC provision for all working parents, in an attempt to reduce poverty by increasing family income through employment.

Moreover, efficiency is one of the most elusive properties of the system, given the difficulty of balancing cost and quality. The regulatory agency Ofsted reports a slow but steady increase in quality of provision but quality remains lower in the private sector.

**Major Achievements and Challenges of the System**

The “jewel in the crown” of the English ECEC system is the EYFS policy document. Half of the interviewees for this English study, including government officials, pointed to the single policy document that lays forth the goals of ECEC in England, as well as the governmental structures and regulations that underpin it. The document is further bolstered by the fact that it rests on a solid body of research. All children, birth through Year 1 in Primary School, are entitled to the same learning experiences and their development and progress is monitored through statutory assessments. This monitoring allows individual needs to be addressed and keeps a “watchful eye” on the state of the country’s children. All providers who receive supply-side funding (the overwhelming majority) are inspected on a four-year cycle (more frequent if there is cause for concern) for structural and process quality. Providers who fail their inspection are closed, and those meeting only minimum standards are required to improve while being re-inspected frequently.

Although enormous progress has been made in this century in terms of quality, sustainability, and equity, it still remains that ECEC staff salaries are lower than those of primary teachers—with the important exception of teachers who work in the final (statutory) year of ECEC (i.e., Reception classes of primary schools). Along with lower salaries comes lower status, making it difficult to recruit into the workforce “high flying” men and women who are attracted to jobs in finance and the media, and well-
paid professions like medicine or the law. There is still a long way to go. Still the government continues to monitor salaries each year so that the problem of low wages cannot slip under the radar; it will, eventually, have to be solved.
The Early Advantage

Part 1
Introduction
Chapter 1: Study Overview

Rationale and Goals

*Rationale*

The England ECEC story could not come at a more opportune time. Globally, the world is casting its eyes and hopes on young children, matching these expectations with unprecedented global policy attention coupled with increased services and supports. In part, global attention might be attributed to the scores of policy documents emanating from the United Nations and other international bodies that extol the importance and benefits of serving young children. Moreover, abundant scientific research fuels this interest, emanating from domains as diverse as the neuro, biological, evaluation, econometric, implementation, and systems sciences. But this focus on young children is not limited to the academy; rather, profound shifts in global demographics—exemplified by unprecedented rising rates of migration, diversification, and automation—are handmaidens to the paramount global realization that the early years matter. Similarly, there is a near-universal realization that what countries do during these all-important and non-retrievable years has the potential, *when done well*, to promote social cohesion, advance economic productivity, and prepare societies for the future. More than “babysitting” and “preparation for school,” ECEC is now considered the social elixir of positive change that the research has proven it to be; it has become the *sine qua non* of effective policy on a global scale.

Moreover, in England, the time to examine ECEC has never been more ripe. The first decade of this century saw a new and integrated curriculum for children between birth and school entry, centered on play, exploration, and conversations with others. There was great expansion in coverage, with free ECEC for 4-year-olds, followed quickly by free provision for 3-year-olds and the poorest 2-year-olds as well. The architecture of an integrated system for health, education and welfare was put in place as a universal entitlement. The economic crisis of 2008-09 ushered in a period of austerity, where
services remained in place but did not expand or improve. Now the country is looking cautiously to the future, with some expansion once again in ECEC.

**Gaps and Goals**

With all this attention accorded to young children, it is somewhat surprising that only limited comparative analyses of ECEC services and their outcomes have been carried out. When conducted, such studies tend to: (i) provide league-table overviews of available services; (ii) focus on program evaluations that provide a glimpse into specific aspects of ECEC (e.g., parenting education); or (iii) examine specific aspects of children’s performance in certain contexts. It is noteworthy that fewer than 10 studies, many conducted fairly recently, seek to understand ECEC from a comprehensive systems perspective, with many of these relying on data from a single source. Few tell complete country stories that explicate why and how exemplary services come to be, how they change and mature, and how they seek to alter the quality, equitable distribution, sustainability, and efficiency of services for young children. Few acknowledge the intimate roles that culture and context play in contouring the nature, amount, and quality of services for young children. Few adopt a systems and/or a systems-change approach to considerations of early childhood services, embracing the disciplines of education, health, and social welfare as they affect children from the prenatal period through the early years of formal schooling. And few use a systematic methodology that permits this kind of detailed analysis. These are the contributions of this study generally, and the intention of this narrative is to present England’s place in that evolving story.

**Considerations**

Two important considerations contour this narrative. First, and unlike other studies, this analysis does not make causal claims regarding the potency of ECEC as a panacea for improving child outcomes, nor does it intend to endorse any one mode or strategy
associated with ECEC. Stated simply, this study considers why, how, and with what effects ECEC systems have emerged in six high-performing countries, England among them.

The second consideration relates to the focus on high-performing countries, coming at a time when so much attention is both lodged in, and aims to advance, ECEC in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Pertinent questions regarding the transportability of lessons across contexts should and do prevail, as do equally potent questions surrounding the construct of “high-performing,” notably who defines it, and what it is. Fueled by concerns regarding the comparatively low performance of American students on international benchmarking assessments, the National Center for Education and the Economy (NCEE), the study’s funder, is interested in understanding elements of jurisdictional policies, practices, and reforms in countries that score well on PISA (The Program for International Student Assessment). The goal is to discern variables that may account for discrepant country performances on PISA, with the intent of elevating the somewhat lacklustre performance of the United States and other nations. Given that ECEC has been one of the most prominent educational reforms of the last two decades and is convincingly associated with producing significant long-term gains in students’ academic and life performance, NCEE was interested in supporting the development of a comparative study to discern the nature, scope, and promising practices associated with ECEC systems implementation in high-performing PISA countries that perform well on PISA. Precisely, how high-performing is defined and how participating countries were selected for the study is discussed below.

**Study Architecture**

ECEC systems work is complicated, yet inescapable. A scholarly commitment to unmasking this complex territory using a systems lens distinguishes this study from others and provides the groundwork for its contributions. Those who understand ECEC readily acknowledge that it must be examined in its totality (Bruner, Wright, Gebhard,
& Hibbard, 2004; Gallagher, Clifford, & Maxwell, 2004; Kagan & Cohen, 1996; Sugarman, 1991; Vargas-Barón, 2013). No one program or intervention can be a proxy for ECEC. No single approach to pedagogy can begin to explicate the complicated and fascinating panoply of policies that converge to create services for young children. But understanding the totality of ECEC is difficult because no country consolidates all the pre-primary services accorded to young children in a single ministry or at a single level of government. In addition to organizational chaos, ECEC policies face temporal changes; they often emerge during one year, only to disappear in the next, typically with changes in political leadership. Service access varies dramatically among countries (OECD, 2012), as does children’s well-being (UNICEF, 2013), even in rich countries. With ECEC not yet deemed a right in most countries, inconsistent and sporadic practices and policies are gamed on ideological playgrounds amidst changing rules, funds, and governance structures. To make sense of systems, both in general and ECEC in particular, conceptual or analytic frameworks are necessary, as is a set of clearly delineated research questions.

**Conceptual Framework**

There are an emerging number of conceptual frameworks, building blocks, organizational theories, and explanatory tools available to ease the challenge of untangling complex, highly-interactive phenomena. NCEE’s Building Blocks for a World-Class State Education System (NCEE, 2015) is one extremely helpful tool, as is the World Bank’s Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER), and its early childhood iteration SABER-ECE (Neuman & Devercelli, 2013). These and other frameworks underscore the salience of systems thinking, including the importance of policy goals and levers, human variables (e.g., leadership, professional development), and accountability factors (e.g., standards, data, compliance).

Considering the holistic nature of early development, the modal lack of consistent and durable ECEC policies, and the need for systems analyses, this study builds on prior
conceptual grounding (Kagan, Araujo, Jaimovich, & Aguayo, 2016). The analysis provisionally suggests that positive child and family well-being (F) are predicated on systemic (high-quality, equitably distributed, sustainable, and efficient services) (D) and family goals (E), which are achieved only in the presence of an effective system (C). Such a system is based on a clearly delineated infrastructure (B) that supports diverse programs (A), sometimes linked by a boundary-spanning mechanisms (BSM) that integrate programs and services across ministerial boundaries. All malleable, these factors are encased in both temporal (political, economic, environmental) (G) and socio-cultural (values, beliefs, heritages, religions) contexts (H).

With the goal of understanding each element of the analytic framework, the proposed analysis will focus on the programs/services (A), the infrastructure (B), and the way these conspire to yield an integrated system (C) that is capable of producing systemic outputs, within temporal (G) and socio-cultural (H) contexts.

1 Letters correspond to diagram below.
Figure 1.1 Theory of Change
Research Questions

Using the framework above, this analysis addressed a series of research questions that describe, compare, and analyze ECEC systems in the six study jurisdictions. Guided by an effectiveness standard that privileges high-quality, equitably distributed, sustainable, and efficient services, three sets of research questions were posed. Largely descriptive, the first set seeks to discern what understandings about each country’s ECEC system actually exist, as well as the current status of the ECEC system. Comparative in nature, the second set of research questions seeks to understand how differences in ECEC systems have evolved, are structured, and produce their intended outcomes. Analytic in nature, the final set of research questions seeks to explain or conjecture why the systems have evolved and function as they do. All of the research questions are designed to understand the nature and contributions of ECEC systems to high-quality, equitably districted, sustainable, and efficient service provision. Sample research questions are provided below; the full set of research questions is provided in the integrated analysis that is available as a separate published volume.

Descriptive Questions – The What

- What does the country perceive its commitment to young children to be, and what contextual variables evoked this stance?
- What are the major ECEC policies, frameworks, programs, and services in place (e.g., parental leave, perinatal services, home visiting, childcare, preschool, transition, health and mental health services, and services for developmentally and economically at-risk children)?
- What does the country perceive as the need for, and elements of, an ECEC system, and to what extent are coordinating mechanisms (e.g., boundary-spanning mechanisms, coordinating bodies, mediating structures) and elements of the infrastructure (e.g., standards and monitoring, durable and sufficient financing, data systems, governance mechanisms, family and
public engagement, pre- and in-service professional and leadership development) in place?

Comparative Questions – The How

- How does the country value or “hold” young children, and how do these values frame policies and practices? Are there certain values that more heavily contour policies and practices, and how have they become instantiated in policy and practice?
- How do country policies vary over time as a result of changes in economic, political, and governmental (centralized/decentralized) conditions and structures? How do these changes affect patterns of implementation, and in the evolution of the ECEC system?
- How effective is the country in terms of the effectiveness of its ECEC system, as measured by its quality, equitable distribution, sustainability, and efficiency?

Explanatory Questions – The Why

- Why, and for what reasons, does the evolving ECEC system reflect durable country values and more transient country economics and politics? Why, and under what conditions, do ECEC systems evolve?
- Why, and under what conditions, can mediating structures have more potency, without centralizing government engagement?
- Why, and under what conditions, can a country focus on outcomes to improve services to young children? Can, and under what conditions, the contemporary support for young children be mobilized to yield greater effectiveness in quality, equitable distribution, sustainability, and efficiency?
Methodology

Country Selection

Comprehensive comparative efforts always force tough decision-making regarding participant selection, be it at the geographic level (e.g., country, region, district, city, school), the individual level (e.g., governor, mayor, high-, mid-, or low-level bureaucrats, parents representing which children), or the analytic level (e.g., systems, program, school, or classroom). Different theoretical frameworks guide such selections, with policy-borrowing frameworks encouraging global south-north analyses (Steiner-Khamsi & Chisholm, 2009). Other selections are guided by funding source(s), which may have interest in a particular region (Berlinski & Schady, 2015). Still others are interested in improving systems and developing appropriate metrics for that analysis (Mourshed, Chijoke, & Barber, 2010).

In this study, two diverse constructs guided the jurisdictional selection: (i) PISA performance rankings for mathematics and (ii) high-quality rankings on measures of ECEC quality. For the purposes of this analysis, the top 30 PISA 2012 countries were broken into three groups (high, 1-10; medium, 11-20; and lower, 21-30), ranked according to their mathematics results. Three corresponding vertical columns were created: countries ranking 1-10 were grouped in the far-left vertical column; countries ranking 11-20 were placed in the middle column; and countries performing 21-30 were placed in the far-right column. To discern the quality of ECEC programs, the Economist Intelligence Unit (2012) report for the same year was used to rank the countries’ ECEC efforts. Looking at countries from around the world, the report examined four criteria: (i) social context; (ii) availability; (iii) affordability; and (iv) quality. Using a composite score based on these four criteria, this analysis divided the top 30 countries into three groups (high, 1-10; medium, 11-20; and lower, 21-30), similar to the groupings used for the PISA rankings. Three corresponding horizontal rows were created for the Economist results: countries ranking 1-10 were grouped in the top horizontal row;...
countries ranking 11-20 were placed in the middle horizontal row; and countries performing 21-30 were placed in the bottom horizontal row. Next, the two grids were combined to create nine cells (three by three). For each cell, the overlapping countries were listed, as reflected in the table below.

Two countries (Netherlands and South Korea) performed in the highest third on both PISA and the Economist ranking, whereas five countries (Denmark, New Zealand, Norway, UK, France) performed in the lower third on PISA and the upper third on the Economist rankings. Given these different performance profiles, and that only five to six countries could be involved in this study due to fiscal and temporal constraints, one country from each cell of the three PISA high-performing countries (the left column) and one country from each cell of the three Economist high-performing countries (the top row) were selected. These countries are highlighted in yellow. This approach yielded five jurisdictions: South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, Finland, and the UK. One additional country, Australia, was added for three reasons: first, it represented a totally different profile (medium PISA and low Economist rankings); second, unprecedented quality work is being undertaken in the country; and third, its mixed market and highly differentiated state approaches to early childhood remarkably parallel the United States.

\[1\] Ultimately, it was decided to study England as it is the largest of the countries in the UK.
Table 1  Selected Countries

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECONOMIST HIGH</th>
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<th>PISA MEDIUM</th>
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<td>ECONOMIST MEDIUM</td>
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<td>ECONOMIST LOWER</td>
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<td>Taiwan</td>
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Data Sources

The conceptual framework and the research questions presented above guided two distinct, yet related, reviews of the literature. The first is an analysis of multi-country studies that have been conducted on ECEC systems and the second is a review of England-specific research, as well as pertinent policies and documents. Taken together, the two bodies of research represent the most recent data on ECEC systems available. In addition, interviews were conducted with key informants within the country.

Literature Reviews

Multi-Country Studies. The purpose of the multi-country study analysis (later converted into a Compendium) was to identify key lessons from previous studies and analyses of ECEC systems around the world to inform the study of English ECEC. By reviewing and analyzing multi-country studies focused on ECEC systems, which include significant attention to one or more elements of the infrastructure, the
Compendium contributed to both the development of this country analysis and to the scholarship on comparative ECEC policy more generally. This is the first attempt to collate and synthesize global ECEC research using a systems-lens. The review focused on discerning diverse methodologies, tools, and results of the limited number of similar studies that exist. Data from this review were helpful in reconsidering the provisional research questions and the methodological approach to this study. Information was gleaned from 16 research studies, most of which were conducted after 2010, and represent all regions of the world. These data have been analysed and compiled into a compendium (Neuman, Roth & Kagan, In press).

**England-specific Documents.** To obtain a detailed overview of the evolution and contemporary status of ECEC in England, numerous documents were reviewed. Policy documents, including the National Childcare Strategy (1998) and the Children’s Act (2004) were reviewed, as were frameworks, such as the *Early Years Foundation Stage* curriculum framework (DfE, 2017) and *Development Matters* (Early Education, 2012). Empirical research conducted in or about England ECEC was also reviewed. Additionally, while many of the documents were well-known, in order to capture failed and visionary efforts, additional unpublished literatures were also reviewed. A complete list of the documents reviewed is attached as Appendix A to this study.

**Key Informant Interviews**

In order to garner the most recent information regarding the status of the ECEC system in England, a series of key informant interviews was conducted. Given that this analysis is the first comprehensive examination of the full ECEC system in England, it needed to include a diverse set of key informants. Guiding the sample selection was a commitment to including diverse voices so that even a comparatively small sample could deliberately capture contrasting perspectives and, in some cases, disconfirming evidence. For all countries involved in the broader study, the sampling frame included individuals from the government, the private sector, the philanthropic community, and
the academic community. In England, diverse ministerial personnel were interviewed including civil servants from the Department for Education and the Cabinet Office, in addition to elected officials. Representatives from the ECEC community were also interviewed, such as members of professional organizations (including parents) and practitioners. Moreover, individuals from different ethnic communities were interviewed. Finally, scholars and representatives from research institutes and universities were included. A total 18 individuals were interviewed for this English study; they are listed in Appendix B. Taken together, these individuals provided diverse perspectives on ECEC history, policies, services, and trends in the country.

**Data Collection, Analysis, and Validation**

**Data Collection**

Document review preceded the key informant interviews and served as the basis for the development of interview protocols. Each document was reviewed for its salience to the research questions and key data from each document was summarized. The 18 interviews were collected over a six-month period, with each interview lasting approximately 60 minutes. In all cases, notes were taken during the interview and interviews were recorded for future reference. Typically, the interviews were conducted by the principal investigator and the second author. Overall, data collection and analysis took approximately fifteen months.

**Data Analysis**

With the goal of producing an accurate and revealing story, a systematic process was used to analyse the data. Since the data are both quantitative and qualitative in nature, the England team used different strategies to analyse each data set and then integrated the key lessons. The quantitative data were reported as they were extracted from primary sources; all quantitative data are attributed. The qualitative data were summarized into field notes that were then reviewed for policy and practice trends,
concrete examples, and major areas of agreement and conflict. Data were integrated to discern key convergent and divergent themes that were expanded as the analysis was written. Primary source documents were consulted as the report was written. Once key themes were identified and substantiated, a draft document was prepared and reviewed by the internal England team.

Data Validation

Committed to the highest standard of research, this analysis was validated at several points in its evolution. First, lead investigators from each of the six jurisdictions and the study’s principal investigator (the international team) co-developed the data collection instruments. Developed for a prior study, these instruments were adapted for use in the present analysis and piloted in some of the counties to assure their validity for the current study. Second, categories of interview respondents were reviewed and confirmed by the international team with the goal of fostering a breadth of diverse, yet informed, interviewees. Agreed upon by the full team, the interviewee categories were content validated by the team. Third, the final draft of each of the six case studies was subjected to an internal review by a knowledgeable England ECEC expert who was not affiliated with the study. Finally, the study was reviewed by external experts from the staff and board of the National Center for Education and the Economy.

Limitations

Three major limitations characterize this study. First, the ECEC system in England is in a state of flux. Services for young children and families are modestly expanding, suggesting that this analysis, although broadly reflective of the overall portrait of the country, simultaneously presents a snapshot in time. The field of ECEC systems, however embryonic, is rapidly changing and this study must be understood within its dynamic contextual realities.
Second, as is the case for any qualitative research, the positionality of the lead investigator influences the interpretation of the data. While efforts have been made to validate the accuracy of the information provided, some of the content of this analysis is subjected to the interpretation of the authors, most of whom are research scholars. Such positionality is somewhat mitigated by the reality that the authors have conducted cross-national work and by the fact that numerous international and external reviewers have examined the content of this study.

Finally, this study captures the nature and evolutionary process associated with the development of an ECEC system in England. As such, it is based on a conceptual framework that specifies the outputs of systemic work in four areas: quality, equitable distribution, sustainability, and efficiency of services. The efficacy of the system is, therefore, predicated on achievements in these outputs. Unlike many other ECEC studies, this study cannot and does not make any attributional claims or suggest correlations with, much less causality for, specific child outcomes, either in the short- or long-term. In this analysis, however, the four areas are conjectured to be both an output of the system and, along with families, as an input to child outcomes. Although this lack of direct focus on child outcomes may be regarded as a limitation of the study, the authors see it as a groundbreaking contribution to discerning key systemic variables that may help account for the accomplishment, or lack, of such outcomes.

Definitions and Abbreviations

Early Years The developmental period of early childhood (from birth to primary education).

ECEC Early childhood education and care (from birth to primary education).

EYFS Early Years Foundation Stage, the statutory framework for all ECEC settings serving children from birth to primary education. This includes guidance on curriculum, provision for learning and development as well as structural regulations, such as staff qualifications and staff:child ratios.
EYT  Early Years Teacher Status, formal teacher qualification which allows individuals to work in all ECEC provision as an early years teacher. This qualifies teachers to teach children aged 0-5+, although EYT do this more often in the private sector.

DfE  Department for Education, the ministry responsible for education, including ECEC services (previously this has been called the Department for Education and Employment, or the Department for Education and Skills, or the Department for Children, Schools, and Families).

DH  Department of Health, the ministry responsible for all hospital or community health services, which are free of charge for all residents of England.

GCSE  General Certificate of Secondary Education, the qualification obtained around the age of 16. This equates to ISCED level 2. Students continue for another two years with either academic or vocational qualifications (ISCED Level 3).

LA  Local Authority, elected local government with responsibility for a specific geographic region. There are currently 152 Local Authorities in England, each of which receives a grant from central government for ECEC education or care services.

NHS  National Health Service, the government body responsible for the delivery of all public health services, including those in the community as well as in hospital or regional centers.

Ofsted  Office for Standards in Education, a non-ministerial agent of the government reporting to Parliament. Ofsted has responsibility for inspecting all educational institutions (e.g., schools, ECEC centers, teacher training, education management in Local Authorities).

Ofqual  Office of Qualifications a non-governmental organization funded by the government to set the standards for all educational qualifications, including for pupils and child care staff (but not teachers).

Private provision  The collection of ECEC services that are not owned nor managed by the state. Though some are “for profit,” others are run by charities or parents.

QTS  Qualified Teacher Status, formal teacher qualification which allows individuals to work as a teacher for children aged 3-11, in either public or private settings; it entitles them to the same salary as primary school teachers in Years 1 through 6; it also qualifies them for leadership positions in primary schools.

Setting  Any ECEC provider, center- or home-based.
State provision  The ECEC services in schools which are under the control of the local government. This does not include services which are contracted out to the private or voluntary (i.e., charitable) sectors, which may or may not be for-profit.

SEND  Special Educational Needs or Disability, special conditions requiring additional educational or developmental input.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the 18 respondents for their expertise and insights.

We are most grateful to Professor Sharon Lynn Kagan for her imaginative conception of this series of case studies and her critical yet supportive guidance.
The Early Advantage

Part 2
General Country Context
Chapter 2: Country Background

Key Points

- England has a historically centralized government: Since the Roman invasion in 43AD, London has been the center of government. A parliament has existed since 1215 and has been increasingly powerful since the 1700s. Parliament holds the executive power, and policies are defined nationally but often implemented at local level.

- England’s population is largely White British, but many other ethnicities and cultures co-exist, due to encouraged immigration from ex-colonies of the British Empire in the 1970s, 80s and 90s.

- England is a highly industrialized country, with 92.4 percent of the population living in urban areas.

- There are inequalities between socioeconomic statuses, but social welfare policies have been forged in an attempt to address these – including universal free health care, universal early education, and targeted cash benefits through what is called “Universal Credit.” The universal ECEC system is thus one major plank in the government’s aim to reduce the effects of economic inequalities on children's life chances.

Historical context

For thousands of years, invaders and incomers arrived, settled, and made their mark on England. A key invasion was the Roman Invasion in 43 AD; by 80 AD the province of Britannia was established, consisting of most of today’s England and Wales. This province established a distinctive culture, characterized by Christianity, improved agriculture, urban planning, industrial production and civic architecture. The
settlement lasted almost four centuries and brought with it stability and wealth. Yet as Roman power faded, trade declined and the region became vulnerable to invasion. The British Isles were progressively settled by pagan Germanic groups, collectively known as the Anglo-Saxons, who pushed the Christian religion to the edges of the British Isles—to Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. By 700, England, had begun to emerge as a separate territory. In 850, England was invaded by Vikings from Denmark, who established their capital in the north of England but were prevented from spreading southward by the Anglo-Saxons in the south. At this point, the Anglo-Saxons began to regard themselves as a united people and appointed a “king of England.” Centuries later, during a quarrel over the succession of this kingship, William of Normandy (part of today’s France) invaded England as he believed his hereditary claim was stronger than the current king’s. William won the battle in 1066, and became king of England. This was the last time that England was invaded.

In 1215, a rebellion began in response to the current king’s high taxes, unsuccessful wars, and conflicts with religious leaders. As a result, the king was forced to sign the Magna Carta, a document that imposed legal limits on the king’s personal powers and gradually developed into the creation of a parliament. This was followed by nearly five centuries of successive kings and queens, the powers of each limited by the people’s parliament. In 1707 the Act of Union was passed, which linked up the countries of England, Scotland, and Wales under one parliament—based in London—for the first time in history, thereby establishing the United Kingdom. In 1714, the throne passed to distant German relatives, which increasingly relied on parliament to govern. As part of this process, the role of prime minister was created.

During this time, the British Empire continued to grow in Asia and the Americas, though this was partly halted when British resources were drawn into the American War of Independence (1775-83), thus curtailing expansion. Meanwhile, in the UK, the Industrial Revolution was taking place, with steam power (in 1781) and steam trains (in 1830) transforming methods of production and transport. This led to the first industrial
cities and a rapid change from rural to urban societies. By 1837, the UK’s factories
dominated world trade and their fleets dominated the oceans, leading to the largest and
most powerful empire the world had seen. Nonetheless, the Industrial Revolution and
the economic boom had led to poverty and deprivation for many, especially low-paid
factory workers in cities. Thus, beginning in the late 1800s, Parliament introduced social
reforms in an attempt to rectify this: education became universal, trade unions were
legalized, and the right to vote was extended to all males over the age of 21 (women
over 30 received the right to vote a few decades later). In 1888, the first standardized
system of local government was imposed.

World War I began in 1914 when German forces entered Belgium on their way to
invade France; soldiers from the UK and allied countries were drawn into the war. By
the time the war ended in 1918, over a million (mostly working-class) Britons had died,
leading to a disillusion with the social order. From this emerged a new political force—
the Labour Party—which was founded to represent the working class, upsetting the
balance long enjoyed by the Liberal and Conservative parties. The 20th century would
therefore see the political domination of two main parties: Labour to the left and
Conservatives to the right, though from time to time a third party gained votes and
formed a coalition government.

Following World War II, despite the victory under Conservative rule, there was an
unexpected swing to the left. A population tired of war and hungry for change elected
the Labour Party to govern. This was the dawn of the “welfare state”; key industries
(e.g., steel, coal, and railways) were nationalized, and the National Health Service was
founded. Nonetheless, rebuilding Britain was a slow process, and the UK was depleted
of reserves: food rationing from the wars continued well into the 1950s and one by one
the colonies of the British Empire became independent. People from these ex-colonies
immigrated to the UK – in many cases they were specifically invited, as additional labor
was needed. By the late 1950s, economic recovery was strong and by the 1960s, the
entertainment industry was “swinging.” The 1970s brought inflation and international
competition, which weakened Britain's economy. The ongoing struggle between the disgruntled workers and the “ruling classes” was brought to the fore once again, and the 1970s was marked by strikes and disputes. In 1979, the Conservative government was elected to power, led by Margaret Thatcher. She reduced the size of public services through layoffs, introduced measures designed to reduce the influence of trade unions, shut down industries that government deemed inefficient (such as coal mines), and sold nationally owned companies to private industry. Economically, these policies were successful, but they carried a social cost with the decline of “old” industries such as coal mining. This was sorely felt and a Labour Government, promising increased social welfare policies, was elected in 1997. This government devolved some powers to Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, including education and social welfare. However, taxation, defense, health, and employment remained centralized. In this way, the parliament in London remains the parliament of the UK and governs most areas of public service, especially taxation.

Geographic/Demographic Context

England forms part of the United Kingdom, and shares its borders with Scotland and Wales. England has an area of 133,000 km² (Office for National Statistics; ONS, 2012a). At last census (in 2011), the population of England was 53.0 million (ONS, 2012b). The vast majority—92.4 percent—of the population lived in an urban area, while 7.6 percent lived in a rural area (ONS, 2013a).

Sociocultural Context

In terms of religion, the English population is diverse. Most of the population (59.4 percent) list Christian as their religion, 24.7 percent say they do not identify with a religion, 5 percent identify as Muslim, 1.5 percent identify as Hindu, 0.8 percent identify as Sikh, 0.5 percent identify as Jewish, 0.5 percent listed Buddhism as their religion, 0.4 percent listed another religion, and 7.2 percent did not give an answer (ONS, 2013b).
In line with this range of religions, there are many cultural groups living in England. In the last (2011) census, 79.7 percent of the population of England identified as British (English, Welsh, Scottish, or Northern Irish), 7.8 percent were Asian (with the largest proportions being Indian [2.6 percent] and Pakistani [2.1 percent]), 5.8 percent were from a white background that wasn’t British (such as Irish [1 percent]), 3.5 percent were from a black background (such as African [1.8 percent] or Caribbean [1.1 percent]), 2.2 percent were from a mixed background (such as White and Black Caribbean [0.8 percent] or White and Black African [0.3 percent]) and 1 percent were from other background (such as Arab [0.4 percent]) (ONS, 2013c).

This diverse population brings a spread of languages. Ninety-two percent of the population of England listed English as their main language, but this does not preclude another language being spoken at home, as is often the case in the large cities. Only 3.7 percent listed a European language as their main language (such as Polish [1 percent] or French [0.3 percent]), 2.5 percent named a South Asian language (Panjabi [0.5 percent] or Urdu [0.5 percent]), 0.7 percent named an East Asian language (such as Chinese, 0.4 percent), 0.3 percent named a West/Central Asian language, 0.5 percent named an African language, and 0.3 percent listed another language (such as Arabic, 0.3 percent) (ONS, 2013d).

Migration inflow has been increasing heavily since the late 1990s (when the Labour government introduced more relaxed migration controls and the European Convention for Human Rights was incorporated into policy), with net migration increasing from 48,000 in 1997 to 333,000 in 2015 (ONS, 2016). This has led to some concerns over immigration, with immigration consistently being named in surveys as one of the top “issues” facing the country (Duffy & Frere-Smith, 2014). Despite this, only 35 percent of respondents to the British Social Attitudes Survey 2015 said they thought immigration had a negative impact on the economy, compared to 42 percent who said it had a positive effect and 23 percent saying it had a neutral effect (Curtice, Philips, and Clery, 2015). Views on the cultural impact are also balanced: 40 percent of the respondents to
the British Social Attitudes Survey (2015) thought that immigration had a negative cultural impact, a further 40 percent said it had a positive impact, and 19 percent said the effect was neutral.

**Political Context**

The United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy, in which the monarch is the head of state and the prime minister of the United Kingdom is the head of government, which in practice means that the prime minister *leads* the government but has a duty to *inform* the monarch. Executive power is exercised by Her Majesty’s Government through the (elected) House of Commons and the (unelected) House of Lords, a minority of whom have inherited their seats, but the majority of whom have been selected by the prime minister after wide consultation. The central government is based in London, and directs the vast majority of government activity.

The UK is a highly centralized country with a multi-party political system. Since the 1920s, the largest political parties have been the Conservative Party (tending to the right) and the Labour Party (tending to the left). From 2010-2015 the Conservative Party relied on a third, much smaller party, the Liberal Democrat Party, to deliver a working majority in Parliament, resulting in the first coalition government since 1945. This coalition ended in May 2015 when the Conservatives won by majority in the general election and governed as a single party.

The government of the UK contains a number of ministries (usually referred to as departments), each of which is led by a government minister. All ministers must first be elected by the voting population of a particular region to serve as a Member of Parliament. The prime minister then selects a few Members of Parliament to lead ministries. Thus, the leaders of ministries are elected officials who, in turn, are supported by unelected civil servants who work in the ministry. Some ministries, such as the Ministry of Defence or the Department of Health, are United Kingdom-wide; others, such as the Department for Education, are responsible only for England and not
Local governance in England is split into 152 Local Authorities, each covering a designated region/city. Each Local Authority is responsible for the delivery of services such as education, transportation, social care, and fire and public safety. Local Authorities are structured in a similar manner to central government, with locally elected officials forming a “cabinet” and civil servants working in departments. Some public services are delivered by national organizations that are not accountable to local government. These include health services (via the National Health Service), welfare benefits, and government pension services. There are also national organizations that have been established by the central government to carry out functions and/or distribute funding (e.g., the Education Funding Agency). These are not accountable to Local Authorities but work closely with them. According to the Local Government Act 2000, Local Authorities are responsible for promoting economic, social, and environmental well-being in their area; simultaneously, the Local Authorities must act in accordance with all legislation from the central government, and the relevant Government Minister (e.g., for education or health) may overrule any action made by the Local Authority. In this way, the English government is highly centralized and controlled.

The United Kingdom has enjoyed a long and remarkable history of political stability in modern times. England has no experience of successful invasion or occupation since 1066, and “reform not revolution” has been the watchword. According to the World Bank’s index of political stability and absence of violence/terrorism, which measures perceptions of the likelihood that the government of the UK will be destabilized or overthrown by unconstitutional or violent means, including politically motivated
violence and terrorism, in 2015 the UK had a political stability index of 0.56. The world average for 2015 was -0.04 points, indicating that the UK government is extremely stable.

The post-World War II Labour government introduced several key welfare acts: the National Insurance Act of 1946 (entitling all persons of working age to a wide range of financial benefits in return for a weekly payment), the National Health Service Act of 1946 (providing free health care for all at point of delivery), and the Children Act of 1948 (establishing a comprehensive childcare service, with particular emphasis on the duty of the Local Authority to receive deprived or “at risk” children into residential care).

The administration of the welfare state in the UK has undergone two major reforms since its inception. The first, in the 1960s and 1970s, aimed to reform managerial efficiency and economic planning by creating a system in which the Treasury allocated resources to national departments, and thence departments to local government services. The second, in the 1980s and 1990s, consisted of restructuring the civil service and the administration of welfare. It had three main elements:

1. The breakup of administration into agencies, so that each part of the administration could be managed and evaluated individually. For example, the inspection of educational institutions is now carried out by the agency called Ofsted; although funded by the Department for Education, it is semi-autonomous.
2. The introduction of new forms of management, with managers being responsible for running governmental agencies like a business.
3. Quasi-markets, with services provided in the marketplace and required to bid in order to obtain government funding.
More recently, aspects of many central government agencies have been privatized or contracted out (e.g., the Department of Health’s laboratories), but the main role of the agencies is still to provide services directly to the public. The National Health Service (NHS) in England was reformed in 2012 to allow for more purchasing of external services. In this way, England can be seen as a liberal welfare state, as there are universal benefits provided through public services, yet the state also encourages the private sector to act as a co-provider of these benefits.

**Socioeconomic Context**

The economy of England is by far the largest of the four countries of the United Kingdom. According to the World Bank, the UK’s GDP at market prices was $2.849 trillion in 2015, with a GDP per capita (PPP) of $41,324. Seventy percent of all England residents aged 16 to 74 are economically active: 55 percent of them are in full-time employment, 20 percent are in part-time employment, 14 percent are self-employed, 6 percent are unemployed, and 5 percent are students who work in their spare time (ONS, 2014a). Thirty percent are economically inactive, mostly due to retirement (45 percent) or being a student who does not work (19 percent), but other reasons include staying at home to look after the household (15 percent) or being long-term sick and disabled (13 percent). With regards to women specifically, 70.5 percent of women in England are employed, 4 percent are unemployed, and 25 percent are economically inactive. Among those who are inactive, the main reasons are looking after their family (40.6 percent), being a student who does not work (22 percent), and being sick or disabled (21 percent) (ONS, 2014a).

Despite generally high rates of employment, the UK has an unequal distribution of income in society. Although income inequality is lower than in the United States, it is higher than in Finland or Australia. (Note that the following figures refer to the United Kingdom and not to England on its own.) The most widely used summary measure of inequality in the distribution of income is the Gini coefficient, which ranges from 0
(where everyone receives the same income) to 1 (where all the income goes to one person). In 2015, the UK had a Gini coefficient of 0.326. In comparison, most OECD countries had a coefficient lower than 0.31, with the lowest being Iceland at 0.24 (OECD, 2014). Indeed, when looking at the aggregate total wealth (property wealth, financial wealth, and private pension wealth) in the UK, the inequality is clear. The aggregate total wealth of all private households between 2012 and 2014 was £1.1 trillion ($1.4 trillion; ONS, 2015). The wealthiest 10 percent of households owned 45 percent of this wealth. In comparison, the least wealthy 50 percent of household owned 9 percent of this wealth. Figure 1 shows the distribution of aggregate total wealth (in pounds) by deciles and divided components consisting of property, liquid assets, possessions, and pensions.

**Figure 1. The distribution of aggregate total wealth in pounds by household income deciles and components. Source: ONS (2015).**
England is a highly industrialized country. Following the global economic crisis in 2008, UK trade dropped in 2009, then steadily increased until 2012 (HM Revenue & Customs, 2016). From the start of 2013, imports have remained relatively consistent, whereas exports, though remaining high, have had more variability. Total trade exports for May 2016 brought in $30 billion (£23.4 billion). This represents a decrease of 9.1 percent compared with May 2015. Mechanical appliances have predominantly been the largest export commodity by value, although precious metals are becoming increasingly important. The USA is England’s largest export partner country, with $4.8 million (£3.7 million) incoming from exports, followed by Germany ($3.4 million; £2.6 million) and France ($1.9 million; £1.5 million). The total trade imports for May 2016 were $46.5 billion (£36.1 billion). This was an increase of 10.2 percent compared with May 2015. Mechanical appliances and motor vehicles have generally been the largest import commodities by value. Germany is the largest import partner country, with $6.6 million (£5.1 million) being spent on imports from Germany, followed by China ($3.7 million; £2.9 million) and the USA ($3.5 million; £2.7 million).

The Treasury decides on corporate and individual taxation, i.e., “money coming in.” It also decides on “financial benefits,” which take the form of state pensions and income support for poor people, i.e., “money going out.” All workers in England have a tax-free Personal Allowance; this is usually around $14,183 (£11,000). The amount of income tax paid by an individual depends on their income outside of their Personal Allowance. Individuals who earn between $14,184 (£11,001) and $55,444 (£43,000) get taxed the “basic rate” of 20 percent on income outside their personal allowance, individuals earning between $55,445 (£43,00) and $193,410 (£150,000) are taxed at a rate of 40 percent, and individuals earning over 193,410 (£150,000) are taxed at a rate of 45 percent (GOV.UK, 2016a).

Most financial benefits in England (i.e., Income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, and Housing Benefit) were replaced by “Universal Credit” in 2016.
The aim of this was to simplify the welfare system, facilitate entry into work, and ensure that people are better off in work than on social welfare benefits. Previously, individuals in low-income work found they would receive more money from unemployment benefits than from low-paid jobs. Under Universal Credit, low wages are supplemented by cash benefits. Universal Credit is paid in monthly installments, with the amount being calculated each month depending on the person’s circumstances and earning during that time. As of June 2016, over half a million people claim Universal Credit, with men aged 20-24 making up one-fifth of that total. Forty percent of those claiming are in employment (Department for Work and Pensions; DWP, 2016). Thus, it appears that the government’s aim of facilitating entry into work is successful.

Educational Context (Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary)

Compulsory education in England begins after a child turns 5. However, many parents choose to enroll their children in Reception classes beginning the September before their child’s fifth birthday, so that they receive a full academic year of education. Nonetheless, Reception classes themselves are not compulsory until the child’s fifth birthday. For this reason, we refer to early childhood as birth to 5+, as the age at which children begin Year 1 at primary school can range from 5 years 0 months to 5 years and 11 months.

English education is divided into five levels: Early Years (birth to age 5+ years), Primary (6-11 years), Secondary (11-16 years), Further Education (16-18/19), and Higher Education (post-18 years, or university). Some of these levels are further subdivided into “Key Stages.” For example, the Primary level consists of Key Stage 1 (ages 5+-7) and Key Stage 2 (ages 7-11). Education is compulsory for all children between the ages of 5 (typically taken in Reception classes as the last year of the Early Years curriculum) and age 18.

As primary and secondary education are compulsory for all children in England, participation rates are assumed to be at 100 percent and enrollment data is not collected
and published. On completion of the examinations at age 16, General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSE) or equivalent qualifications (UK Key Stage 4 / ISCED 3) are awarded. This set of examinations in a range of subjects typically occurs at age 16. In order to progress onto Advanced Levels or other forms of further education (UK Key Stage 5 / ISCED 4), usually five GCSE passing grades are needed. Following this, the most basic entry requirement for university (ISCED 6) is three Advanced Level (age 18) exam passes. Data collected on the destinations of pupils after completing Key Stages 4 and 5 allows us to see participation rates in non-compulsory education. In 2013-14, 90 percent of young people continued with formal education after completing Key Stage 4 (age 16), 5 percent went on to an apprenticeship, and 5 percent left education (Department for Education; DfE, 2016a). In the same year, 65 percent of young people continued with education after completing Key Stage 5 (age 18)—with 48 percent enrolling in university.

However, this only provides information for one recent cohort of young people. Another way to look at participation rates in education is to explore the distribution of highest qualifications held by all ages in the population. In the 2011 census, the highest qualification held by 27.4 percent of the population of England aged 16 and over was a degree level qualification or above (ISCED 6+), 12.4 percent held 2+ A levels or equivalent (ISCED 4) as their highest qualification, 3.5 percent held an apprenticeship qualification (ISCED 3), 15.2 percent had 5+ GCSEs or equivalent qualifications (ISCED 3), 13.3 percent had 1-4 GCSEs or equivalent (ISCED 3), 22.5 percent had no qualifications (ISCED 2), and 5.7 percent listed their highest qualification as “other” (ONS, 2013e). It is worth noting that only 6.8 percent of those without qualifications are under 25, with nearly 75 percent of those without any educational qualification being over 50. As can be seen by the graph below, the education level of the population is increasing with each generation. The age group of 16-24 shows slightly confounded data as the typical age of obtaining a degree is after 20, the typical age of obtaining level 3 qualifications is 18, and there may be 16 year olds who had not yet obtained their
GCSEs, as census night in 2011 was in March and these exams are typically taken in May/June. Figure 2 shows the distribution of highest qualification in various age groups.

**Figure 2. Highest qualifications held by age group. Source: ONS (2013e)**

The population in the UK is relatively well educated. According to an OECD report on literacy (OECD, 2013), only 3.3 percent of adults in the UK have literacy proficiency below level 1, meaning they have only basic vocabulary knowledge and can read brief texts on familiar topics to locate a single piece of specific information. Some 13.1 percent have literacy proficiency at level 2, which means they have knowledge and skill in recognizing basic vocabulary and in determining the meaning of sentences, and have
the ability to read a paragraph of text; 33.93 percent can understand various mediums of text with some competing information and have the ability to paraphrase and infer; 35.9 percent can read dense, lengthy texts; understand rhetorical structures; and identify, interpret, and evaluate multiple piece of information, while disregarding irrelevant content and discounting competing information; and 13.1 percent can integrate, interpret, and synthesize information from complex or lengthy texts, apply background knowledge to make inferences, and understand conditional information.

**Policy Process**

Policies are proposed by elected officials at the national level, sometimes prompted by civil servants or the public. These proposals are consulted on and approved at Cabinet level, where the prime minister chairs the lead ministers from a range of government ministries. In some cases, a public consultation may be opened for interested parties to submit their views; this is common practice with ECEC services. Following this, amendments are made if necessary, and the proposal is made into a “government bill” with the help of parliamentary lawyers. The bill is then considered, and often debated and amended, in the Houses of Parliament. To become law, a bill must be approved by the House of Commons (elected members) and the House of Lords (appointed members or those with inherited title). Following this, the Monarch gives her approval (called the “Royal Assent”) for it to become law. This stage is largely a formality, as the Monarch always acts on the advice of ministers. Once a policy has been made law, the Local Authorities are obligated to implement the policy, with funding and guidance from the central government.

**Implications for ECEC**

The long history of England has led to a highly centralized government operating what is loosely termed a “welfare state,” in which provision for children’s health, care, and education has come to the fore in the last three decades. The watchword of the country has been “evolution, not revolution,” and England has enjoyed political stability for
centuries. Although the population of more than 50 million is largely white and nominally Christian, successive waves of immigration from the Commonwealth and elsewhere add diversity, especially in large cities. London, the hub of the country, is home to hundreds of languages and its schools celebrate diversity. In the last two decades, children in London’s multicultural schools have out-performed the rest of the country in exams (Sylva et al, 2010). Finally, there is a national commitment to education as one of the means to further economic prosperity and social harmony. The ECEC system must cater to this large and diverse population while supporting equality.
Chapter 3: Conditions of Young Children

Key Points

- The English government has a strong responsibility to care for young children, and does so with its social welfare, educational, and health services, which are free of charge.
- Children whose parents are unable to look after them, or children who are exposed to maltreatment, are taken into the care of the Local Authority and, most commonly, placed in foster homes.
- England’s strong focus on welfare led to reductions in the number of children living in poverty in the early years of this century, but the number is rising again.

Demographic Data on Numbers of Young Children

There are over three million children under age 5 in England. As of the last census, 71 percent of the population under the age of 5 living in England are White British (English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British), 11 percent are Asian (Indian/Pakistani/Chinese/Other), 6.5 percent are mixed ethnicity (White and Black Caribbean/White and Black African/White and Asian/Other), 5 percent are Black (African/Caribbean/Black British), 5 percent are from another White background (Polish/Irish), and 1.5 percent are from another ethnicity (e.g., Arab) (ONS, 2013f). The census makes clear the greater diversity among the young compared to older generations. In terms of main languages spoken, 94.2 percent of the population of England between the ages of 3 and 15 speak English as their main language, 2.4 percent speak another European language such as Polish (0.9 percent) or French (0.2 percent), 1.9 percent named a South Asian language (Panjabi [0.3 percent] or Urdu [0.4 percent]),
0.3 percent named an East Asian language (such as Chinese [0.1 percent]), 0.3 percent named a West/Central Asian language, 0.5 percent named an African language, and 0.4 percent listed another language (such as Arabic [0.3 percent]) (ONS, 2013g). This picture of predominantly white, English speaking children is drawn from national statistics; nonetheless, the large cities, particularly in the south, have higher proportions of non-white, non-English speaking children, so it is not unusual for a nursery in London to have the majority of its children speaking a host of languages other than English.

**Vulnerable Children**

*Children in Need*

Children who are orphaned, stunted, or abused are classified by social services in England as “in need,” and this information is routinely collected. There are over 390,000 children identified as in need of social services in England, which equates to roughly 3.4 percent of the population under the age of 18. A fourth—25.3 percent—of children in need are under the age of 5. When a child is assessed following a referral by staff from health, education, police, or welfare services, the child’s primary need is determined. The most frequent primary need for services is due to abuse or neglect (49.4 percent), followed by family dysfunction (17.9 percent) and child’s disability or illness (10.2 percent) (DfE, 2015a).

In 2015, there were 69,540 children in England who were “looked after” by their Local Authority (roughly 0.6 percent of the population under 18). “Looked after children” refers to children whose parents or carers no longer have responsibility for them. In 75 percent of cases, this is due to a court order, as the parents or carers are unable to ensure the welfare of their child(ren). Some 13,830 of looked after children in 2015 were under the age of 5 (roughly 0.4 percent of the population under 5), thus constituting almost 20 percent of all looked after children. The overall number of looked after children has been steadily increasing over the last seven years and is now higher than at any point since 1985. Sixty-one percent of all children placed into care are done so due
to abuse or neglect from their parents, 16 percent due to family dysfunction, 9 percent due to family in acute stress, 5 percent due to absent parenting, 3 percent due to child’s disability, 3 percent due to parent’s disability or illness, and 2 percent due to socially unacceptable behavior of the parent(s) (Zayed & Harker, 2015). The reason for the need for care is not available specifically for children under 5, so the figures above refer to all children who are looked after.

Three quarters of looked after children under the age of 18 are placed in foster care; 9 percent are placed in secure units, children’s homes, or hostels; 5 percent are placed for adoption; 5 percent are placed with their own parents (but the Local Authority still has ultimate responsibility for their welfare); 3 percent live independently or in residential employment (e.g., as members of the armed forces); 2 percent live in other residential settings such as care homes or young offenders’ institutions; and 1 percent live in residential schools. The goal is for looked after children to live in as home-like a situation as possible, and thus only a small percentage of children are not placed in homes of some kind.

Some 2.2 percent of the population of England under age 5 have a long-term health problem or disability that limits day-to-day activities (ONS, 2014b). Parents who are unable to provide sufficient care for their disabled child will be referred to social services for increased help, and in extreme cases, for their child to be taken into the care of the Local Authority. As mentioned above, only 3 percent of children who are taken into care are done so due to a disability, so this situation is very rare.

**Children in Poverty**

In 2013, 17 percent of children lived with their parents or carers in relative poverty, meaning their family’s income was less than 60 percent of the national median before housing costs (DWP, 2015). This follows a general downward trend from 26 percent in 1999, to 21 percent in 2005, followed by a period of stability up to 2008. There was
further decline between 2009 and 2011, with the trend stabilizing at this point. This reduction in child poverty is particularly impressive as poverty is measured in terms of relative poverty in England; in other words, the poverty line moves up as the average income rises. On an absolute poverty line, the reduction of poor children would be much steeper.

**Children of Single Parents**

Only 29 percent of families with children have a single parent (ONS, 2014c), with 56 percent of families having married or civil partnered parents (biological or step) and 15 percent having cohabiting parents. Of the lone parents with full-time custody of their children, only 11 percent are fathers. In 67 percent of families with two parents both parents work, in 27 percent only one parent works, and in 6 percent neither parent works. Fifty-nine percent of lone parents work and 41 percent do not (ONS, 2014d).

Taken together, the condition of children in England is generally good, with a free and efficient health service, the majority living in two-parent families (although some are “reconstituted” after divorce). However, there are wide income disparities, with a relatively small percentage of individuals owning a great deal of the country’s wealth. Under the Labour government, the percentage of children living in poverty fell, but this levelled out with the financial crisis of 2008-09. Ill and disabled children are well looked after by the National Health Service. However, children taken into the care of the local government generally have low attainment in school and have poorer health and employment prospects than children looked after by their own families, despite more than a decade of government policies to support their development (Zayed & Harker, 2015).
Chapter 4: Policies Related to Young Children and Their Families

Key Points

- Early childhood has only been a government priority in England for the past two decades. Before this, the focus of education was mainly on primary and secondary school, with very few policies pertaining to 2- to 5-year-olds. This changed in 1997, when a Labour government was elected with a strong focus on social welfare and improving conditions and outcomes for young children from birth.

The election of the Labour government led to a period of expansion in ECEC services in the early years of the 21st century. The main goal of the Labour party reforms was equality, and they saw expanding early education as a means to (i) narrow the attainment gap between rich and poor, and (ii) enable mothers to re-enter employment and thus increase family incomes to (iii) help support the development of all children, with a special focus on those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

- Unfortunately, expansion was halted by the economic crisis in 2008-09 and a change of government in 2010. Whereas the Labour government was concerned with reducing inequalities between rich and poor children, subsequent governments have been more interested in providing high-quality ECEC services for all children, with a particular focus on policies that increase parental employment.

- The key legislative document concerning ECEC is the Early Years Foundation Stage (2008, with later revisions) which specifies a common national curriculum along with requirements related to ratios, staff training, space, child assessments, and child welfare.
Legal Documents that Frame Service Delivery

_Pre-1997_

There have been several key reports and Acts of Parliament through the last two centuries that have shaped the nature of provision for children up to the age of 5. The 1870 Forster Education Act set the framework for compulsory education starting at age 5, with separate schools (called “infant schools”) for 5- to 7-year-olds becoming a permanent part of the school system. It was not until the 1921 Education Act that local education authorities were encouraged to provide nursery schools for 2- to 5-year-olds. Notably, however, this policy was advisory, and did not mandate services for this younger age group.

During and after the Second World War, early education saw little expansion despite a time of relative economic prosperity, as the government considered childcare to be the province of the family and therefore it expected the private and voluntary/charitable sector to take up the mantle of nursery provision (Cleave et al., 1982). In the absence of public nursery places, mothers began to set up their own playgroups, which would later be described in 1973 as “an essential social service” by the Secretary of State for Social Services. In this way, England’s ECEC services have been a mix of public and private services from the very beginning. Children who were 5 and 6 years old were considered to be students and so enrolled in primary education, whereas younger children were only the responsibility of the state if their parents were very poor and needed special assistance.

In 1967 the Plowden Report was published, which is widely recognized as the defining moment for child-centered primary education and a significant step towards solving educational inequality (Halsey & Sylva, 1987). Although this report did not focus specifically on children under 5, the committee agreed that nursery provision was essential, not only for educational purposes, but also to improve the social, health, and welfare conditions of children (Central Advisory Council for Education, 1967). The
report recommended that nurseries should be aimed at children aged 3-5, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education rather than Health, and supervised by qualified teachers. Nursery provision was to be financed by the government and held in primary schools or separate nursery schools and inspected in the same way as primary and secondary educational provision. The planned expansion was to take place in the public sector, with teachers trained to the same standard as those in primary schools, and with the same system of inspection to guarantee high quality.

Unfortunately, the planned expansion did not take place because the 1970s ushered in a period of economic depression, limiting plans for investment in universal preschool provision. This was followed by a long period of focus on primary and secondary schooling. For example, the system of selective schooling based on a test at age 11 was abolished, and the vast majority of secondary school students began to be educated together in a “comprehensive” rather than an elite “grammar” school. During this period of focus on older children, relatively little attention or funding was available to early education until 1997 when a Labour government was elected.

*The Labour Government 1997-2010*

When Labour was elected, they showed a clear determination to reduce poverty and disadvantage, and early childhood was central to their strategy. Under their leadership, expansion of early education services did indeed take place, through in a mixed economy of private, charitable, and state provision. Several key policies aimed at helping young children and their families were introduced between 1997 and 2010, with a particular focus on creating equal starting points at school entry for young children from all backgrounds (Stewart, 2013). Increasing parental employment was seen as the main route to reducing poverty, which was supplemented by increasing resources directed at low-income households with children, whether the adults were employed or not. Changes to the tax-benefit system increased the level of financial support to all households with children, while also attempting to improve financial incentives for
parents to work. The main goal of the Labour party reforms was equality, and they saw the aim of expanded early education as a means to (i) narrow the attainment gap between rich and poor, and (ii) enable mothers to re-enter employment and thus increase family incomes to (iii) help support child development.

In order to further support parents entering employment, or returning to work, a series of measures to increase the availability and affordability of childcare were put in place. The first ever National Childcare Strategy was published in 1998, pledging to “ensure quality, affordable childcare for children aged 0-14 in every neighborhood” (Department for Education and Employment, 1998, p.15). The government began funding part-time ECEC for all 4-year-olds, and by 2004 this had been extended to include all 3-year-olds as well. Initially, these part-time services were publicly funded for 12.5 hours per week for 33 weeks each year, but this was soon increased to 15 hours per week (DfE, 2016b), and by 2017, under the 2015 Childcare Bill, children were entitled to 30 hours per week for 38 weeks. Built-in flexibility allows parents to choose to take longer days of childcare rather than spreading the hours throughout the week. Parents wishing or requiring longer hours are able to “top up” the free hours by privately paying for hours that exceed the government-funded hours. These government-funded hours can be taken in any type of ECEC provision (e.g., state nursery, private center, childminder’s own home) in the parent’s Local Authority, with payment for each child going directly to the provider.

In addition to increasing availability and affordability of childcare, a series of policies was instituted near the start of the 21st century aimed at improving the quality of ECEC provision. Notably, the Department for Education was re-named the Department for Children, Schools, and Families, with a new emphasis on parents and childcare. Early education and care were integrated under its auspices and increased funding followed. Regular inspections held every four years by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) were introduced for all early education and care settings in 2006, replacing the health inspections that had previously been implemented for infant and toddlers. In
addition, a single curriculum was established for all ECEC providers in England—the *Early Years Foundation Stage* Curriculum intended for children between birth and entry to Year 1 (Department for Children, Schools, and Families, 2008). Under this framework, minimum qualification requirements covering childcare managers and a proportion of other staff were imposed for the first time, and a new graduate-level qualification, the Early Years Professional, was introduced. The Early Years Professional, while not equal to the “Qualified Teacher Status” of teachers in primary and secondary education, requires a university degree—thus encouraging more graduates into the workforce. However, salaries were, and sadly still are, lower for Early Years Professionals than for staff with Qualified Teacher Status, who could take jobs throughout the primary school, including ECEC provision but also primary years 1-6 (DfE, 2017b).

Perhaps one of the most defining policies of the Labour Government was the *Every Child Matters* framework, first proposed in 2003, which attempted to integrate “services around the child” (HM Treasury, 2003). The framework set out five outcomes for all children: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making positive contribution, and economic well-being. It also outlined ways to promote collaboration between children’s services, such as improving information sharing (and removing any legislative barriers to better information sharing), introducing a lead professional to coordinate child welfare cases, and creating the new post of Director of Children’s Services in local government, which brought together the responsibilities of the former Directors of Education and of Children’s Welfare, thus integrating local-level social services for children with educational ones.

*Every Child Matters* became law in the 2004 Children Act, which created new duties for Local Authorities to plan for the sufficiency of provision of children’s services and coordinate services across relevant partners, including health and employment. The strong commitment of a left-wing Labour government heralded a major shift in the delivery of ECEC services from targeted to universal. Previously, ECEC services had
been deliberately located in poor neighborhoods, making it “targeted” provision with fewer than 25 percent of children getting it for free. The universal expansion meant that all 4-year-olds would receive free ECEC, an entitlement that was extended to all 3-year-olds a year later. Earlier targeting towards the poor was particularly noticeable with Sure Start programs, which had originated in the most disadvantaged areas. These Sure Start Children’s Centres were originally designed to provide high-quality, integrated services of education, care, health and social welfare, tailored to the needs of each community. The services usually included providing information and advice to parents, and offering drop-in sessions and activities for families/carers, outreach and family support services, child and family health services, and training and employment advice.

Moving toward a more universal approach, the Labour government promised to establish Sure Start Children’s Centres in nearly every community in England. When they lost to the Conservative-Liberal Coalition government in 2010, there were more than 3,000 such centers across the country, nearly achieving their universal target.

The Coalition Government 2010-2015

In the election of May 2010, a coalition government consisting of the Conservative and the Liberal Democratic parties came to power. Soon after the election, ECEC once again moved up the political agenda, having been identified as a method of supporting employment of parents, with a reduced emphasis on directly supporting household income. Moreover, the coalition government shifted away from broader “child well-being” outcomes toward educational achievement (Stewart & Obolenskaya, 2015). This can be seen in the shift in terminology from policies based on “every child matters” to policies based on initiatives to “help children achieve.” The Every Child Matters framework was dismantled (its five very broad outcomes were reduced to those related to achievement), and the Department for Children, Schools, and Families was returned to its original name—the Department for Education. Both of these changes decreased emphasis on services to families and replaced that focus with more singular emphasis on children’s education. Moreover, although many legal responsibilities of the Local
Authority to pursue integrated children’s services still remained, as they were formalized in the Children Act 2004, the demise of the Every Child Matters framework saw these responsibilities become less of a priority and funding for integrated services was greatly reduced. Nonetheless, statutory guidance still describes a duty of information sharing and integrated working when it is suspected that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. In effect, this means that integrated working between services is more likely to happen when children are at risk than universally across the system.

The coalition government (2010-15) also successfully built upon some Labour policies for young children and their families, and made several improvements to the quality of provision under the 2015 Childcare Bill. Perhaps the most substantial contribution was to extend Labour’s policy for free early education to the 20 percent most disadvantaged 2-year-olds (defined as those with parents who are unemployed or on a low income, or who are under the care of the Local Authority). This was extended in September 2014 from 20 percent to 40 percent of the most disadvantaged 2-year-olds, all of whom now receive 15 hours a week of free ECEC provision. Furthermore, with the introduction of Universal Credit, parents who could previously claim back up to 80 percent of their childcare costs in tax credits under the Labour government can now claim up to 85 percent, and unemployed parents, who could previously not claim, now can. In 2013, the Department for Education published More Great Childcare following a review of the childcare workforce (DfE, 2013). More Great Childcare set out plans to replace the level 6 qualification of Early Years Professional with the new Early Years Teacher; effectively relabelling the qualification. (Note that these new Early Years Teachers are not given Qualified Teacher Status, which is the status required to teach in the primary school nor are they trained alongside individuals preparing to teach throughout the primary school grades.) It also proposed a stronger level 3 qualification of “Early Years Educator” which raised the entry requirements for training to a C grade in GCSE
English and Maths. All of these changes were implemented in September 2014 through the revised framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2014a).

Despite the several steps forward for quality in childcare provision, there have been several retrograde steps as well. One retrograde step was the coalition government’s 2011 abolishment of the requirement for Sure Start Children’s Centres in the most disadvantaged areas to employ an Early Years Teacher (with a level 6 qualification). This requirement was lifted by the coalition government.

In a similar retrograde step, shortly after taking office in 2010, the coalition government abolished ring-fenced funding for Sure Start Children’s Centres. Funding now comes from the Early Intervention Grant, which has a wider spread and includes children and young people through to adolescence. Total Local Authority spending on Sure Start Children’s Centres decreased significantly, from £1.2 billion in 2010/11 to £945 million in 2012/13—a reduction of over 20 percent (Waldegrave, 2013). Indeed, the coalition government saw a reduction in central government spending on Sure Start and on the childcare element of the working tax credit, and in Local Authority spending on early education (Stewart & Obolenskaya, 2015). In contrast, spending on employer childcare vouchers increased. These allow parents to save in tax by being paid partly in childcare vouchers, therefore making it most beneficial to parents on a high income.

**The Conservative Government 2015- the Present**

The Conservative government (elected May 2015) continued the focus of the coalition government on childcare to support parental employment rather than on narrowing the attainment gap between rich and poor. It did, however, introduce the Early Years Pupil Premium in September 2015, which provided an extra £300 per year for each disadvantaged child under 5 attending an ECEC center. In contrast, primary schools receive £1,320 per year per child.
To support parents to work, the Conservative government extended the free government-funded hours again, by pledging to provide an additional 15 hours of ECEC provision for working parents of 3- and 4-year-old children—thereby providing these families with a total of 30 hours of government-funded childcare per week (Childcare Act 2016). Early implementation began in September 2016, and almost full implementation is now in place. Thus, whereas the Labour government initiated many programs to reduce inequalities between rich and poor children, successive governments have been more interested in extending hours for all children, especially to support parental employment.

**Stated Policy Aims**

The official aim of the current Conservative government is to support parental employment and child development. Although these are twin goals, some critics say that the aim of supporting parental employment seems to be seen as more important than supporting the development of children. Nonetheless, the two are to some degree interrelated, in that supporting child development by increasing the income of the household may thereby improve the home learning environment of the child.

The *Early Years Foundation Stage* curriculum framework specifies the seven domains of development that ECEC is supposed to enhance. This has been statutory for more than 10 years and is widely accepted by the workforce and families. The document outlines the learning goals for all young children, which include the development of socio-emotional skills and a positive attitude towards learning along with more specific academic skills like pre-literacy and numeracy. The *Early Years Foundation Stage* curriculum also outlines measures to support vulnerable children, including children with special educational needs, children whose home language is not English, and disadvantaged children. Finally, although the EYFS does not delineate the raft of policies and procedures related to child protection, the Ministry for Education has
responsible for child protection (along with the Ministry of Health and the Police), and the policies and regulations are very strong in this area.

Table 4.1: Stated policy aims for children aged 0-3 years (0.1) and children aged 3 to the start of primary school (0.2) [IEA, Table 2, page 23]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy aims</th>
<th>Level 0.1</th>
<th>Level 0.2</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support parental employment</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support parental education and training</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support parental work/life balance</td>
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<td>●</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encourage the development of socioemotional skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop positive attitudes and dispositions to learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduce language and literacy skills</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduce basic mathematical skills</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encourage healthy physical development</td>
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<td>●</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepare young children for school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduce young children to citizenship</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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<tr>
<td>Remediate special needs, e.g., language delay/physical disability</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support/safeguard vulnerable young children</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support young children where the language use at home is different from the national language</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce inequality and social disadvantage</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fosters health and mental health for children</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect children from abuse and violence</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
- Highly ranked policy aim
○ Policy aim
- No policy aim
Major Policy Changes in this Century

Curriculum

The curriculum framework for the early years—Early Years Foundation Stage—was first outlined in 2008 and subsequently revised in 2012 to reduce the number of early learning goals and make it simpler for practitioners and parents. Since then, it has been updated in 2014 and 2017 to reflect minor changes in regulations and clarify wording. These changes are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7. The EYFS is proudly called “a curricular entitlement” and it forms the basis for child assessments at ages 2 and 5, the Ofsted inspection framework, and the staffing structures (especially ratios) that are legally required.

Child Assessment

In 2015, the child development check conducted by the Department of Health at the age of 2 and the developmental progress check conducted in the ECEC setting at the age of 2.5 (if the child attended one) were brought together to form the 2-Year-Old Check. Now, health visitors and early years practitioners collaborate to form one assessment of a child’s development, which becomes part of the national child database. It is used to identify children in need of special educational or health services.

Since 2013, the government has been holding public consultations on the child assessment conducted at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage at age 5. The government has proposed changing the current assessment; however, as of 2018 no suitable replacement has been developed.

Extent of Free Provision

In September 2014, government-funded hours in ECEC provision were extended from the most disadvantaged 20 percent of 2-year-olds to the most disadvantaged 40 percent of 2-year-olds. Moreover, under the Childcare Act 2016, the Conservative government
doubled the number of free hours of childcare children of working parents can receive (from 15 hours to 30 hours per week). Importantly, expansion at this substantial rate cannot be accomplished without changes in funding; indeed, the government promised an extra £1 billion per year in early education entitlements by 2019-20 (DfE, 2015b).

Staff Qualifications

Though there have been increases in the quantity of childcare provision available, these have been accompanied by some declines in staff qualifications. The Graduate Leader Fund, which supported private and charitable centers to hire a graduate teacher, was abolished in 2011. This was disappointing because there had been a positive evaluation indicating the Fund’s role in improving the quality of provision for 3- to 4-year-olds (Mathers et al., 2011). Another retrograde step was the abolishment in 2011 of the requirement for Sure Start Children’s Centres in the most disadvantaged areas to employ an early years teacher with a degree level qualification. This requirement was lifted by the Coalition Government.

In 2013, the Department for Education and the National College for Teaching and Leadership published the “standards” for degree-level Early Years Teachers and two-year qualification Early Years Workers. Then in 2016, a public consultation was held regarding ECEC staff qualifications, with a particular focus on Literacy and Numeracy requirements for level 3 staff. In 2014, all level 3 qualified staff members (those without University degrees) entering the workforce were required to hold at least a C grade GCSEs in Maths and English. This requirement was weakened in 2017 to include demonstrations of literacy and numeracy skills through “functional skills” tests (DfE, 2017a), effectively lowering the entry requirement.
Table 4.2: Key policy changes for services for children aged 0-3 years (0.1) and children aged 3 to the start of primary school (0.2) [IEA, Table 7, page 38]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy changes</th>
<th>Level 0.1</th>
<th>Level 0.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy changes in ECEC expenditure</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy changes in statutory entitlements to ECEC</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy changes in ECEC child: staff ratios</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy changes in ECEC staff qualifications</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy changes in national ECEC curriculum</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy changes in ECEC regulation and quality</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy changes in child assessment</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy changes in child protection</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy changes in health</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key:**
- ○ No changes in the past five years, and none currently
- ● Changes in the last five years that have taken place
- + Planned changes in the next five years
- n/a Not applicable or no data supplied
Part 3
Direct Services for Young Children
Chapter 5: Nature of General Services Provided for Young Children

Key Points

- As outlined in Chapter 2, the National Health Service (NHS) was established in 1946. The NHS continues to provide free health care at the point of delivery for all residents of England. This includes services for physical and mental health, as well as preventative services such as inoculations and routine dentistry.

- There are many free health services provided for pregnant mothers and young children, as well as 52 weeks of statutory employment leave and 39 weeks of statutory pay for expecting parents and parents with newborns. These services are highly regulated to ensure that everyone receives the same standards.

- The Department of Health is responsible for the large majority of services discussed in this chapter. Other services, such as child protection services and domestic violence reduction services, involve cross-overs with other departments such as Education and the Home Office (i.e., police).

- With the introduction of Every Child Matters in 2003, responsibility for child protection moved from the Department of Health to the Department for Education, making a single ministry responsible for education, care, and welfare.

Nature of General Services Provided

Pre-natal

All services for pregnant women and those in the perinatal period are free at the point of delivery and provided by the NHS. Parenting education is one such service. Mothers can choose to attend antenatal classes in their area (NHS, 2015a), which tend to start...
eight to 10 weeks before the baby is due, and are held once a week for two hours. A few of these classes are for pregnant women only, but most welcome partners and friends to some or all of the sessions. In areas with high concentration of “vulnerable” members of the population, there are special classes for single mothers, teenagers, or women whose first language is not English. These classes help parents make their own birth plan by learning about the different arrangements for labor and birth. Other topics covered include health in pregnancy (diet and exercise), health after pregnancy, feeding and caring for your baby, and relaxation techniques. The classes also provide parents with the chance to discuss their plans and any worries with professionals and other parents. They are often a good way for parents to meet others who are expecting a child around the same time and allows them to create friendships which may provide social support in the first few months of their baby’s life. These services have been government-funded since the 1960s, and it is estimated that around 65 percent of women today attend these classes (Redshaw & Heikkila, 2010), though this attendance rate is much lower in low-income families.

Mothers expecting their first child will have up to 10 antenatal appointments with their midwife or doctor (NHS, 2015b). Mothers expecting a second or subsequent child will have around seven. At the first appointment, mothers are given information on folic acid and vitamin D supplements; nutrition and lifestyle factors (drinking/smoking/exercise); and free, optional antenatal screening tests. Screening tests for sickle cell and thalassaemia are offered prior to 10 weeks into the pregnancy, a test for Down’s Syndrome will be offered around 11-14 weeks, and further screening for abnormalities is done at around 18-21 weeks. Urine is tested throughout the pregnancy for several things, including protein or albumin, to check for an infection or pre-eclampsia. Blood pressure is measured at every appointment to check for signs of pregnancy-induced hypertension. Several blood tests are also offered to check for HIV, syphilis, hepatitis B, blood group, rhesus disease, anaemia, and diabetes.
Routine iron supplementation for all pregnant women is not recommended in the UK; however, expectant mothers are offered blood tests that check for many things, including anemia, and if the test shows a lack of iron then the mother is usually given iron tablets or folic acid.

**Perinatal**

Statutory Maternity Leave in England lasts 52 weeks, beginning as early as 11 weeks before the due date (GOV.UK, 2016b). Mothers can return to work any time after the first two weeks of their baby’s life. Statutory maternity pay is paid for up to 39 weeks. For the first six weeks, the mother receives 90 percent of her average weekly earnings, then for the next 33 weeks she receives £139.58 or 90 percent of her average weekly earnings (whichever is lower). Fathers can take two weeks of paternity leave, which is paid at £139.58 or 90 percent of his average weekly earnings (whichever is lower) (GOV.UK, 2016c). Parents can choose to use shared parental leave if the mother ends her maternity leave and maternity pay in exchange for shared parental leave and shared parental pay (GOV.UK, 2016d). The parents will then receive the remainder of the mother’s 52 weeks of leave and 39 weeks of pay to split between them. Shared parental leave is paid at £139.58 or 90 percent of the parent’s average weekly earnings (whichever is lower). In 2013, mothers took an average of 20 weeks of maternity leave and fathers took an average of two weeks of paternity leave. New mothers have a statutory right to return to the jobs they had before maternity leave.
All births in England must be registered within 42 days of the child being born. This is done at the local register office for the area where the baby was born or at the hospital before the mother leaves.

**Health**

*Skilled Attendants at Delivery*

A midwife is always present during the delivery of a child, whether in a hospital or not. In a hospital, there is also access to doctors (obstetricians, anesthetists, and neonatologists) if required, though usually a midwife is sufficient. In order to practice as a midwife, an individual must hold a Bachelor’s degree in midwifery and be registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council, in accordance with the Nursing and Midwifery Order of 2001.

*Childhood Immunizations*
All childhood immunizations are free and administered by National Health Service staff, either health visitor or family doctor. When a child is eight weeks old, a 5-in-1 vaccine (which protects against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio, and Haemophilus influenza type b), a pneumococcal vaccine, a rotavirus vaccine and a Men B vaccine are offered (NHS, 2016a). At 12 weeks old, a second dose of the 5-in-1 vaccine and a second dose of the rotavirus vaccine are administered. At 16 weeks, a third dose of the 5-in-1 vaccine, a second dose of the pneumococcal vaccine, and a second dose of the Men B vaccine are administered. At 1 year old, a Hib/Men C vaccine; a measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine; a third dose of the pneumococcal vaccine; and a third dose of the Men B vaccine are administered. At 3 years and 4 months a second dose of the measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine and a booster vaccine for diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, and polio are given. Between the ages of 2 and 7, annual flu vaccinations are offered free of charge. The vast majority of children receive all these immunizations (NHS, 2016a).

**Childhood Screenings for Hearing/Vision/Disabilities**

Within 72 hours of giving birth, all parents are offered a physical examination for their baby, called the Newborn Physical Examination (Babycentre, 2014), and there is almost universal take-up, with under 0.01 percent declined screenings reported in 2015 (Public Health England, 2015). This examination includes a screening test to check the appearance and movement of the baby’s eyes using a light. This test looks for cataracts, among other conditions. Hearing difficulties are screened for using the automated optoacoustic emissions (AOAE) test, which is done by placing a soft earpiece in the baby’s ear and playing a quiet clicking sound. The earpiece picks up the response from the inner ear and displays the results on a computer. For many babies, this is sufficient screening, but if the test is unclear or there is a possibility that the child may have hearing difficulties then another test is conducted. The automated auditory brainstem response (AABR) test is done by placing three small sensors on the baby’s head and neck, and using soft headphones to play quiet clicking sounds. The sensors detect brain
and hearing nerves’ responses to the sound. Throughout childhood, hearing is regularly tested when the child goes to the doctors for check-ups. Beyond this, many signs of disability are checked for through examinations of the baby’s head size/shape, palate, heart, lungs, hands and feet, spine, hips, and reflexes.

**Child Well-Baby Visits**

Young children have regular health and development reviews throughout early childhood to make sure they are healthy and developing normally (NHS, 2015c). These reviews are typically done in the home, GP surgery, well-baby clinic, or children’s center. Around the time of a baby’s birth, the parents are given a personal child health record by the midwife (popularly called “the red book”). This is used by health professionals to record a child’s weight, height, vaccinations, and other important health information. Parents can also use the red book to record any illnesses their child contracts and details of any medicines they take. The book contains a developmental milestones section for the parents to update and questionnaires to be filled in before each review. These reviews, which are offered to all children, are carried out at the ages of 10-14 days, 6-8 weeks, 9-12 months, and 2-2.5 years. For each review, parents are contacted by post and telephone with an offer of a specific appointment. Although optional, they are highly recommended, and parents must reply in writing if they do not wish to participate. The review covers general development (i.e., movement/speech/social skills/behavior/hearing and vision), growth, healthy eating and keeping active, behavior and sleeping habits, tooth brushing, child safety, and vaccinations. Results of this review are discussed with the parents by the health visitor and/or the general practitioner. Once the child begins school, health and development support is taken over by the school nursing team and school staff.
National Health Insurance

Through the NHS, health services are free at the point of use for all UK residents, with some limited exceptions—such as prescriptions for adults (limited to £9 per prescription), optical services, and dental service. Importantly, these are still free for those under the age of 19 and in full-time education, and those with a low income. Due to this, England does not use the term “health insurance,” as there is no need to insure against the risk of incurring health services since they are all free. Another way of looking at the applicability of the term “health insurance” is to say that all residents of England (regardless of citizenship status) receive free health insurance, which covers all aspects of pregnancy, birth, and development through to adulthood.

Nutrition

In 2010, 83 percent of mothers breastfed at birth in England, up from 78 percent in 2005 (McAndrew et al., 2012). Mothers with managerial or professional occupations were more likely to breastfeed at birth (91 percent) than mothers with intermediate occupations (81 percent), those with routine or manual occupations (76 percent), and those who had never worked (74 percent). However, the prevalence of breastfeeding quickly reduces, with 72 percent of mothers still breastfeeding after one week, 57 percent still breastfeeding at six weeks, and only 36 percent still breastfeeding at six months. It is worth remembering that the WHO recommends breastfeeding exclusively for the first six months. Indeed, if we were to look at exclusive breastfeeding, there is a much more dramatic decrease in prevalence, with 71 percent of mothers exclusively breastfeeding at birth, 57 percent after one week, 24 percent at six weeks and only 1 percent at six months. NHS guidance agrees with the WHO recommendation and the benefits for mother and baby are clearly outlined in the guidance (NHS, 2016b). Nonetheless, the NHS also gives advice and guidance on formula milk (NHS, 2014).
Advice on choosing whether to breastfeed or not is given in the antenatal classes and solutions to common questions and concerns are discussed. All mothers are encouraged to try breastfeeding. In 2008, the Department of Health commissioned the charity Best Beginnings to produce a DVD called *From Bump to Breastfeeding*, which is available free online. Researchers at Bournemouth University evaluated the effectiveness of this DVD and found that women who watched the DVD were significantly more likely to continue breastfeeding at six weeks compared to those who did not (Wilkins et al., 2010). A significant proportion of women reported increased confidence when breastfeeding and had a more positive attitude after watching the DVD. Furthermore, women who left school with no qualifications were most likely to watch the DVD, which is particularly important because this demographic group breastfeed significantly less than more-educated groups. Breastfeeding “drop-in sessions” after the child is born are available throughout England at children’s centers. Children’s centers are also encouraged to create a supportive environment for breastfeeding by normalizing breastfeeding throughout the center, providing information about breastfeeding, using visual displays to encourage breastfeeding without making mothers who struggle feel uncomfortable, and signposting specialist help such as breastfeeding clinics or counselors (Wise, 2009).

**Child Protection Services**

Child protection and social services are governed at a local level (separate from health services), although all Local Authorities must follow central government statutory guidance. All Local Authorities use the Common Assessment Framework to identify children who are “in need.” As mentioned in Chapter 3, these are most commonly children who have been abused, have family dysfunction, or struggle with disability. As part of this assessment, the social worker must decide whether there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm (HM Government, 2015a). If it is decided that the child is in need of additional services but is not in harm, the family and other professionals will agree to a Child in Need Plan to
ensure the child’s future safety and welfare. If it is decided that the child might be at risk of harm, a child protection conference is convened in order to bring together and analyze, in an inter-agency setting, all the relevant information and plan how best to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. This conference will involve the family members, supporters, advocates, and professionals most involved with the child. If it is decided that the child is likely to suffer harm, a lead statutory body (either Local Authority children’s social care or National Society for the Protection and Care of Children) and a lead social worker are appointed. They draw up a Child Protection Plan and a core group of professionals and family members (if appropriate) who will develop and implement the Child Protection Plan are identified. If it is decided, on review of the evidence, that the child is not at risk of harm, then a Child in Need Plan is made. Child in Need Plans are usually developed and implemented in a similar way, though this differs by Local Authority. These plans are reviewed at regular intervals – usually six weeks for Child in Need Plans and three months for Child Protection Plans – to decide whether the plan should remain, be revised, or be discontinued.

If a parent is sentenced to prison, their child is not identified by social services unless it creates a different child protection issue (e.g., absent parenting). Children of prisoners are only provided with additional services if they are referred to social services in the same way as other children. Many children of prisoners are looked after by other family members.

Statutory guidance outlined in Working Together to Safeguard Children states that when a child is assessed as being “in need,” this assessment should continue past the provision of services in order to monitor the impact of the services (HM Government, 2015a). Each Local Authority has a Local Safeguarding Children’s Board (LSCB) responsible for coordinating the local work to safeguard children and monitor the effectiveness of local arrangements. When a child is seriously harmed or dies from abuse or neglect, the LSCB must create a case review to identify ways that local professionals and organizations can improve the way they work together to safeguard children (HM
Government, 2015a). This review must be completed within six months and should result in a report, which is published and readily available. There is movement towards a National Case Review Repository, which would publish all these reports in one place to make it easier to access and share learning at a local, regional, and national level. This has begun, but it is not yet included in statutory guidance that reports must be published in the National Case Review Repository.

Since Our Call to End Violence against Women and Girls was published by the government in 2010, there have been significant steps forward in tackling domestic violence and abuse (HM Government, 2015b). Domestic abuse is now a recognized offense in its own right, and coercive control is acknowledged as well as physical violence. Domestic Violence Protection Orders have been introduced to prevent ongoing risk of violence to a victim, and a Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme has been introduced to give members of the public the right to know if their partner (or the partner of a family member) has a history of abusive behavior. In a recently published policy paper, the government set out its strategy for Ending Violence against Women and Girls (HM Government, 2016). This includes improving the provision of services so that “all services make early intervention and prevention a priority, identifying women and girls in need before a crisis occurs, and intervening to make sure they get the help they need for themselves and for their children” (HM Government, 2016, p.14).

**Enrollments in Above Services**

Health services are a universal entitlement for adults and children in England. All children are enrolled in the National Health Service; each child receives their unique NHS number at birth and all services of the NHS are free. A tiny minority of wealthy children use private health services, although they are entitled to free care by the NHS. Overall, there is nearly universal take-up of free health services.
Organization of Above Services

Ministerial Authority

The majority of health services discussed in this chapter are under the sole responsibility of the Department of Health, including antenatal classes, child immunisation, health screenings, and nutritional advice. However, other services, such as child protection services and domestic violence reduction services, involve cross-overs with the Department for Education (social work services), the Ministry of Justice (police services) and the Department of Work and Pensions (maternity, paternity, and parental leave and pay). In general, inter-departmental working groups ensure smooth integration so that individual families receive seamless services.

Table 5.1: Bodies or ministries responsible for children aged 0-3 years (0.1) and children aged 3 to the start of primary schooling (0.2) [IEA, Table 4, page 28]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsible body or ministry</th>
<th>Perinatal</th>
<th>Level 0.1</th>
<th>Level 0.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work and Employment</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Protection / Welfare</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families and Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Body</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-cutting departmental structures with specific responsibility to children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
- ● Responsible body
The National Health Service was founded in the wake of the Second World War, at a time when the country felt enormously grateful to “our boys” who had defended the nation against horrific enemy attack in which thousands of ordinary citizens died as well as soldiers. The public had an appetite for taxation that would enable all segments of society access to a decent health service and affordable housing. Although there have been many financial cuts to the NHS in the last decade, the core services remain intact and it would be political suicide for a political party to try to abolish these core services. Welfare services, on the other hand, are at risk in times of austerity because they come under the Ministry for Education, which does not have the same level of public support.
Chapter 6: Nature of ECEC Services

Key Points

- ECEC services are an established part of the education system in England.
- The final year of ECEC is called Reception class and takes place in a primary school.
- Prior to Reception, ECEC can be experienced in the state sector (nursery school, nursery class) or in the private/charitable sector (childcare center/day nursery, playgroup or preschool, childminder).
- Children aged 3-4+ with working parents are entitled to 30 hours per week of free ECEC, while children of non-working parents are entitled to 15 free hours (as outlined in Chapter 4). The government-funded hours can be taken in any ECEC settings, including private, charitable, and state-run settings. Two-year-old children in the bottom 40 percent of income are entitled to 15 hours per week of free ECEC.
- All formal ECEC providers in England must follow the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum (described in detail in Chapter 7) and be registered with Ofsted (the monitoring and inspection agency, discussed in more detail in Chapter 11). All formal ECEC providers are inspected by Ofsted at least once every four years.
- It is completely the choice of the parents which setting their child attends. The Local Authority reimburses each center for the eligible children who attend with funds that come from central government.
Nature of ECEC Services Provided

Home Visiting

Parenting Education: There is no explicit “parenting education” provided through home visits. Although health visits provided by the Department of Health around the time of the birth include giving advice to parents and making sure the child is developing healthily, these do not focus on educating the parents in child development. However, the Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) is widely offered in poor neighborhoods (DH, 2012); this program offers regular structured home visits by nurses over the child’s first two years of life. These visits are adapted to the family’s specific needs, but always include an element of parent education. Although the FNP is open for anyone (as it is an NHS services), it is most common in poor neighborhoods and aims to target poorer families.

In-Home Care and Education: The main form of formal in-home childcare in England is childminding. Childminders are a formal provider of childcare in England, as they must be registered with a childminder agency or Ofsted. Childminders must follow the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum in the same way as all ECEC services in England; thus, they provide integrated education and care. In accordance with the EYFS, this is largely done through play and other cognitively stimulating activities, such as woodwork or cooking. Childminders can take children from birth and typically provide ECEC services for the whole working day, with a maximum of three children under the age of 5. As of 2013, there were 55,900 registered childminders in England (DfE, 2014b). The vast majority of childminders are self-employed and make individual contracts with families. If the children are eligible for a free place from the government (from age 3 to school entry), the childminder is paid the officially agreed hourly rate for free childcare, in which case the childminder then gets inspected by Ofsted. Childminders can also provide care for children not covered by the free entitlement, i.e., children under age 3 or for “out of worktime hours” such as evenings or weekends.
**Center-based Care and Education**

There are many types of center-based provision in England:

**Childcare Center:** Center-based ECEC is far more common than home-based care. Like childminders, centers can take children who are a few months old up to the age of compulsory schooling, and are the most common form of provision for children under 3. They typically run for the whole working day, and may be run by employers, private companies, community/voluntary groups, or the Local Authority. Day nurseries must register with Ofsted and be inspected regularly. Moreover, they must follow the EYFS curriculum, thus they provide integrated education and care. Activities are similar to those run by childminders, but with a higher proportion of adult-initiated activities. Day nurseries are the most common type of center-based ECEC provider in England, with nearly 18,000 as of 2013 (DfE, 2014b). The majority of children are under the age of 4, with 35 percent being 3-year-olds, 29 percent 2-year-olds and 18 percent under 2 years old. Only 10 percent are 4 years old and the remaining 8 percent are 5 or older. The average day nursery has 45 places per day, but a typical day will see 35 children attending. Childcare centers are used most often by parents with full-time jobs because they are open 50 weeks a year and operate all day long.

**Playgroup or Preschool:** In England, “preschool” is the term typically used to describe a type of playgroup. This service takes children who are a few months old up to the age of compulsory schooling, in part-time sessions of up to four hours a day. This service is often run by a voluntary/charitable group, parents, or privately. Preschools follow the EYFS but usually involve more play than other forms of center-based provision. They are registered with Ofsted and inspected at least once every four years, as is every other form of provision. As of 2013, there were 7,100 preschools in England, serving an average of 30 children a day (DfE, 2014b). Nine percent of children who attend preschools are under 2 years old, 30 percent are 2-year-olds, 41 percent are 3-year-olds, 11 percent are 4-year-olds, and the remaining 9 percent are 5 or older. The main
difference between preschools (or playgroups) and other forms of provision (i.e., childminders or center-based provision) is that they are usually run by parents and are mostly part-day rather than full time. Because most playgroups are open part-day and only in weeks that schools are open (39 weeks/year), they do not provide suitable day care for parents with full time jobs, so are often used in conjunction with other services, such as childminders.

School-Based Care and Education

Nursery School: Nursery Schools are Local Authority schools in their own right; they are registered in the same way as a primary school and they have a well-paid head teacher and highly trained teachers on their staff. As their staff costs are high, there are fewer than 400 in the entire country. Sessions normally run for 2.5–three hours in the morning and/or afternoon. Nursery schools were originally located in neighborhoods of high disadvantage to serve the most vulnerable children; 64 percent of nursery schools are in the 30 percent most deprived areas of England (Early Education, 2015). Though referred to as “schools” and led by teachers, there is still a mixture of child-initiated play and teacher-led activities. The proportion of time split between the two is decided by the teacher based on the age and developmental stage of the children in attendance, as is advocated by the EYFS. Despite providing higher quality ECEC than any other provider (Ofsted, 2015b), budget cuts have led to reductions in the number of nursery schools (DfE, 2014b). Nursery schools typically provide for 55 children per day. Over half the children in attendance are 3 years old, 11 percent are 2 years old (likely disadvantaged 2-year-olds using their government-funded hours), and 16 percent are 4-year-olds. Many experts consider nursery schools to be one of the best features of English ECEC provision. Despite this, they are not ideal for parents with full-time jobs because they operate only 39 weeks a year and finish at 3:30 in the afternoon. For this reason, many parents combine nursery school provision with childminder provision to cover the end of the day as well as during the long holiday periods.
**Nursery Class in a Primary School:** ECEC provision in nursery classes is very similar to the provision seen in nursery schools; however, they are usually housed in a separate unit on the premise of a primary school. Indeed, the integrated education and care provision is always led by a teacher with Qualified Teacher Status, the highest qualification among early years staff and equal to that of primary school teachers. Children in the nursery class are aged 2-4 years old, and sessions normally run for 2.5 to three hours in the morning and/or afternoon with class sizes of between 20 and 28 with two adults. As of 2013, there were 7,600 primary schools with nursery classes (DfE, 2014b). Nursery classes have not expanded in this century; the great expansion has been in the (cheaper) center-based sector despite the fact that Ofsted reports show quality is higher in school-based provision (Ofsted, 2015b). Nursery classes serve the same kind of families as nursery schools: those who do not require full-time provision or those who can hire private childminders to look after children at the end of the day and on long vacation periods.

**Reception Class:** This service is free for all who attend it and provides full-time early childhood education during normal school hours for children aged 4-5+ years. There is some discrepancy among reports on English ECEC as to whether Reception classes are included in ECEC or as part of primary education. Some reports, especially the earlier ones, classify them as the first year of formal schooling due their location in a primary school and their full day (i.e., six hours) provision. However, Reception class is not compulsory and—importantly—follows the EYFS curriculum and not the National Primary Curriculum that begins in Year 1.

Throughout the United Kingdom, all children must begin education at the start of the term after the fifth birthday. For this reason, the parents of a child born in December usually choose to enroll their child in Reception class in the September before their fifth birthday. Nonetheless, not all children attend Reception class—a child born in July could potentially begin education in Year 1 in the September following their fifth birthday, but parents usually do not choose to do this for fear of their child falling
behind, and typically enroll them in Reception class in the September before their fifth birthday. This means that some of the children attending Reception classes are fulfilling a statutory requirement, whereas other are not yet required to attend education, depending on the age of the child.

Therefore, Reception classes have been classed as ISCED Level 0 in this report. In the ISCED 2011 report, it states “the boundary between ISCED level 0 and level 1 coincides with the transition point in an education system where systematic teaching and learning in reading, writing and mathematics begins” (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012, p.30). This is more pertinent to the transition between Reception classes and Year 1 than the transition between Nursery classes and Reception classes, as there is no official change in teaching style or curricular learning goals during this time.

Nonetheless, the EYFS curriculum states that the balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities should be decided based on the age and stages of development of the children in the setting, and so Reception classes (with children aged 4-5+) are more formal than Nursery Classes (with children about 2-4) or center-based services (with children aged 0-5+ and no qualified teachers).
Figure 6.1: Overview of ISCED Level 0 in participating countries [IEA, Figure 2, page 15]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of children</th>
<th>ISCED level 0</th>
<th>ISCED level 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Childcare Center/Day Nursery</td>
<td>Nursery School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Childminder</td>
<td>Nursery class in a Primary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0 to 5 years</td>
<td>Playgroup/Preschool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 to 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reception class in a Primary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Start at 4 or 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>ISCED 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1: Main setting types and characteristics of services for children aged 0-3 years (0.1) and children aged 3 to the start of primary school (0.2) in England [IEA, Table 8h, page 53]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting type</th>
<th>Serving children aged…</th>
<th>Typical length of day (hours)</th>
<th>Funding type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Publicly subsidized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day Nursery/Childcare center</td>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursery School</td>
<td>2-5 years</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playgroup or Preschool</td>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursery class in a state primary school</td>
<td>2-5 years</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reception class in a state primary school</td>
<td>4+-5+ years</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childminder</td>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
● Funding type exists
Transition to School

Before the child leaves the Reception class in order to progress to Year 1, an “Early Years Foundation Stage Profile” is completed by their Reception teacher. The Profile provides parents, carers, practitioners, teachers, and monitoring services with a well-rounded picture of a child’s knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels, and their readiness for Year 1 (DfE, 2017a). Each child’s level of development is assessed against the early learning goals set out in the EYFS. Year 1 teachers are provided with a copy of the Profile in order to inform a dialogue between Reception and Year 1 teachers about how best to support the development and learning of each child during the transition from ECEC to primary education. Although not legally mandated, the meeting between the Reception and Year 1 teachers usually takes place in the primary school when they discuss the Foundation Stage Profile of children who will be moving from the end of ECEC (Reception class) to Year 1.

Boundary-Spanning Mechanisms

All ECEC services are under the responsibility of the Department for Education, and because of this consolidated approach to governance, there are no “boundary-spanning mechanisms” necessary at the government level. However, cross-over between public (e.g., nursery schools) and private providers (e.g., childminders) is promoted by the Department for Education in order to provide parents with ECEC services that meet their needs. For example, childminders are encouraged to provide wrap-around care (before and/or after center-based provision) so that young children do not have to spend long days in group provision. The Department for Work and Pensions, which is responsible for employment, liaises with the Department for Education when it is in its interest to encourage mothers into work. There is currently an “inter-departmental task force” at the national level which is developing the funding and regulation structures that will support the move from 15 hours of free ECEC per week to 30, which was rolled out nationally throughout 2017. Although chaired by the Minister for Education,
representatives from the Ministries of Health, Work and Pensions, and The Treasury all attend and contribute.

**Enrollments in ECEC Services**

*By Age*

It is estimated that between only 1-3.5 percent of young children do not attend any formal ECEC provision in England (DfE, 2010a). For the past three governments, it has been a governmental aim that all children enroll in ECEC services in order to improve child development and increase parental employment, and enrollment data is collected to identify whether policies are successfully increasing enrollment. Enrollment varies with age, so that almost all 5-year-olds are enrolled in Reception classes, whereas only 85 percent of 3-year-olds attend ECEC services. This explains why Table 6.2 reports only 90 percent enrollment across the three age groups.

**Table 6.2: Percentage enrollment in formal care and preschool by age phase in study countries [IEA, Table 1, page 17]**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment in formal care and preschool by age phase (%)</th>
<th>Under 3 years</th>
<th>3 to start of primary school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*By Socioeconomic Status*

Parents with a higher income are more likely to enroll their child in “formal” (i.e. center-based) ECEC services, during their “entitlement hours” as well as additional hours, most often due to greater capacity to pay for it, whereas parents with lower incomes are more likely to rely on informal services, such as the help of family members or neighbors (DfE, 2014b). Nonetheless, the enrollment of poorer children has increased steadily since 1997, with free ECEC for 15 hours per week (later extended to 30 hours).
and childcare tax credits outside the entitlement for poor families in which both parents work.

Figure 6.2 Enrollment in formal ECEC services by parental annual income for all children age 0 until school entry.

Service Delivery Organization

Local Authorities have a statutory responsibility to ensure that all children in their locality have access to ECEC services; in other words, Local Authorities must ensure that there are enough places for all children of parents who wish them. However, the specific organization of service delivery is the responsibility of the service provider. England’s ECEC system is a mixed-economy model, so there are private, voluntary/charitable providers as well as public providers. The Local Authority is responsible for public ECEC provision, and private and voluntary/charitable providers are responsible for theirs. However, it is the statutory responsibility of Local Authorities
to ensure that there are enough providers for all the families who wish to use ECEC, by offering public provision or actively encouraging the private sector.
Chapter 7: Pedagogical Approaches and Curriculum

Key Points

- The nationally defined Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum (EYFS; DfE, 2017a) must be followed by all ECEC providers in England. It defines early learning goals distributed across seven areas of learning and development, as well as specific guidelines on child:staff ratios, use of space and time, and provision for children with special educational needs or disabilities.
- Despite outlining specific learning goals, the EYFS encourages practitioners to remain flexible and employ different pedagogical approaches based on the children in their center, to cater for the needs of the individual child.
- Play is encouraged, aiming to achieve a balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities. Nonetheless, these activities are to be tailored to the needs of the children as individuals; thus the curriculum is designed to provide appropriate pedagogy for all children regardless of developmental stage or background.
- There are critics who argue that the pedagogy implemented to achieve the early learning goals is too formal, especially for younger children, and suggest the EYFS should be modified. However, Ofsted reports seemingly refute this claim, reporting annual increases in centers achieving “good” or “outstanding” judgments for curricular implementation and pedagogy across the age range from birth to 5+ (Ofsted, 2015b).
Describing Curriculum and Pedagogical Approaches

England’s early childhood approach emphasizes age-appropriateness and play in pedagogy. Notably, the English curriculum does not prescribe a specific pedagogical approach. Instead the EYFS encourages practitioners to employ different pedagogical approaches and practice flexibly, in accordance with the current developmental stage of each individual child. Piaget and Vygotsky are frequently said to have influenced pedagogy in England, but Montessori and Steiner schools do exist, and there has been a strong Froebelian influence as well. Certain pedagogical practices are recommended—for example, scaffolding and sustained-shared thinking, which both promote high-quality interactions between adults and children—but it is ultimately left to the practitioner to identify suitable situations (usually during child-initiated activities) and adapt the practice to suit the child. Indeed, the uniqueness of each child is emphasized in the framework’s guiding principles for pedagogical practice, which state that “every child is a unique child who is constantly learning” and “children develop and learn in different ways” (DfE, 2017a, p.6).

Respondents in interviews spoke highly of pedagogy in England, with one senior teacher noting that, “Early childhood has become pedagogically very rich and very thoughtful. I mean, it always was, but it didn’t have the literature to back it up—and now it has.”

Nonetheless, in international comparisons, English pedagogy is frequently described as a “pre-primary” approach based on structured, often teacher-directed practice with regular performance assessments of children’s development against the early learning goals (e.g., Bennett, 2005). Critics point particularly to the goals in the curriculum related to reading and mathematics. However, this notion is rejected by many practitioners and researchers (Sylva et al., 2010) who argue that the early learning goals are approached through informal pedagogy.
First, although the EYFS identifies early learning goals for each child’s development, these range from concrete outcomes such as “children count reliably with numbers from 1-20” (DfE, 2017a, p.11) to more open goals for the practitioner to interpret, e.g., “children express themselves effectively, showing awareness of listeners’ needs” (p.10). Second, the EYFS clearly advocates a play-based approach to ECEC, with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities (Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004). Indeed, the EYFS states “play is essential for children’s development, building confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others” (DfE, 2017a, p.9).

Finally, the proportion of child-initiated to adult-led activities is left to the practitioners to decide based on the individual needs of each child. Thus, despite what might at first appear as “formal” curricular goals, the pedagogical strategies recommended for achieving them are largely play-based. Sylva et al. (2016) outline how pedagogy in ECEC can be seen on two dimensions—one representing the academic orientation of curricular goals and the other representing the pedagogical strategies employed, ranging from child-initiated to adult instruction. Through this perspective, the pedagogy in England’s early years settings is not as academically driven as is claimed in some international comparisons. While there is an academic aspect to some of the early learning goals, social and emotional development is also a major part of the curriculum. Moreover, play is encouraged. For this reason, the authors of this study choose to describe England’s curriculum and pedagogical approaches as holistic and balanced between cognitive and social-emotional goals.

**Historical Evolution of Curricular/Pedagogical Approaches**

The first English statement about curriculum or recommended pedagogical approaches in the early years came in the 1933 Hadow Report, which advocated the use of Froebel’s kindergarten methods in infant and nursery schools. Two leading principles were established:
“1. The recognition of the child’s spontaneous activity, and the stimulation of this activity in certain well-defined directions by the teachers.

2. The harmonious and complete development of the whole of the child’s faculties. The teacher should pay especial regard to the love of movement, which can alone secure healthy physical conditions; to the observant use of the organs of sense, special those of sight and touch; and to that eager desire of questioning which intelligent children exhibit. All these should be encouraged under due limitations, and should be developed simultaneously, so that each stage of development may be complete in itself.”

(Hadow Report, 1933, p.27)

From this, it is clear that English ECEC is founded in a holistic, child-centered approach. These principles were, of course, advisory, and so infant and nursery schools were under no obligation to follow a national curriculum. Indeed, there was an active discussion at this time surrounding the philosophy, nature, and purpose of early years provision, with growing interest in the works of Froebel, Dewey, Montessori, and Susan Isaacs resulting in an array of pedagogical approaches. This lack of consistency continued for decades, with Piagetian and Vygotskian theories entering the discussions in the ‘60s and ‘70s. Finally, the introduction of a national ECEC curriculum (the EYFS) around the turn of the 21st century sought to ensure a “coherent and flexible approach to care and learning so that whatever setting a parent choose, they can be confident that [their children] will receive a quality experience that supports their development and learning” (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008, p.7).

Previous to the EYFS, there had been Desirable Learning Outcomes introduced by the Conservative Government in the late 1990s (Department for Education and Employment, 1996). This was replaced by the Early Learning Goals included in the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Phase (Qualifications and Curriculum
Authority & Department for Education and Employment, 2000), which covered children aged 3-5. In 2003, the Birth to Three Matters curriculum was published by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 2003) in an attempt to specify a curriculum for the under 3s. However, concerns were raised over inconsistencies between Birth to Three Matters (0-3), which was centered on relationships, and the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Phase (3-5+), which was centered on developmental domains.

In 2003, the Birth to Three Matters curriculum was published by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 2003) in an attempt to specify a curriculum for the under 3s. However, concerns were raised over inconsistencies between Birth to Three Matters (0-3), which was centered on relationships, and the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Phase (3-5+), which was centered on developmental domains.

In 2008, the Department for Education published a combined and consistent curriculum for birth to school entry: the EYFS (Department for Children, Schools, and Families, 2008). This brought together and replaced all previous curriculum frameworks and documents in one coherent vision, blending together the relationships emphasis of the previous curriculum for younger children with the developmental domains of the curriculum for older children. The EYFS was introduced as a cohesive, statutory framework for early childhood education and care, and was a legal requirement for all early years settings in England for children from birth to 5 years old. It was made up of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements and the assessment processes, and Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage, which described in detail how the EYFS was to be implemented.

In 2012 the curriculum was “slimmed down” to increase flexibility of practice (DfE, 2012); the number of Early Learning Goals was reduced from 69 to 17 and the amount of paperwork to be completed by practitioners was cut back. Nonetheless, the revised EYFS upheld the principles and areas of learning and development first set out in the 2008 EYFS. In addition, safeguarding and welfare of children, along with staffing requirements, were made much more evident in the 2012. However, there is also an increased focus on school readiness, which has been criticized as contradictory to the ethos of early education that “all children, at all stages, are ready to learn” (Whitebread and Bingham, 2011). Since 2012, there have been two further revisions to the EYFS—one in 2014 (DfE, 2014a) and one in 2017 (DfE, 2017a). Neither of these revised versions
included changes to the pedagogy or curricular approaches, and were instead published to update regulations.

**Framework Documents that Influence Curriculum (National/Subnational)**

The EYFS is the only curriculum framework for ECEC and includes all regulations that pertain to ECEC practitioners and children. As the national curriculum framework, it is mandated for all formal ECEC providers to use the EYFS when planning their practice. However, the Ofsted early years inspection framework (Ofsted, 2015a) also has a significant influence on the curriculum delivered by practitioners. Although settings are not mandated to use the Ofsted inspection framework when planning activities and resources, they are required to meet the criteria in order to receive a favorable inspection report. Inspection reports for each center are published online, and are used by parents when deciding where to send their children. Moreover, a negative evaluation can result in closure. Thus, although settings are not mandated to adhere to Ofsted inspection criteria, it is very much in their own interests to do so. The monitoring process is discussed in more detail in Chapter 9.

**Nature/Content of Curriculum (Areas of Learning, Curriculum Frameworks)**

The EYFS specifies seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational provision in early years settings. Three are “prime areas” focusing on “igniting children’s curiosity and enthusiasm for learning” and “building their capacity to learn, form relationships, and thrive” (DfE, 2017a, p.7). The three prime areas are Communication and Language, Physical Development and Personal, Social, and Emotional Development. The remaining four “specific” areas are used to strengthened and apply the prime areas. The specific areas are Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World, and Expressive Arts and Design. Each of these areas of learning and development is explained with reference to experiences that should be provided for the child, for example, “Communication and Language development involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their
confidence and skills in expressive themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations” (DfE, 2017a, p.8).

In addition to curriculum, the EYFS also outlines safeguarding and welfare requirements, which includes guidelines on child protection, staff regulations, staff qualifications, staff:child ratios, health in the early years setting (e.g., healthy food, giving medicine to children, what to do if a child hurts him or herself), environmental safety (e.g., fire safety and hygiene requirements, spatial requirements), and risk assessments. These regulations and requirements are discussed in further detail in Chapter 9 and 10. Thus, one document specifies the national curriculum, recommendations for pedagogy, and safeguarding and health requirements, along with requirements for teacher qualifications, ratios, and reporting to parents.
Table 7.1: Areas of learning included in curriculum guidance for children aged 0-3 years (0.1) and children aged 3 to the start of primary school (0.2) [IEA, Table 24, page 113]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of learning in prescribed curriculum guidance</th>
<th>Level 0.1</th>
<th>Level 0.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal and emotional development</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social development including citizenship, values</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes and dispositions to learning</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical development and health education</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language development and communication skills</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading and literacy skills</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematical skills</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the natural world</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology and the digital world</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive arts, music, and creativity</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second / foreign language</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious and spiritual</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
- ● Yes, national guidance includes this area of learning
- ○ No, national guidance does not include this area of learning
- n/a Not applicable, as no national curriculum guidance exists

Use of Time and Space

Practitioners are expected to use time, space, and activities to promote child development, for instance by allocating time and space for free-play.

In terms of use of space, the EYFS has specific indoor space requirements that must be met. For instance, centers with children under 2 must have at least 3.5m² per child, while children aged 3 to 5 require 2.3m² per child (DfE, 2017a). Furthermore, providers of
ECEC must ensure access to an outdoor play area; if that is not available, outdoor activities must be planned and taken on a daily basis (unless adverse circumstances make this inappropriate or unsafe).

Relating to the use of time, no specific schedules are enforced. This is due to the fact that the main goal of the EYFS is to encourage practitioners to shape their teaching to the needs of the children, and to focus on the areas where the children might need more help. In this sense, the main requirement on use of time relates to the need to find a balance between planned and purposeful adult-led play, and child-initiated activities.

However, the “teeth” in the system is the regular inspection by Ofsted, as these have detailed inspection frameworks to ensure all EYFS requirements are met. Moreover, if staff or parents feel the use of time and space is inadequate, they can contact the Local Authority or Ofsted to make a complaint.

**Diversity and Cultural Responsiveness**

Practitioners are expected to tailor their practice to the children in attendance. When planning activities, the EYFS encourages practitioners to take into account the cultural backgrounds of the children and choose activities and experiences that they can relate to. As with VII.6 above, the Ofsted inspectors will ensure that practice is being representative and inclusive of all the children in the setting. In order to get a positive rating, the Ofsted Inspection Handbook outlines the following: “Practitioners provide an exceptional range of resources and activities that reflect and value the diversity of children’s experiences. They actively challenge gender, cultural, and racial stereotyping and help children gain an understanding of people, families, and communities beyond their immediate experience” (Ofsted 2015a). There are also well-advertised routes to make a complaint for both parents and practitioners who think that practice is failing in any respect, including lack of cultural awareness.
Provision for:

Children Identified with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities

One of the guiding principles of the EYFS is that every child is unique, and develops and learns in their own way, at their own rate. This includes children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND). Settings funded by Local Authorities must follow the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (DfE, 2015c), outlining the statutory guidance for organizations working with people with special educational needs or disabilities.

Practitioners observe the development of each child daily and must consider whether a child may have SEND. If they need specialist advice, the Local Authority is responsible for providing it. In such a case, the practitioner (sometimes with outside expertise) will help the family to access relevant services from an appropriate agency. State nursery schools and nursery/Reception classes, as well as private providers, are required to identify a qualified member of staff to act as the Special Educational Needs Coordinator, responsible for ensuring the setting is identifying and meeting SEND needs appropriately, and ensuring that parents are involved in these processes. When necessary, the Coordinator is also responsible for liaising with specialized professionals or agencies to help the children in need and their families. Once again, inspection criteria for ECEC settings include having appropriate strategies for handling concerns of SEND and accommodating children with SEND (Ofsted, 2015a).

Children whose Home Language/Culture is not that of the Country Majority

For children whose home language is not English, the EYFS requires providers to encourage the children’s use of their home language in play, rather than forcing them to use English at all times, in order to support their language development. However, no clear specifications are provided on how to do this.
At the same time, teachers must also ensure that children have sufficient opportunities to learn and reach a good standard of English so that they are ready to benefit from the opportunities available to them when they begin primary education. Communication, Language, and Literacy skills in the EYFS must be assessed in English, but all other areas of learning and development can be assessed in a different language if the setting has the facilities to do so. If the child does not have a strong grasp of English, the practitioner must meet with the parents/carers to discuss the child’s language abilities in the home language in order to establish whether there is cause for concern about a language delay, or whether they might just be struggling with English specifically.

**Children who are Deemed Gifted**

As individualized learning is encouraged, practitioners are expected to scaffold around a child’s existing developmental level. Although “gifted” children are not specifically mentioned in the curriculum, it is expected that each child is learning at the appropriate level for them, as one of the Ofsted inspection criteria is that “children of all abilities are offered appropriate learning opportunities” (Ofsted, 2015a).

**Transitions (Within Setting, Across Settings)**

The EYFS was designed to ease “horizontal” transitions from setting to setting by specifying the same curriculum regardless of setting or age group. The “vertical” transition from ECEC to primary education is aided by the fact that Reception classes are always located within a primary school, so that the final year of the EYFS is spent in school. Moreover, there is precise alignment between the three “specific areas” of learning and development outlined in the EYFS—Literacy, Mathematics, and Understanding the World—and the three “core subjects” of the National Curriculum for Primary and Secondary Education—English, Mathematics, and Science.

To support a smooth transition from the EYFS to Year 1, early years practitioners are required to carry out an EYFS profile for each child in the final term of the year in which
the child reaches the age of 5, comparing the child’s current level of development against the early learning goals set out in the EYFS. The EYFS profile is used to inform a professional discussion between EYFS and Year 1 teachers and allows the new teacher to plan an effective and appropriate curriculum that will meet the needs of all the children in the class (DfE, 2017a). In addition to this, practitioners must include a brief paragraph explaining how the pupil demonstrates the characteristics of effective learning outlined in the EYFS curriculum framework: playing and exploring, active learning, creating, and thinking critically. In contrast to the early learning goals, these are processes rather than outcomes, and they give Year 1 teachers context that is crucial for understanding the child’s future learning needs. Thus, the EYFS profile introduces the Year 1 teacher to the child and helps the teacher to identity how they can meet the child’s needs, and a subsequent conversation between the EYFS practitioners and Year 1 teacher expands on information presented in the profile. Such conversations are made easier by the fact that the Reception class (last year of ECEC) is in the primary school containing years 1 through 6.

Discussion between the Reception and Year 1 teachers is particularly important for pupils with special educational needs or disabilities. As the Reception practitioner completes the profile with the understanding that a child with SEND may demonstrate learning and development in a different way, it is important for the Year 1 teacher to be aware of how the Reception practitioner is assessing the child’s development. The EYFS practitioner also needs to explain the child’s method of communication to the Year 1 teacher in order for that teacher to effectively teach the child. In much the same way, the discussion is important for children whose home language is not English. Their EYFS profile may suggest that they have language delays, due to the fact that the early learning goals for communication and language and for literacy must be assessed in relation to English. The EYFS practitioner, from discussions with the parents, would know whether the child’s language development in the home language is at the expected level and must discuss this with the Year 1 teacher. The EYFS practitioner
should also convey the cultural background of the children to help the Year 1 teacher understand the values held by the child that may explain their responses to the environment and to social situations.

Innovations

Because the EYFS does not prescribe a particular pedagogy, practitioners are at liberty to use innovative practices and pedagogical approaches, provided that they promote development in the seven outlined areas of learning and development. Although such “freedom to innovate” may sound idyllic, in reality practitioners are often anxious that Ofsted inspectors will expect school-like pedagogy. Ofsted tries to make clear that they expect practitioners to use their judgement about pedagogy for individual children, but one of our interviewees reported rumors about “unfair inspectors who expected formal learning and so marked a setting ‘down’ (for play based pedagogy).”

Although not new in England, the clear alignment between the ECEC and primary school curricula characterizes the system as a whole, as does the clear alignment between the EYFS and the Ofsted Framework for Inspection. Finally, the EYFS Profile (observation-based assessment) completed near the end of the Reception year is based squarely on the early learning goals that are the backbone of the EYFS curriculum. The entire system is integrated and so innovations generally have to conform to its principles.

Contributions to Quality

The EYFS was identified as the “jewel in the crown” of the English ECEC system in more than half of the interviews. One government official summarized: “[The EYFS] is something that we have that is better [more comprehensive] than in other countries. It sets the standards, it is mandated for providers, Ofsted inspect against its standards. It does work.” The EYFS is founded on research in child development and provides practitioners with examples of effective practice and experiences that will encourage a
child’s development. Adherence to this curriculum and a high level of knowledge of its seven domains/areas of development is a strong focus of Ofsted inspections. In addition to fostering child development, the curriculum contributes to the high-quality standards of overall provision. Included within the framework are all the regulations that apply to “organizational” provision, such as staff:child ratios, staff qualifications, child welfare regulations, and health and safety legislation. Moreover, as all ECEC settings are mandated to use this curriculum framework, the same high-quality provision can be expected across the system, if children or staff move between centers.

Challenges

The EYFS curriculum was defined over a decade ago, and thus was influenced by educational research from the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Although there have been some changes to the curriculum in this century, the core structure of it and its areas of learning and development remain the same. There has been argument that the curriculum should be updated to include more “21st-century” skills, for example by encouraging the development of executive function in young children with activities that include planning and self-regulation (Sylva et al., 2016).
Chapter 8: Children’s Development: Goals, Standards, Assessment, and Accountability

Key Points

- The EYFS curriculum, defined by the Department for Education, contains 17 early learning goals that young children are expected to meet by the time they leave their ECEC provision to begin Year 1 in primary school.
- ECEC settings are inspected against these early learning goals in order to ensure that practice is encouraging child development in the key areas.
- In the realm of health services, the Healthy Child Programme, run by the Department of Health, details the expected standards of provision for young children. Data is collected on these standards nationally and is used to inform policy and monitor quality. Each child’s General Practitioner is expected to be familiar with the Healthy Child standards for child health and development and to orient their practice toward achieving them.

Early Learning and Development Standards

History/Evolution

In 1996, the Department for Education and Employment published its first curriculum for the early years (age 3 to school entry) entitled *Desirable Learning Outcomes for Children Entering Compulsory Schooling* (DfEE, 1996), which specified the learning goals that should be achieved before school entry. In 2000, Curriculum Guidance for the Early Years expanded the goals to include the more socioemotional and creative aspects of development (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority & DfEE, 2000).

In 2003, Birth to Three Matters outlined the curriculum for children 0-3, but focused almost exclusively on emotional and social development rather than learning goals and placed emphasis on relationships as the core for development in learning (DfES, 2003).
In 2008, the two curricula (Birth to Three Matters and Curriculum Guidance for the Early Years) were merged, and the *Early Years Foundation Stage* curriculum framework became the single statutory framework for all children in ECEC. Its main innovation was to extend the emphasis on **learning** down to 0-3 and extend the emphasis on **relationships** up to 3-5+, making an integrated whole that combined a focus on learning goals with a focus on relationships between staff and children, staff and parents, and children and children. In other words, the “developmental standards” were always to be considered simultaneously with the social context.

In 2012, the EYFS was reformed to reduce the number of learning goals from 68 to 17 (DfE, 2012), after practitioners complained that it was too detailed and prescriptive. Another major change in 2012 was an increased emphasis on safeguarding children and a renewed focus on school readiness (harking back to 1996). Subsequent updates in 2014 and 2017 have not changed the early learning goals which are described in detail in the following section.

**Content (What Children Should Know and Be Able to Do)**

The 17 current early learning goals are distributed between the seven areas of learning and development outlined in the EYFS. The following description is taken directly from the Department for Education’s statutory framework of the EYFS (DfE, 2015c):

**The Prime Areas**

**Communication and language**

1. **Listening and attention:** children listen attentively in a range of situations. They listen to stories, accurately anticipating key events and respond to what they hear with relevant comments, questions or actions. They give their attention to what others say and respond appropriately, while engaged in another activity.
2. **Understanding**: children follow instructions involving several ideas or actions. They answer “how” and “why” questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events.

3. **Speaking**: children express themselves effectively, showing awareness of listeners’ needs. They use past, present, and future forms accurately when talking about events that have happened or are to happen in the future. They develop their own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events.

**Physical development**

4. **Moving and handling**: children show good control and coordination in large and small movements. They move confidently in a range of ways, safely negotiating space. They handle equipment and tools effectively, including pencils for writing.

5. **Health and self-care**: children know the importance for good health of physical exercise, and a healthy diet, and talk about ways to keep healthy and safe. They manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs successfully, including dressing and going to the toilet independently.

**Personal, social, and emotional development**

6. **Self-confidence and self-awareness**: children are confident to try new activities, and say why they like some activities more than others. They are confident to speak in a familiar group, will talk about their ideas, and will choose the resources they need for their chosen activities. They say when they do or don’t need help.

7. **Managing feelings and behavior**: children talk about how they and others show feelings, talk about their own and others’ behavior, and its consequences, and know that some behavior is unacceptable. They work as part of a group
or class, and understand and follow the rules. They adjust their behavior to different situations, and take changes of routine in their stride.

8. Making relationships: children play cooperatively, taking turns with others. They take account of one another’s ideas about how to organize their activity. They show sensitivity to others’ needs and feelings, and form positive relationships with adults and other children.

The Specific Areas

Literacy

1. Reading: children read and understand simple sentences. They use phonic knowledge to decode regular words and read them aloud accurately. They also read some common irregular words. They demonstrate understanding when talking with others about what they have read.

2. Writing: children use their phonic knowledge to write words in ways which match their spoken sounds. They also write some irregular common words. They write simple sentences which can be read by themselves and others. Some words are spelled correctly and others are phonetically plausible.

Mathematics

3. Numbers: children count reliably with numbers from 1 to 20, place them in order and say which number is one more or one less than a given number. Using quantities and objects, they add and subtract two single-digit numbers and count on or back to find the answer. They solve problems, including doubling, halving, and sharing.

4. Shape, space, and measures: children use everyday language to talk about size, weight, capacity, position, distance, time, and money to compare quantities and objects and to solve problems. They recognize, create, and describe
patterns. They explore characteristics of everyday objects and shapes and use mathematical language to describe them.

**Understanding the world**

5. *People and communities:* children talk about past and present events in their own lives and in the lives of family members. They know that other children do not always enjoy the same things, and are sensitive to this. They know about similarities and differences between themselves and others, and among families, communities, and traditions.

6. *The world:* children know about similarities and differences in relation to places, objects, materials, and living things. They talk about the features of their own immediate environment and how environments might vary from one another. They make observations of animals and plants and explain why some things occur, and talk about changes.

7. *Technology:* children recognise that a range of technology is used in places such as homes and schools. They select and use technology for particular purposes.

**Expressive arts and design**

8. *Exploring and using media and materials:* children sing songs, make music and dance, and experiment with ways of changing them. They safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools and techniques, experimenting with color, design, texture, form, and function.

9. *Being imaginative:* children use what they have learned about media and materials in original ways, thinking about uses and purposes. They represent their own ideas, thoughts and feelings through design and technology, art, music, dance, role-play, and stories.
Table 8.1: Expectations for child outcomes in different areas of learning and development for children aged 0-3 years (0.1) and children aged 3 to the start of primary school (0.2) [IEA, Table 35, page 130]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explicit expectations for child outcomes in areas of learning</th>
<th>Level 0.1</th>
<th>Level 0.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal and emotional development</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social development including citizenship, values</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes and dispositions to learning</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical development and health education</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language development and communication skills</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading and literacy skills</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematical skills</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the natural world</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology and the digital world</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive arts music, and creativity</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second / foreign language</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious and spiritual</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
- ● Yes, there are expectations for child outcomes
- ○ No, there are not expectations for child outcomes in this area
- n/a There are no stated expectations for child outcomes during this phase

**Mandated/Not**

All early years providers must follow the EYFS, which details the early learning goals and provides guidelines on how to approach these in day-to-day activities. All settings are inspected by Ofsted to ensure the appropriate implementation of the curriculum and pedagogy outlined in the EYFS in a way that best supports child development.
**Use**

The early learning goals are used every day to plan activities and to informally assess children’s development. For example, photographs on display are labeled with respect to the learning goal demonstrated in the documented activity. Parents are sent emails and photos talking about the day’s activities in terms of the way they were intended to support their child’s development within the domains of the curriculum. Importantly, goals related to reading and writing are not expected until the final year of the EYFS, when children are about to become 6.

During the Ofsted inspection visit (for which very little notice is given), staff are asked to provide individual records of children and documentation of practice as evidence of implementation of the national curriculum and adherence to its early learning goals. Individual child records document progress over time within each of the seven domains of development. Children’s developmental record may include photographs of physical development such as jumping over a wall, drawing development through successive paintings, or narrative development through transcripts of children’s own stories. Moreover, settings are required to share with parents records of their children’s developmental progress in relation to the early learning goals.

**Modifications**

As mentioned previously, the 2012 revision of the EYFS streamlined the early learning goals. Prior to this, the EYFS was published alongside Development Matters (Early Education, 2012), governmental guidance that outlined stages of progress towards the early learning goals that children were expected to achieve before the beginning of primary school. Although this is no longer published by the government, it is still used frequently by practitioners to track progress towards the early learning goals. Compared to the newer curricula in many European countries, the EYFS is beginning to
look at little tired. However, the governmental work required for Brexit will mean that educational initiatives such as curriculum reform have had to take a backseat.

Health Standards

History/Evolution

Services related to children’s health have always been the responsibility of the Department of Health (DH). In 2004, the National Service Framework for Children, Young People, and Maternity Services was published, outlining “national standards for the first time for children’s health and social care, which promote high quality, women and child-centered services and personalized care that meets the needs of parents, children, and their families” (DH, 2004, p.9). “Standards” in this document applied to services to support healthy development in addition to the health goals for individuals.

Following significant changes in parents’ expectations, knowledge about neurological development, and knowledge about effective health interventions, the Healthy Child Programme—Pregnancy and the First Five Years of Life was introduced in 2009 (DH, 2009). This updated the health standards for children and young people and included a major emphasis on parenting support, the use of new technologies, integrated services, and vulnerable children and families, underpinned by a model of universalism. Health and development reviews are a key feature of the Healthy Child Programme. As outlined in Chapter 5, parents are given a “red book” around the time of the child’s birth which contains developmental milestones for the parents and GP to use for tracking and recording a child’s development. Each child’s development is checked throughout the pregnancy and post-birth, at the ages of 10-14 days, 6-8 weeks, 9-12 months and 2-2.5 years.

Mandated/Not
All national health services must adhere to the health standards set out in the Healthy Child Programme, which include a series of inoculations approved by the National Institute of Clinical Excellence, a semi-independent agency funded the Department of Health.

Parents can refuse inoculations, dentistry, and health checks. However, if they refuse urgent treatment or a succession of routine screenings, the family will be referred to social services to investigate the child’s well-being. When there are serious concerns, the child can become looked after by the Local Authority so that the parent is no longer responsible to consent to medical treatment. These cases are very rare.

Use

The vast majority of the UK population uses the NHS’s early childhood health services. It is estimated that only 11 percent of the UK population (data not available for England specifically) have some form of private medical insurance (King’s Fund, 2014), which may be used sparingly with families relying mainly on the free National Health Service. The health of all resident children in England is monitored by the National Health Service and appropriate services offered for free, including community health services, dentistry, and medicines.
Table 8.2: Use of child outcomes data for children aged 0-3 years (0.1) and children aged 3 to the start of primary school (0.2) [IEA, Table 39, page 136]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of results of national or typical subnational child assessments to inform the development of ECEC policy and practice nationally</th>
<th>Level 0.1</th>
<th>Level 0.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For accountability and performance management of settings</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For commissioning of providers</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By central body to inform strategic planning of ECEC</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By regional body to inform strategic planning of ECEC</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By local body to inform strategic planning of ECEC</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By providers to inform strategic planning of ECEC</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By settings to inform planning of ECEC programs</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By ECEC practitioner-groups to inform planning of ECEC programs</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By parent bodies to inform parental choice of ECEC</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
● Yes, outcomes data are used for this purpose

Assessment, Data, and Accountability

Two compulsory assessments are required to be conducted on young children. The first, known as the “two-year-old check,” is the responsibility of the Ministry of Health, and is followed by the “Early Years Foundation Stage Profile” (EYFSP). This Profile, which falls under the responsibility of the Ministry for Education, is completed by the Reception teacher in the final term of the year in which the child reaches age 5.
“Two-Year-Old Check”

This check is conducted at the age of 2-2.5, by health visitors. It assesses the child’s physical development, as well as their cognitive and social-emotional development—with the cooperation of the early years practitioner if the child is already in some form of childcare, or with the help of the parents otherwise. Data collected from these assessments is fed into the Maternity and Children’s Data Set held by the National Health Service (NHS, 2013). This provides comparative data that is used to improve service quality and service efficiency. It also allows the Department of Health to commission services in a way that reduces inequalities, by providing extra funding to disadvantaged areas. Although this is the only mandated check, the vast majority of children regularly visit their general physician's “office,” which is free and deals with childhood illnesses from serious (e.g., measles) to minor (e.g., upper respiratory infections). Each child has a detailed health record kept here, which is passed on if the child moves. If the general practitioner has concerns, they pass them on to the health visitor who is linked to their practice, and this health worker has a statutory right to make home visits in cases of concern.

The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP)

The EYFSP is conducted under the Education ministry, not Health. It takes place in the final term of the year in which the child turns 5; in other words, in the Reception class shortly before the child starts compulsory education in Year 1. Rather than requiring formal assessments, the EYFS recommends more informal ongoing assessments of children’s development. Practitioners are encouraged to keep paperwork to a minimum, through informal note-taking during observation of the children as they carry out normal practice in their everyday interactions. The EYFS profile is based on practitioner’s knowledge of the pupil, gained predominantly through observation and interaction in a range of daily activities, but it also takes account of contributions from the child, the child’s parents, and any other relevant adults. This knowledge is used to
compare the child’s current level of development to the 17 early learning goals set out in the curriculum. The comparison must state whether the child’s learning and development for each early learning goal is: not yet at the level of development expected at the end of the EYFS (emerging); at the level of development expected at the end of the EYFS (expected); or beyond the level of development expected at the end of the EYFS (exceeding).

Data from the EYFS profile is collected locally and nationally for every cohort in order to monitor the development of children, ensure standards are being met, and inform policy development. This was summarized in an interview by a government official who said:

“[The EYFS profile] is something that’s really big and we really make sure that that’s key and that we understand it and that we’re really pushing to make sure the [attainment] gap (between rich and poor) is closing. So the breakdowns [of data] for the disadvantaged and demographic groups are really important for Government.”

Locally, data from the EYFS profile is used to identify settings where children’s development is “exceeding” in order to reward those settings, and identify settings where children’s development is “emerging” (i.e., failing to meet expectation) in order to support those settings with extra funding, or to place those settings under special measures for improvement.

Thus, although education and health data sets are created on both a national and local level, they are not integrated. Health has justifiable concerns over confidentiality of patient data. However, services are encouraged to share data and information when the well-being of a child is at risk.

**Innovations**
Many Local Authorities and individual settings purchase software that is tailored to the early learning goals. This enables them to efficiently track the developmental progress of individual children between birth and school entry with relation to the goals. Some Local Authorities provide “child-progress tracking software” to centers for free, making it easier for them to report to parents on their children’s progress. Technology provides the conceptual framework for assessments in the early learning goals, as a means for recording and saving them, as well as the analytical framework for comparisons.

**Contributions to Quality**

National data on child outcomes and health standards allows the government to monitor the quality of ECEC services. As this data is published publicly, and funding is allocated with consideration of performance, the system is accountability-driven. Decisions about a setting’s performance are not made solely on the basis of children’s development; the social and cultural factors of the local community are also taken into account. The national assessment data for each Local Authority is benchmarked against other authorities with similar demographic profiles, thus promoting more fair and useful comparison.

**Challenges**

From the national data collected, it is difficult to identify the impact of specific policies. Although correlations can be drawn between national averages on the EYFS profile and the timing of specific policy implementation, this evidence is not strong enough to prove the effectiveness of any one initiative. For example, a decrease in the gap between the outcomes of rich and poor children does not *automatically* demonstrate the effectiveness of the National Pupil Premium (paid to settings for each disadvantaged child enrolled). Such a decrease might instead result from better health of poor children or even a national television program aimed at preschoolers. In this way, the data collected can only be used to monitor the quality of the system overall, without drawing specific conclusions about which specific aspect of the system contributes towards it.
For example, is the Ofsted inspection system more important in improving quality than the system of teacher training? The national databases on children and on centers, no matter how accurate and detailed, cannot answer this question. However, research studies specifically tailored to examine the effectiveness of particular aspects of the system are also commissioned, which are usually based on samples and not on the entire population.

To summarize the challenges, the large-scale collection of child assessment data enables policymakers as well as parents to know how well the country—and individual children—are developing. It is broad brush, however—it can tell that development of children in the north of the country lags behind that of their peers in the south, but cannot give the exact reasons for this. In order to answer more detailed questions about aspects of the ECEC system, smaller and more targeted research is commissioned by the government, research councils, and charities.
Chapter 9: Program Quality: Standards, Inspection, and Improvement

Key Points

- Standards and regulations for all services are set by the central government.
- Education, health, and social welfare services are all monitored in a substantial and regular way. This leads to common standards in practices across the country, although lapses do sometimes occur.
- Ofsted, the national monitoring and inspection body for the entire education system, monitors the implementation of regulations for ECEC settings in order to ensure high-quality services.

Program Regulations

England’s ECEC services are highly regulated. All formal providers must register with Ofsted and meet all the requirements of the EYFS curriculum and assessment frameworks. All regulations are developed and monitored by the central government, but through consultation with Local Authorities, early years providers, and parents. The majority of the consultation responses come from early years practitioners, local government officials, owners of private nurseries, and parents. Following this, the government publishes a response to the consultation and finalizes its proposal. This then becomes part of an Education Bill voted on in Parliament before it becomes a statutory (legal) requirement and integrated into the EYFS.

At the time of writing, the following regulations apply to all formal childcare providers, private and public:

Staff:Child Ratios and Staff Qualification Requirements
There are no group size limitations in England, as staff:child ratios are used instead. All staff:child ratios are specified according to the age of children in the group, as well as the qualification level of the staff. The criteria for staff qualifications are detailed in the following chapter, but for the purposes of this chapter, English level 2 qualifications equate roughly to ISCED level 3 education, English level 3 equates to ISCED levels 4 and 5, and English level 6 equates to ISCED level 6. Level 6 staff members must be qualified teachers with a university degree.

For children under the age of 2, there must be at least one member of staff in each room for every three children, with at least one member of staff holding a level 3 qualification with suitable experience. At least half of the rest of the staff must hold a level 2 qualification and at least half must have received training that specifically addresses the care of babies. For 2-year-olds, there must be at least one member of staff for every four children, with at least one staff member holding a level 3 qualification and at least half of the other staff holding a level 2 qualification.

For children aged 3 and over, in any setting supervised by a level 6-qualified staff member (e.g., a public nursery school, a nursery class in a public school, or another setting), there must be at least one staff member to every 13 children. At least one other member of staff (besides the level-6 qualified staff member) must hold a level 3 qualification. In public nursery schools or nursery classes in a public primary school, there must always be a level 6 staff member. In other early years settings that do not have a level 6 staff member present, the ratio for children aged 3 and over is 1:8. Because many classrooms in the private and charitable setting are not led by a bachelor’s degree-level teacher, their ratio is 1:8.

For children in Reception classes or children in independent schools where the majority of children will reach the age of 5 within the school year, there must be a level 6 qualified teacher for every 30 children. This is the same as the regulations for all primary school provision. However, in practice, virtually all Reception classes have a
teaching assistant, usually holding a level 3 qualification. Ofsted inspectors expect Reception classes to have at least two qualified staff for the class and inspection reports would be critical of schools that did not operate on ratios of 1:13-15 in classes with children 4+-5+ years.

**Physical Space Requirements**

Providers must ensure that their premises, including overall floor space and outdoor spaces, are fit for purpose and suitable for the age of children cared for and the activities provided on the premises. For children under 2, 3.5m² per child is required; 2.5m² is required for children aged 2; and 2.3m² is required for children aged 3 to 5. Providers must provide access to an outdoor play area or, if that is not possible, outdoor activities should be undertaken on a daily basis. Providers must also comply with requirements of health and safety legislation (e.g., fire safety and hygiene requirements) and take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of children, staff, and others on the premises in the case of a fire or any other emergency. For instance, they must have fire detectors, fire exits, fire control equipment, and an emergency evacuation procedure.

**Risk Assessment Requirements**

Regulations concerning risk are very detailed. Providers must determine where it is helpful to make some written risk assessments in relation to specific issues, to inform staff practice, and to demonstrate how they are managing risks if asked by parents or inspectors. Risk assessments should identify aspects of the environment that need to be checked on a regular basis, when and by whom those aspects will be checked, and how the risk will be removed or minimized. Providers must maintain records and obtain and share information (with parents and carers, other professionals working with the child, the police, social services, and Ofsted) to ensure the safe and efficient management of the settings, and to help ensure the needs of all children are met. These records must be easily accessible and available. Confidential information and records about staff and
children must be held securely and accessible and available only to those who have a right or professional need to see them.

**Table 9.1: Staff:child ratios for children aged 0-3 years (0.1) and children aged 3 to the start of primary school (0.2) [IEA, Table 21, page 107]**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended staff: child ratio for children</th>
<th>England</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 1 year old</td>
<td>1:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year old</td>
<td>1:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years old</td>
<td>1:4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years old</td>
<td>1:13* or 1:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years old</td>
<td>1:13* or 1:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years old</td>
<td>1:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 years old</td>
<td>1:30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
* When led by level 6 qualified staff member – ratio is 1:8 when led by staff with lower qualification

**External Inspection (Monitoring) Regulations**

Once a provider registers as an early years setting with Ofsted, they are subject to inspections at least once every four years. These inspections evaluate the provider’s adherence to the EYFS: the extent to which they meet the statutory learning and assessment guidelines as well as regulations concerning staff qualification, staff:child ratios, and reporting to parents. They further evaluate the overall quality and standards of the early years pedagogy in line with the principles and early learning goals of the EYFS. The inspection focuses mainly on process quality as the Ofsted inspector observes the teaching and learning practices alongside interviews with staff, parents, and children. Nonetheless, inspectors also look at structural variables like staff training, adherence to the EYFS regulations, and leadership strategies.
All inspectors follow the Early Years Inspection Handbook (Ofsted, 2015a), which outlines specific guidelines on how to prepare, conduct, and grade all evaluations. Evidence about the quality of teaching and learning can be gathered by observing the children at play; talking to the children and practitioners about the activities provided; observing the interactions between practitioners and children; gauging children’s levels of understanding and their engagement in learning; talking to practitioners about their assessment of children’s knowledge, skills, and abilities and how they are extending them; observing care routines and how they are used to support children’s personal development; evaluating the practitioners’ knowledge of the early years curriculum; and talking to parents. In addition, inspectors scrutinize children’s records, the daily/weekly/termly activity plans, and communications with parents.

The length of the inspection varies based on the type and size of the ECEC setting (Ofsted, 2015a). In the case of childminders, the inspector will remain on site for about three hours, whereas in group provision open during restricted hours, the inspection will last for about four hours. In a group provision open full days, the inspector is required to be present for a minimum of six hours, and in the case of large-scale provision centers, the inspector will either be carried out by more than one inspector, or be carried out over more than one day.

In all group settings, with the exception of childminders (as their groups will generally be very small), the inspector must track the experiences and development levels of a representative sample of children. The inspector will therefore choose a minimum of two children, then discuss the children’s starting points and progress with the provider. The evidence collected must reflect the quality of the practitioner’s assessment of the children’s knowledge and progress, the impact of any early years pupil premium funding on the children’s progress, the discussions held with the children’s key person regarding progress, any records the provider keeps that show how they have tracked the progress of the children, and whether children are developing skills in the prime areas that help them to be ready for their next stage of education.
Following the inspection, a grade is awarded for overall effectiveness, as well sub-grades for “effectiveness of leadership and management,” “quality of teaching, learning, and assessment,” “personal development, behavior, and welfare,” and “outcomes for children.” These are graded on a four-point scale from 1 (outstanding) to 4 (inadequate). The results of the inspection are published on the Ofsted website, with the name of the setting, and directly fed-back to the Local Authority to inform their decisions about funding. Centers are visited more frequently if previous inspections have found cause for concern. The Ofsted Chief Inspector for Early Years publishes an annual report in which he/she gives performance data on early childhood providers by region and by type of provider (Ofsted, 2015b), thus enabling the public and policy makers to compare quality over time and across the country.
Table 9.2: Aspects of quality assurance processes covered by inspection for children aged 0-3 years (0.1) and children aged 3 to the start of primary school (0.2) [IEA, Table 30, page 133]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of quality assurance covered by inspection</th>
<th>Level 0.1</th>
<th>Level 0.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regulation compliance</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff performance</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership and management</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s learning outcomes</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum program</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s well-being</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental satisfaction</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial stability</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value for money</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
● Yes, aspect covered
○ No, aspect not covered
n/a Not applicable, as no accreditation exists

Professionalism and Adequacy of External Inspection Personnel

Ofsted has rigorous recruitment and training procedures for its inspectors, and all are expected to have a high level of knowledge of the Early Years Inspection Handbook. New inspectors must demonstrate agreement (in numeric judgments) with more experienced ones and have to meet stringent standards for quick and well-written reports. The handbook is based squarely on the EYFS, but Ofsted has also consulted academic researchers regarding quality indicators in early years provision. Ofsted monitors the quality of inspections, but no external review is conducted. Providers can appeal if they think their inspection grade is inaccurate, but judgments are rarely overturned.
Uses of External Inspection Data

As noted previously, all Ofsted inspection reports are publicly available online. They are published with the name of the setting, the setting location, and names of the setting leadership team, but names of individual children and teaching staff are not included. Settings that receive an inspection grade of 2 (“requires improvement”) are inspected again within a year to see if the recommended improvements have been made. If the setting has not made the improvements, then it will receive an inspection grade of 1 (“inadequate”) and the Local Authority will decide whether to shut the setting down completely or take measures to improve it. Ofsted inspection grades are also used by Local Authorities when providing government-funded places, as the government aims to provide these in settings rated good (3) or outstanding (4).

Table 9.3: Reporting of inspection results of settings for children aged 0-3 years (0.1) and children aged 3 to the start of primary school (0.2) [IEA, Table 32, page 124]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting process of inspection</th>
<th>Level 0.1</th>
<th>Level 0.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Report to setting</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report to parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report to providers</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report to local body with responsibility for ECEC</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report to regional body with responsibility for ECEC</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report to national body with responsibility for ECEC</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report published in local media</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report published on internet</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
● Yes, reporting does occur
○ No, reporting does not occur
n/a Not applicable, as no inspection exists
Summarized monitoring data is collected and published by each Local Authority so they can know the overall quality of provision in their locality. Further, summaries of all inspections are reported nationally by Ofsted so that the overall quality of the English ECEC system can be tracked from region to region, from year to year, and for different types of provision, e.g., public vs. private. National monitoring data is used by central government to identify overall quality and areas of improvement, and assess the impact of policies. As of March 2015, 85 percent of early years registered providers (including center-based, school-based, and childminder provision) were rated “good” or “outstanding” (Ofsted, 2015b). This represents a dramatic increase of 18 percentage points in five years. The Children’s Minister (one of three deputies to the Senior Minister of Education) says that the high inspection rating of the ECEC system reveals that practitioners are becoming more able to tailor their practice to the early learning goals set out in the EYFS. Monitoring data broken down by Local Authority is used by central government as a performance measure of Local Authorities to inform funding decisions. Consistent poor performance of a Local Authority leads to high-level enquiry about adequacy of services and management, and can potentially lead to funding sanctions.
Table 9.3: Use of inspection results of settings to inform the development of policy and practice in settings for children aged 0-3 years (0.1) and children aged 3 to the start of primary school (0.2) [IEA, Table 34, page 126]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of inspection reports</th>
<th>Level 0.1</th>
<th>Level 0.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reports used for accountability and performance management of ECEC providers and setting</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports used for commissioning providers</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports used by central body to inform strategic planning of ECEC</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports used by regional body to inform strategic planning of ECEC</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports used by local body to inform strategic planning of ECEC</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports used by provider bodies to inform strategic planning of ECEC</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports used by settings to inform planning of ECEC services</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports used by ECEC practitioner groups to inform planning of ECEC services</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports used by parent bodies to inform parental choice of ECEC</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
- ● Yes, results are used
- ○ No, results are not used
- n/a Not applicable, as no inspection exists

Innovations

Some groups, especially private nursery chains, devise their own internal monitoring schemes to improve practice and enhance professional development. Moreover, some professional development courses in universities use research-based, standardized quality observation scales such as the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) as their basis for training. Many groups in England are experimenting with the use of observational scales devised originally for evaluation research (e.g. ECERS,
CLASS) as the basis for professional monitoring of staff with the aim of professional development.

**Contributions to Quality**

England, along with other countries in the United Kingdom, has very generous staff:child ratios, especially for children under 3. Although this does contribute to high quality, it is also expensive, resulting in high staffing costs and few extra funds available to increase teacher salaries or fund professional development.

Meanwhile, regular inspections drive up quality by making it a high priority for ECEC providers, as they do not want to risk sanctions such as the withholding of funds or even closure. Because inspection reports are published online and accessible to all, settings are held accountable for the quality of their provision, and those with low-quality provision will be less attractive to parents and could face closure from the Local Authority. Moreover, the national dataset of inspection reports is split by sub-grades (for “effectiveness of leadership and management,” “quality of teaching, learning and assessment,” “personal development, behavior and welfare,” and “outcomes for children”). This helps local governments identify areas which need improvement. For example, if “personal development, behavior and welfare” scores are consistently lower nationally than the other sub-grades, the local officials could decide to provide guidance or additional funding for this area.
Chapter 10: Professional Preparation and Development

Key Points

• ECEC staff can have a variety of qualifications, ranging from level 2 to level 6 or above. The EYFS’s explicit staff:child ratios specify how many staff with each level of qualifications are required in each setting.

• In order to obtain the qualifications necessary to join the ECEC workforce, individuals follow many routes leading to different levels of qualification, including vocational training courses intended mainly for young people 16-19 years of age or undergraduate university degrees, possibly followed by post-graduate teacher training university courses. There are also employment-based teacher training routes which confer Qualified Teacher Status on those who work in specialist “teacher training” ECEC settings and have already attained an undergraduate degree.

• Pre-service teaching qualifications are regulated by the National College for Teaching and Leadership, an executive agency of the Department for Education which sets the content standards for teacher training courses (level 6) for those training to teach children 3-11 years. For levels lower then 6, pre-service courses must be accredited by Ofqual, a non-ministerial government department that regulates qualifications, exams, and tests in what is called “further education” and not “higher education.”

• One of the weaknesses of the English ECEC system is that, compared to pre-service training, training for serving teachers (in-service training) is largely unregulated and offered by universities, private companies, and charities.

• Staff wages are usually higher in state nurseries than private or charitable ones. This reflects the higher proportion of qualified teachers in the public sector, and also the different characteristics of children served. For example, there are typically more children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in public provision, as they have better facilities, and so the settings receive more money to better support these children.

• There are national pay scales in the state sector. Level 6 qualified teachers get the same salary and benefits as teachers in primary schools, while those with level 2 or 3 qualifications receive lower salaries. Private sector salaries are individually negotiated with private owners but are generally lower than those in the public sector.
Overview of the Teaching Workforce

As explained in Chapter 9, under the EYFS guidelines, staff qualifications are directly connected to the staff:child ratio requirements and age of children, with more highly qualified staff being allowed to manage more children and the Reception class requiring at least one degree-level teacher to lead.

An ECEC staff member can have any qualification ranging from level 2 to level 6 or above, each level being characterised by a type of qualification. For instance, level 2 refers to vocational qualifications typically obtained after completing age 16 examinations; level 3 refers to qualifications specific to ECEC obtained through Further Education usually at age 18-19 and requiring a stated period of supervised practice; and level 6 refers to qualifications that grant Early Years Teacher Status or Qualified Teacher Status, which are obtained through accredited bachelor’s degrees or post-graduate teacher training courses.

Despite these standardized qualifications, actual position titles vary by setting. For centre-based settings not in schools (day nurseries, playgroups and preschools), staff are divided into three types: senior managers (who have overall responsibility for running the setting), supervisory staff (who are qualified to look after groups of children on their own), and other paid childcare staff (who are not qualified to look after a group of children on their own) (DfE, 2014b). For school-based settings (nursery schools, and nursery and Reception classes in primary schools), staff are divided into four types: head teacher (only in nursery schools), teachers (who supervise and lead classes), nursery nurses (who are not teachers but are qualified to look after a group of children on their own), and other paid early years support staff (who are not qualified to look after a group of children on their own). As can be seen in Table 10.1 the different staff types are distinguished in part by their qualification levels.
Table 10.1: Types of staff in center-based and school-based ECEC provision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of setting</th>
<th>Staff role and qualifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private and Charitable Center-based provision</strong></td>
<td><strong>Senior managers</strong>&lt;br&gt;Levels 3 to 6&lt;br&gt;Overall responsibility for running the setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(day nurseries, playgroups, preschools)</td>
<td><strong>Other paid childcare staff</strong>&lt;br&gt;Level 2&lt;br&gt;Not qualified to look after a group of children on their own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Public School-based provision</strong>&lt;br&gt;(nursery schools, and nursery and Reception classes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Head teacher</strong>&lt;br&gt;(in nursery schools)&lt;br&gt;Level 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Nursery nurses</strong>&lt;br&gt;Level 3&lt;br&gt;Not teachers but are qualified to look after a group of children on their own</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Childminders are the only form of formal home-based provision in England. They usually work alone. Childminders are not differentiated based on their qualifications because their childminder:child ratios are the same regardless of qualification.

Table 10.2 shows the percentage of qualifications at each level of education that are held by different types of ECEC staff. The second row shows that 68 percent of supervisory staff in center-based settings have ISCED Level 4 qualifications and 21 percent have a bachelor's degree. In contrast, 95 percent of school-based early years teachers have a bachelor's degree or higher. This is because there must always be a level 6 staff member in school-based provision, whereas center-based settings can choose to employ level 3 supervisory staff but then must use more generous staff:child ratios.
Table 10.2: Distribution of educational attainment for staff who work in settings that serve children birth to compulsory schooling (Year 1) in England [IEA, Table 19i, page 102]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distribution of educational attainment (percent)</th>
<th>No formal relevant qualifications</th>
<th>GCSEs or equivalent (ISCED level 3)</th>
<th>A Levels or equivalent (ISCED level 4)</th>
<th>Foundation Degree or Diploma (ISCED level 5)</th>
<th>Bachelor’s degree or higher (ISCED level 6 and above)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ECEC Center-based, senior manager</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECEC Center-based, supervisory staff</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECEC Center-based, other childcare staff</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-based, head teacher/early years coordinator</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-based, qualified early years teacher</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-based, nursery nurse</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-based, other early years support staff</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-based, childminder</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Early Years Provider Survey (DfE, 2014b)

Statutory Requirements for Working with Young Children

Content of Initial Requirements

The National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) defines the qualifications that ECEC practitioners must hold. These qualifications must demonstrate a depth and level of learning that is appropriate to specified developmental outcomes of the EYFS. Level 2 qualifications entail a working knowledge of widely understood principles and
implications within the field of practice. Level 3 qualifications entail a broader and deeper understanding of the theoretical underpinning of ECEC, including conflicting theories and constructs. In addition, all level 3 practitioners must demonstrate an in-depth understanding of early years education and care so that they can (NCTL, 2013a, p.3):

- support and promote children’s early education and development
- plan and provide effective care, teaching, and learning that enables children to progress and prepares them for school
- make accurate and productive use of assessment
- develop effective and informed practice
- safeguard and promote the health, safety and welfare of children
- work in partnership with the key person, colleagues, parents and/or carers, or other professionals.

The Early Years Teachers’ Standards, set out by the NCTL (2013b), states that to receive Early Years Teacher Status and be considered a level 6 staff member in center-based provision, an individual must:

- set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge all children
- promote good progress and outcomes by children
- demonstrate good knowledge of early learning and EYFS
- plan education and care taking account of the needs of all children
- adapt education and care to respond to the strengths and needs of all children
- make accurate and productive use of assessment
- safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and provide a safe learning environment
- fulfill wider professional responsibilities.

In order to be considered a level 6 staff member in school-based provision, an individual must also have Qualified Teacher Status (which allows them to work with
children aged 2-11, i.e., all ages within primary school). Thus, the requirements for level 6 ECEC staff members who are employed in school-based provision are the same as the requirements for all teachers in the English education system. The Teachers’ Standards, set out by the Department for Education in accordance with the NCTL (DfE, 2011) are very similar to those for the Early Years Teacher, with the important difference that the qualified (school) teacher employed in a primary school must have “good subject and curriculum knowledge” and must “plan and teach well-structured lessons.” Thus the school-based teacher must have a knowledge of the primary curriculum as well as the EYFS, and also must “plan and teach lessons” that are more similar to those in primary schools.

ECEC staff qualifications up to level 3 or 4 must be accredited by Ofqual, the non-ministerial government agency that regulates qualifications, exams, and tests (level 4 is rarely used in ECEC, but is held by a small number of older staff members). Ofqual must approve all staff training courses for lower level staff. They make regular (once each four years) inspection visits to training courses in the further education sector (for level 2 or 3 qualifications). To be initially approved, a course must meet the national requirements set by Ofqual for valid, reliable assessment and awarding procedures (Ofqual, 2015). They must also be regulated by Ofqual onto the Qualifications & Credit Framework or National Qualifications Framework. Importantly, these qualifications must include an element of assessed performance, such as an observation working with children, along with scrutiny of child assessments or curriculum plans. For degree-level courses, Ofsted (rather than Ofqual) inspects on a regular cycle, usually once each four years, to make sure they are up to date and research-based, and have suitable procedures for assessing the quality of each trainee’s supervised practice when on placement in ECEC settings.
Content of Ongoing Requirements

The EYFS states that all providers must support in-service staff to undertake appropriate professional development to ensure they offer quality learning and development experiences for children. Moreover, when settings are inspected, evidence of training or professional development will be expected and will contribute to the overall judgment. Settings are often expected to organize their own professional development training from private providers. The content of training requirements is laid down by the EYFS—curriculum, pedagogy, welfare requirements, work with parents and the community—but the details of training are left up to the individual training providers, with no centrally defined criteria available.

Distribution of Authority (Among Ministries and Levels of Government)

The Department for Education is responsible for all statutory requirements involving young children and teachers, including those related to workforce development. These are centrally defined and applicable to all early years providers who receive state funding for the eligible children they serve. It is then the job of Local Authorities and Ofsted to make sure that the regulations are followed.

Organization of Work Responsibilities

Work responsibilities are organized by qualification type. Staff members with level 2 qualification cannot be solely responsible for a group of children, and those with level 2 and level 3 qualifications are expected to engage more in “care,” while level 6 qualified staff members are expected to engage in more “educational” activities.
Professional Preparation (Pre-Service)

**Who Delivers and the Capacity of Preparation Institutions**

Level 2 and most level 3 qualifications are delivered at post-secondary education “colleges,” which cater locally to young people 16-19 year of age (not the same meaning as a college in the United States, which normally offer degrees). These courses for level 2 and 3 qualifications last, on average, two years. Bachelor’s degrees that lead to Early Years Teacher Status or Qualified Teacher Status count as level 6 qualifications, last four years, and are delivered by universities.

In order to achieve Early Years Teacher Status (equivalent to level 6 qualification), an individual must complete early years initial teacher training. This is mainly delivered by universities in two ways: a three- to four-year undergraduate degree in an early childhood-related subject, or a one-year post-graduate teacher training course after a three-year undergraduate degree, for example in psychology, which did not provide Early Years Teacher Status. Alternatively, graduates from an undergraduate degree program that did not entail Early Years Teacher Status can take an employment-based training route, in which they take paid employment in an early years settings while they receive academic instruction in part-time, one- to two-year courses delivered by participating universities or training centers.

The routes to achieve Qualified Teacher Status are different from those for achieving Early Years Teacher (EYT) Status. QTS training involves a three- to four-year undergraduate degree in education, or a one-year post-graduate teacher training course, called the “Post Graduate Certificate in Education.” QTS courses have higher entry requirements and are less specific to the early years than the EYT because they include the study of at least two consecutive stages of education (such as the Early Years Foundation Stage [age 3-5 in schools] and Key Stage 1 [ages 5-7]). In reality, teachers with the QTS qualification have a higher status and salary than those with the EYT qualification because they are qualified to teach children throughout the primary
years (between the ages of 3 and 11), while those with EYT qualifications can teach only in nurseries or Reception classes. The QTS teacher is expected to have a deeper knowledge of the curriculum from age 3 to 11, and thus a more complete understanding of how the “foundation stage” prepares a child for Key Stage 1. And finally, those with QTS are able to take on more well-paid senior management positions, such as headteacher of a primary school. Thus, although the government wishes to attract a larger and better ECEC workforce, the vast majority of ambitious ECEC workers will try to achieve a QTS and work in ECEC located in primary schools, rather than take the EYT path, which has lower status, lower pay, and less desirable conditions of employment such as holiday benefits.

**Nature, Frequency, Distribution, and Evaluation of Preparation Efforts**

All ECEC training routes, for all levels, include taught aspects, coursework, exams, and work placements in an early years setting. Topics covered are organized around the EYFS curriculum. All courses are regulated by Ofqual (levels 2-3/4) or Ofsted (level 6), and must meet their national requirements. The training courses are monitored through focused observation during inspection visits to training facilities, plus scrutiny of assessment procedures and documentation (e.g., essays) of trainee’s learning (GOV.UK, 2015a).

**Incentives for Participation**

Early years settings can receive a grant of up to £7,000 to employ a person wishing to take the employment-based training route to receive their teacher status. The £7,000 is to allow the trainee time off work to attend university courses and for special support from experienced staff as the trainee develops classroom skills. In addition, the trainee herself can apply for an additional £7,000 grant to cover university fees. Not surprisingly, there is a great deal of competition for these incentives and they are in limited supply.
Those with undergraduate degrees who take the one-year post-graduate teacher training route to receive their teacher status can receive £7,000 to cover post-graduate course fees. In addition, there are grants of up to £5,000 available for graduates with high academic achievement.

For those who receive their training through the normal three- or four-year undergraduate courses, there are no exceptional grants, but students can apply for a student loan from the government, as with all undergraduate degrees in England. Additional grants are also available to poorer students, as assessed by household income, to help with living costs.

ECEC training in “colleges of further education” (level 2 qualifications and most level 3 qualifications) are offered for free by Local Authorities to young people under the age of 19. “Further” in the title usually refers to vocational education, as distinct from “higher” education in universities.

**Professional Development (In-Service)**

_Who Delivers and the Capacity of the Deliverers_

If the Local Authority has budget for it, they may offer their local ECEC settings free continual professional development (CPD). However, since the financial crisis of 2008, few Local Authorities have had sufficient budget or staff to offer in-service training for free to the private and charitable sector, and so these settings mostly have to pay to receive CPD delivered by their Local Authority or organize their own CPD from a private provider. Nursery schools, primary schools with nursery, and Reception classes receive some CPD funding from the Local Authority, but it rarely comes from an Early Years budget. For example, Reception teachers may be offered training in science or mathematics teaching, which comes from a whole-school budget. In a recent survey conducted by the English government, 95 percent of nursery schools reported a specific budget for in-service in 2013, whereas only 37 percent of primary schools with nursery
and Reception classes said they had a specific training budget for early years staff (DfE, 2014b). In the same survey, 38 percent of private day nurseries and 36 percent of playgroups said they had received funding from their Local Authority to contribute towards in-service training. These data show that there is inadequate funding across the board for in-service training, with the exception of nursery schools, which often have the highest proportions of vulnerable children (e.g., with disabilities) and thus often receive higher funding.

**Nature, Frequency, Distribution, and Evaluation of In-Service Efforts**

Some in-service training courses are online, especially those provided by professional organizations; some are group courses delivered by private consultants in ECEC settings; and some are group courses delivered off-site at a university. The government does not collect specific information about the content or effectiveness of in-service courses. However, Ofsted has overall responsibility for ensuring that all settings participate in “effective” CPD. This is one of the weaknesses of the English ECEC system; pre-service is highly regulated and monitored for quality, whereas in-service is unregulated and largely not evaluated.

**Incentives for Participation**

The EYFS states that all providers must support staff to undertake appropriate training and professional development opportunities to ensure they offer quality learning and development experiences for children. In order for settings to earn a high score in their Ofsted inspection, they must demonstrate evidence that their staff have received training or professional development. It is unclear, however, whether a one-day inspection can really judge the value of CPD on staff improvement.
Compensation

Salary Ranges

Wages are usually higher in state nurseries than in private or charitable ones (where compensation is left to providers’ discretion). On average, staff in private day nurseries earn £8.40 per hour, compared to £12.00 per hour in state nurseries (DfE, 2014b). This reflects the higher proportion of qualified teachers in the public sector, and also the different characteristics of children served; for example, there are typically more children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in public provision, as they have better facilities, and so the settings receive more money to better support these children. Meanwhile, all school-based teachers have Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and are therefore paid on the same salary scales as primary teachers. For this reason, their hourly pay is double that of supervisory staff in center-based provision. However, within school-based provision, staff in nursery schools are paid more than staff in nursery and Reception classes in primary schools, as a result of the characteristics of the children in attendance.
Table 10.3: Average hourly pay of different types of staff in ECEC settings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Center-Based Ecec Settings</th>
<th>Private Day Nursery</th>
<th>State Day Nursery-but not a school</th>
<th>Playgroup: charitable sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All staff</td>
<td>£8.40</td>
<td>£12.00</td>
<td>£8.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Manager (level 3-6)</td>
<td>£11.20</td>
<td>£17.30</td>
<td>£10.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisory Staff (level 3)</td>
<td>£8.70</td>
<td>£12.60</td>
<td>£8.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Paid Staff (level 2)</td>
<td>£6.80</td>
<td>£8.60</td>
<td>£7.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School-Based Ecec Settings</th>
<th>Nursery Schools</th>
<th>Primary Schools with Nursery and Reception Classes</th>
<th>Primary Schools with Reception class but no Nursery Classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Staff</td>
<td>£14.10</td>
<td>£13.80</td>
<td>£14.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Teacher/Early Years Coordinator (level 6)</td>
<td>£29.80</td>
<td>£23.50</td>
<td>£22.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualified Early Years Teacher (level 6)</td>
<td>£22.50</td>
<td>£19.40</td>
<td>£20.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursery Nurses (level 3)</td>
<td>£11.50</td>
<td>£10.20</td>
<td>£10.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Paid early years support staff (level 2)</td>
<td>£9.20</td>
<td>£8.80</td>
<td>£9.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Early Years Provider Survey (DfE, 2014b)

Childminders’ hourly wages are typically higher than those of the rest of the private sector. They are self-employed and make a private fee arrangement with parents, which are usually around £5 per child, per hour, but depend heavily on the area. Some belong to a national childminder network that recommends fees, but there is no systematic national data available.

**Benefit Ranges**

Because the NHS is free at the point of delivery for everyone (i.e., insurance is provided by the state for all residents), English ECEC staff do not get health insurance from their employers. They are, however, entitled to the same statutory benefits as other workers
in England, including sick leave and paid holidays (between four weeks in the private sector and 13 weeks in the state sector). All staff are also entitled to the maternity/paternity allowance paid by the state.

**Who Determines?**

In the state sector, national pay scales determine compensation. Level 6 qualified teachers get the same salary and benefits as teachers in primary schools. Those with level 2 or 3 qualifications in the public sector receive lower salaries than teachers, but still higher than those at the same grade in the private or charitable sector. Private-sector salaries are individually negotiated with private owners. Not only do staff in the private sector receive substantially lower salaries, they get about half of the holiday entitlement compared to teachers and level 3 staff working in schools.

**Role of External Entities (e.g., Unions, Professional Associations)**

The National Union of Teachers, to which primary and secondary teachers belong, is open to individuals with Qualified Teacher Status. Those without Qualified Teacher Status belong to various public service unions, whose bargaining power is lower. Many private day nurseries subscribe to the National Day Nursery Association, an association that liaises with governmental bodies to discuss issues facing their practice. Other associations include the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years and the British Association for Early Childhood Education. In terms of economic muscle, only the National Teacher Union can bargain successfully with the national pay formula. This means that staff in the private and charitable sectors, where Qualified Teacher Status is rarer, have little bargaining power. However, the National Association of Day Nurseries has been influential in increasing public funding for private providers and changing regulations which were limiting the practice of private settings.

**Attracting, Promoting, and Retaining the Workforce**
Strategies/Processes for Attracting People into the Workforce

The ECEC workforce is primarily attractive to women, and is currently 98 percent female. Every year, the ECEC sector employs more staff because childcare use is rising. Between 2010 and 2013, private day nurseries increased total staff by 14 percent, public day nurseries increased by 10 percent, playgroups increased by 10 percent, nursery schools increased by 9 percent, primary school with nursery and Reception classes increased by 17 percent, and primary schools with Reception classes but no nursery classes increased by 18 percent (DfE, 2014b). Thus, there are increases across the workforce, not just in one sector.

However, there are disparities in the characteristics of those who are recruited into different settings. Typically, individuals with level 2 and 3 qualifications are recruited by the private sector, where pay is lower, and individuals with level 6 qualifications are attracted into the public sector, for example as teachers in schools. There is no difficulty in recruiting into ECEC jobs those with low examination marks in secondary school; however, the whole private workforce needs uplifting in salary and entry qualifications (which are currently very low). Talented individuals wishing for a teaching career may well worry that ECEC salaries may be moving downwards, and thus seek jobs elsewhere in the school sector.

Opportunities for Advancement in the Field

Teachers working in the public sector have ongoing appraisal and salary review, as is the process for all primary school teachers. Practitioners in the private sector have different contractual arrangements, depending on their employer, and this leads to different practices regarding appraisal and salary review. National organizations such as the National Day Nursery Association lobby the government for higher rates of reimbursement for each childcare hour, which could lead to salary increases through increased governmental investment in the whole system. This is an uphill battle,
however, especially in light of the uncertainties brought about by Britain’s leaving the European Union.
**Turnover Rates**

According to the Early Years Provider Survey (DfE, 2014b), staff in private day nurseries have an annual turnover rate (i.e., percentage of staff leaving the setting for any reason) of 12 percent, as do staff in public day nurseries. Staff in playgroups have a turnover rate of 10 percent. Staff in nursery schools have a turnover rate of 9 percent. The turnover rate is 7 percent in primary schools with nursery and Reception classes, and 8 percent in primary schools with Reception but no nursery classes.

**Evaluating the Workforce**

Degree-granting institutions are required to publish criteria for the teaching qualifications they offer, and are inspected by Ofsted. Non-degree courses are inspected by Ofqual. This ensures that the workforce entering practice are sufficiently prepared according to the criteria laid down by Ofqual and the National College of Teaching and Leadership. Once in service, staff in ECEC settings are evaluated by Ofsted observation of daily practice (through the normal program monitoring procedure). If the evaluation is poor, the Local Authority will become involved, and will either provide additional training to practitioners in the setting, thus improving their quality, or will close the setting, which will make it difficult for staff to find other jobs. National data from Ofsted inspections are collated to provide an overview of the quality of the entire workforce, although the quality of individual teachers is not published.

**Innovations**

*Professional Preparation (Pre-Service Training)*

One clear innovation to pre-service training was the introduction of an employment-based training scheme for ECEC in 2013, after it proved successful with Primary and Secondary teacher training. This program, called Teach First (not unlike Teach for America), gives graduates a six-week intensive preparation at a summer institute, followed by a two-year employment contract as a teacher. While working full-time in
an early year setting, they also participate in a two-year Leadership Development Program (GOV.UK, 2013). These two-year placements are organized through Teach First and trainees receive good salaries for the full two years of their employment, although not equivalent to fully trained teacher. A similar program, School Direct, was introduced in 2014; trainees work part-time and receive part-time teacher training for one year (GOV.UK, 2014). Both these on-the-job training routes for ECEC are innovative and important in England because they are highly competitive and attract individuals from prestigious universities into ECEC teaching. The benefit of degree-holding teachers has been well-established in the literature (Mathers et al., 2014), and thus Teach First and School Direct can be considered as innovative ways to increase quality. Unfortunately, as one government official noted, “[Participants] get on a graduate scheme, do it for a couple of years, and then leave.” Indeed, some see Teach First as a way to learn leadership skills for a future (different) career, rather than a way to train for a career in teaching. However, many participants do remain in the profession, and talented Teach First trainees can enliven classes and move quickly on to leadership roles in schools.

**Professional Development (In-Service Training)**

In-service training is often made up of a combination of workshops, one-day conferences, and on-line courses. One promising example of innovative CPD is a suite of courses provided by A+ Education Ltd. and the Center for Research in Early Childhood. These are based on training in observational scales to connect research with practice. Nonetheless, though there are innovative courses for in-service education, there has been little policy innovation in the area.

**Salaries**

Historically, ECEC staff in the state sector have received higher salaries and better benefits compared to those in the private sectors. Though the government is attempting
to create a more level playing field, progress has been slow. In 2011, the Early Years Single Funding Formula made it a legal requirement for Local Authorities to pay public and private settings the same basic hourly rate for government-funded hours. However, public settings still received a higher amount due to the higher proportion of disadvantaged children and children with SEND in their settings. Moreover, staff in public settings are more qualified than staff in private settings, because it is mandated that schools have teachers with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). The government is currently considering how to enhance the status of early years teachers (DfE, 2017c), i.e. those with Early Years Teacher Status instead of QTS, in order to encourage more graduates into the private sector. Currently, more bachelor’s-degree graduates choose to take training leading to QTS, as it allows them to work in both public and private settings. The government is concerned that this results in fewer early years specialist teachers. For this reason, it is holding a consultation on amending regulations to allow those with Early Years Teacher Status to work in public schools. If this change is made, salaries between public and private settings would like equalize more, as the public sector would not have to pay their teachers the same as primary teachers. Unfortunately, then, this change might lead to “equalizing downwards,” instead of upwards in terms of salary.

Attracting New Members of the Workforce

In 2017, the government published a new Early Years Workforce Strategy (DfE, 2017c), which set out the Department for Education’s plans to remove barriers to attracting, retaining, and developing the early years workforce. To attract the workforce, a previous requirement that all level 3 staff have a grade C in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE; the examination typically taken at age 16) in English and mathematics was replaced with broader and less stringent requirements for demonstrating literacy and numeracy skills, through lower qualifications and functional skills tests. Many employers had reported difficulty recruiting level 3 staff because there were too few candidates with sufficiently high marks on GCSE exams.
Moreover, there were difficulties in recruiting level 2 staff as they saw no opportunity for advancement to level 3 if they were lacking in GCSEs.

In addition, the report outlines action for recruiting more bachelor’s degree-level graduates into the early years, which includes reviewing the teacher training routes and conducting a feasibility study into developing a program that specifically seeks to grow the graduate workforce in disadvantaged areas. To counter the poor reputation of the early years sector as a career choice, the government will encourage employers to engage with schools and colleges and talk directly to students about working in the sector. Finally, a review will be conducted to consider how men can be attracted to the workforce by identifying the factors that influence the number of men in childcare.

Furthermore, the previously discussed Teach First program runs highly active promotions in universities and holds interview days on campuses so that students don’t have to travel, making it more likely they will apply. Other than Teach First, however, there are few innovations attracting high-quality students (i.e., with high academic achievement in secondary education, as well as at university) into training for ECEC jobs.

**Health Workers who Support ECEC**

In 2014, Community Health visitors began to work directly for the Local Authority, rather than for hospitals or clinics, in order to provide more integrated services for young children and families. Health visitors and midwives often have offices in Children’s Centres, located in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Although moving health visitors to education settings was a good idea, Children’s Centres are struggling to remain open because of budgetary constraints at local government. Moreover, ECEC settings are not required to have their own health workers.
Mental Health Workers who Support ECEC

The Department of Health, as opposed to the Department for Education or the Local Authority, is responsible for community mental health workers. These workers are employed by the DH’s Community Psychiatry Teams and can be called upon by ECEC settings for advice or referral of a child. There are long waiting lists for specialist treatment for child mental health problems, however, due to financial cuts to the services.

Contributions to Quality

It is well known that graduate-led provision is typically higher-quality than ECEC provision led by less-qualified staff members (Mathers et al., 2014; Sylva et al. 2010). Thus, the mandated requirement for all school-based settings to have a qualified teacher is instrumental in driving up quality. However, allowing those with Early Years Teacher Status to teach in public schools may lead to fewer teachers with Qualified Teacher Status being employed in school ECEC classes, which may lead to lower quality (Sylva et al, 2010).

Challenges

The main challenge to the ECEC workforce is funding, with many community health workers having to make priority decisions about which children to help. Moreover, many private settings complain that they are unable to pay for more qualified staff due to the hourly rate of government-funded ECEC hours. The many gains of the period from 1997-2009 appear to be stalling, due to financial crises, government priorities of parental employment rather than child development, and the need to focus governmental attention on the UK’s leaving the European Union.

Moreover, ECEC, especially in the private sector, is not always considered an attractive or respected career. As one committee member from a Local Authority commented, “It’s not a career route that you would want your daughter to take…. They will earn a
half of what a [primary school] teacher will earn and they will have no clear career opportunities." Unfortunately, the lower qualifications for ECEC staff, which aim to make it easier for individuals to enter the field, also undermine the value of it and result in lower salaries. This ultimately worsens the problem of attracting a talented workforce. Indeed, a civil servant said, "Why would anyone with high grades go into ECEC? But the answer is not to lower the standards; it’s to raise the wages. It’s the only way to attract people in."
The Early Advantage

Part 5
Systemic Outputs: Fostering Equitable and Efficient Services
Chapter 11: Governance

Key Points

- The English ECEC system is highly centralized, with one ministry (the Department for Education) in charge of all ECEC services for children, as well as the social welfare of children. The Department of Health is responsible for health services.

- The two ministries (DfE and DH) discuss overlapping responsibilities at Cabinet level, but policy implementation is accomplished through specific, time-bound, inter-ministerial task forces. Following their fulfillment of duty, they are disbanded. In this way, inter-ministerial collaboration is ad-hoc, rather than a lasting mechanism; it is subject to short- and medium-term pressures rather than guided by a long-term strategy.

Level of Authority

At a national level, there are two main ministries involved in early childhood: the Department for Education and the Department of Health. A third ministry, the Department of Work and Pensions, has an interest in childcare to support employment and in supporting parental leave at birth and through the child's first year. Each of these ministries can introduce policies that are then implemented by Local Authorities. Such policies are often accompanied by national guidance to ensure consistent implementation. In total, there are 152 Local Authorities in England, all of which must act in accordance with national governance. Nonetheless, Local Authorities can adapt policies to suit local circumstances, and those composed of impoverished or minority families get extra funding from central government to reflect their more challenging circumstances.
Table 11.1: Level of government responsible for setting ECEC policy for children aged 0-3 years (0.1) and children aged 3 to the start of primary schooling (0.2) [IEA, Table 3, page 25]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level at which responsibility for ECEC resides</th>
<th>Level 0.1</th>
<th>Level 0.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility for ECEC policy lies mostly at national level</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility for ECEC policy lies at national and subnational levels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
● Level at which responsibility for ECEC resides

Involved Ministries

As noted above, the Department for Education (DfE), the Department of Health (DH), and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) are the three ministries involved in early childhood services for children aged 0-5+. The DfE is the lead ministry, and is responsible for defining the curriculum and child assessments and setting standards for workforce qualifications. It is also responsible for all other regulations acting upon ECEC provision, setting policy and assuring implementation, funding ECEC services, and coordinating inspection and monitoring through Ofsted. The DH is responsible for child health surveillance and free health services at the point of delivery. The DWP has a minor role, and is consulted on for childcare policies that affect parental employment.

National Coordinating Strategy

There is no national coordinating strategy for ECEC governance, largely because all ECEC and welfare services are under the responsibility of a single ministry, the DfE. However, there is a need to coordinate with health agencies, and this is done at both the Cabinet and local levels.
Inter-Ministerial Articulation (if no National Strategy)

There are few inter-ministerial bodies. Instead, when services or policies pertain to multiple ministries, an implementation task force can be set up for a specific period and then disbanded. These task forces aim to ensure effective implementation and overcome any challenges to the implementation of their specific policy or service. Implementation task forces are set up by, and report to, the Prime Minister (or by individual ministers), but it is not compulsory for every policy to have an implementation task force. The task forces specify broad outlines for implementation, which are then developed into operational structures and guidelines by individual ministries for components specific to their area of work. These guidelines are ultimately sent to local government for implementation. Thus cross-department working occurs at a high level in central government.

A recent example of a task force is the Childcare Implementation Task Force, which was established to “drive delivery of a coherent and effective government-wide childcare offer to support parents to work” (Cabinet Office, 2016), and includes delivery of the new government-funded ECEC hours (extended from 15 hours to 30 hours for working parents), tax-free childcare for working families, and up to 85 percent support with childcare costs for parents claiming Universal Credit (for example, those on low income, or unemployment benefits). Members of this task force include the Secretary of State for Education, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, the Minister of State for Employment, the Minister of State for Welfare Reform, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Education, and the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Local Government.

Cabinet committees are also established to ensure coordination of policies in specific areas. These are more formal than task forces and often involve multiple lead ministers and even the Prime Minister. However, like implementation task forces, these Cabinet committees are disbanded after their purpose is met, and currently no committee relating to early childhood policies exists. Many matters (regardless of policy area) are
resolved between departments, through more informal discussions and emails, without the need for Cabinet committees or implementation task forces. Inter-ministerial working in England is thus ad hoc, as it is done for a particular purpose only as necessary and as part of an ethos of “lean government.”

**Vertical Integration**

According to the 2004 Children Act, Local Authorities have a duty to ensure the “sufficiency” of provision of children’s services. Thus, when central government promises a service, the Local Authorities have to provide it. Funding and guidance for these services comes from central government, but it is the responsibility of the Local Authority to ensure effective and efficient implementation. Local Authorities decide how the central government funding they receive will be spent on services, and in times of economic austerity, they must “make do” with the budget they are given. Thus, while the provision can be ensured (as Local Authorities legally must provide the services, through the parental entitlement to specified hours of free ECEC in Ofsted-inspected provision, combined with their legal responsibility to provide adequate support for vulnerable children and families), the standards cannot.

**Inter-Sectorality**

At the local level, the Department of Children’s Services (an arm of each different Local Authority) is responsible for education and care of children. However, the local health departments have a duty to ensure children’s health, which often involves collaboration with ECEC services. For example, health visitors organize drop-in sessions at ECEC settings to increase their outreach with disadvantaged families. There are efficient inter-sectoral working groups and services for child protection involving ECEC staff, social welfare, health, and the police. As explained in Chapter 5, for every child who is identified as “at risk,” a Child Protection Plan is drawn up and a core group of professionals is assigned to the child, including professionals from health, education
and social care. The group meets roughly every eight weeks to review the child’s plan and assess their situation.

Multi-agency teams such as those for child protection may include staff from the Local Authority, the police, and private and charitable bodies. In the English system, inter-sectorality at local level is more permanent than inter-ministerial working, and at local level there are many standing committees or structures that bridge child development, education, health, and social welfare.

**Innovations and Recent Changes**

ECEC services are tightening their belts and searching for ways to make economies. However, there are no new governance structures, and the existing committees/groups for inter-sectorial working have been starved of funds, as each Local Authority department concentrates on its core services.

**Contribution to Equity and Efficiency**

The co-location of all ECEC services within the Department for Education (at the national level as well as local) increases efficiency by facilitating discussions about services, and ensuring that services which are related can be overseen efficiently by the same government officials. An example of this is with the extension from 15 to 30 government-funded hours for working parents, which has been introduced alongside a new system of “Universal Credit” for poorer families which helps to provide/supplement family incomes. The extended free entitlement allows mothers to work for longer hours and this is supposed to compensate for the welfare system cutting back on income support for stay-at-home parents.

**Challenges**

The challenge of not having a formalized national coordinating strategy is that inter-ministerial work (and to a certain extent, collaboration within the Department for
Education) is subject to the personal characteristics of the government officials involved. Indeed, one social policy academic noted:

“In any organization, you have ambitious people who want to get to the top, for politicians getting to the top is to be a Cabinet member, and the way you get to the top—to be a Cabinet member—is to demonstrate not just that you’re very good but that you’re better than others, which makes cross-departmental working very, very difficult…. If the ministers involved were friends already, you get good cross-government working.”

Thus, positive relationships between ministers are vital for high-quality, frequent collaboration at national level and also at local level, as they reduce potential competitiveness. During the Labour government from 1997-2010, when the greatest expansion in early childhood services was seen, relationships between ministers responsible for young children (Health, Education, and Welfare) were known to be strong and integrated services were rife (Eisenstadt, 2011). As such, inter-ministerial relationships were key to developing a high quality and integrated system. However, this approach is not as reliable as a formalized national coordinating strategy, as there is no guarantee of collaboration.

Moreover, the austerity measures that England is facing a decade after the economic crisis of 2008-09 have had significant impact on governance. As one Local Authority official noted, “It can make you move towards a greater integrated model, because people kind of have to share their budget, or people retrench and spend their budget only on the services that they are mandated to provide.” A further contextual impact has come from Brexit (i.e., leaving the European Union), with government departments waiting for the outcome of Brexit before creating more policies that they may not be able to deliver if a bad trade deal is struck and the economy worsens. Economic factors have, for the past decade and indeed throughout history, had a significant impact on the way departments work to deliver their services.
Chapter 12: Finance

Key Points

- Revenue for public spending on education and some care comes from national taxation.
- The supply-side funding is then transferred to Local Authorities in the form of the Dedicated Schools Grant, which is split into three notional blocks: Early Years, Schools, and High Needs Children. Currently, Local Authorities can move money in and out of blocks as they see fit. However, limiting this flexibility somewhat, as of September 2017, the central government sets a basic hourly rate for government-funded ECEC hours, albeit with some adjustments made to account for the circumstances of each setting and Local Authority. This is then sent to Local Authorities to pass on to providers.
- No Local Authority can pay a provider less than the government’s hourly rate, but some top it up in special instances such as paying more to nursery schools in recognition of their higher numbers of children with SEND.
- Parents may receive additional funding from government in the form of childcare vouchers (demand side) and tax credits. Throughout 2017, a new “tax-free childcare” scheme was rolled out nationally in which the government pays 20 percent of working parents’ ECEC costs (via tax credits). This helps to support childcare costs in families who are not disadvantaged and/or who require childcare outside the normal “working week hours” (e.g., evenings and weekends). Tax credits are income-sensitive, meaning that lower-income families receive more tax credit than high-income ones.
Description of Key Public Funding

Revenue Amounts and Sources, Covering Whom

Revenue for public spending on education comes from national taxation. For 2017-18, the Department for Education’s expenditure limit is set to £60.1 billion ($77.4 billion) in total on education (GOV.UK, 2015b). This sum is split into a resource budget (£55.5 billion; $71.5 billion) and a capital budget (£4.6 billion; $5.9 billion). As explained in more detail below, this funding is available to all ECEC settings providing government-funded hours.

Key Public Supply-Side Funding Streams

Of the resource budget held by the Department for Education, £3.4 billion ($4.4 billion) is allocated to the Early Years block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (GOV.UK, 2017). The Dedicated Schools Grant is the principal source of public supply-side funding for both public and private ECEC settings. It is paid from the central government to Local Authorities and is split into three notional blocks: 80 percent for Schools, 7 percent for Early Years, and 13 percent for High Needs Children. The total amount of the block grant given to each Local Authority is determined centrally and roughly conforms to the number and ages of children in residence, with an additional weighting for disadvantage. However, Local Authorities are ultimately responsible for deciding how to divide central government funding, meaning that they can spend some money from the Schools block on Early Years, or money from the Early Years block on High Needs Children, as they see fit.

The majority (97 percent) of the Early Years block of this grant is paid to ECEC providers in the form of government-funded hours. As detailed in Chapter 4, the government is now committed to providing 30 hours of free government-funded childcare per week for working parents of 3- and 4-year-olds. Parents of 3- and 4-year-olds whose parents who are not working, and 40 percent of the most disadvantaged 2-
year-olds, receive 15 hours of free government-funded childcare per week. Local Authorities are required to use an Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYFSS) to define the hourly rate for ECEC settings (both public and private) in their area. This formula must include a deprivation supplement for 3- and 4-year-olds and factor in the number of children attending the settings. The deprivation supplement consists of additional funding for each child whose family falls within the current poverty definition. All funding rate details must be submitted to the Department for Education for publication to allow providers and parents to compare rates across the country. In this way, hourly rates are monitored nationally to ensure no Local Authority is paying their ECEC providers substantially less. Nonetheless, the ECEC sector is still in competition for funding with other education providers (primary, secondary, and special schools), as the Local Authority can choose to move funds, for example, from the Early Years block to the Schools Block.

The Early Years National Funding Formula is set by the central government and came into effect in September 2017 (DfE, 2016c). This formula is used to allocate funding for 3- and 4-year-olds, for both the 15 hours of universal entitlement and the 30 hours entitlement for children of working parents. This formula sees the Local Authority receiving central government funding for ECEC calculated using a base hourly rate of funding for each child, an additional needs factor (reflecting the extra costs of supporting children with additional needs, e.g., SEND or deprivation) and an area cost adjustment (reflecting the different costs of providing childcare in different areas of the country). Within this formula, every Local Authority is guaranteed to receive a minimum funding rate of £4.30 ($5.54) per hour, per child. Local Authorities have the power to increase the hourly rate if they wish, drawing on funds from other pots of money that they oversee. The central government has also defined new requirements on the amount of central government funding for 3- and 4-year-olds that Local Authorities must pass to providers; this is set at 93 percent for 2017-18 and 95 percent for 2018-19. This means that centrally retained funding and any funding movement out of the early
years block will be constrained to a maximum of 7 percent in 2017-18 and 5 percent from 2018-19. Therefore, the Early Years National Funding Formula will ensure that all Local Authorities will be able to pay providers at least £4 ($5.15) per hour for 3- and 4-year-olds and that funding will be consistent and fair for all ECEC providers in England. In practice, the average hourly rate across all Local Authorities was already above £4 ($5.15; Noden & West, 2016). Thus, the new Early Years National Funding Formula is not a method of increasing funding to ECEC providers, but of reducing variance among Local Authorities and ensuring consistency and fairness nationally.

The Early Years Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant includes funding for the Early Years Pupil Premium, which ECEC settings serving disadvantaged children are entitled to (£37.1 million, or $47.8 million, in 2017-18). For every child eligible for pupil premium (i.e., every child from a low-income family or from an adopted/foster family who claims government-funded hours), the setting receives £300 ($386.56) to spend on resources that will further that child’s development. This funding is available to all ECEC settings.

Finally, the Early Years Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant holds supplementary funding for nursery schools, as these are concentrated in disadvantaged areas (64 percent are in the 30 percent most deprived areas of England), provide high-quality ECEC led by specialist head teachers and qualified teachers, and give priority in their admissions to disadvantaged children and children with SEND (Early Education, 2015). In 2017-18, £56.21 million ($72.43 million) was allocated for supplementary nursery school funding, routed via Local Authorities.

From the capital budget, there are multiple initiatives and funds for which Local Authorities and individual providers may apply. One recent example was the Early Years Capital Funding Application Round, which began in July 2016 and was open to Local Authorities to bid for capital funding to support the delivery of the 30 hours of government-funded childcare (GOV.UK, 2016e). This fund had £40 million ($51.5
millions) available to be allocated to Local Authorities in order to expand ECEC provision in those areas and create the extra places necessary to deliver the government’s promise.

No public funding is available for children who are not eligible for government-funded hours, i.e., all children under the age of 2 and the 60 percent most advantaged 2-year-olds.

Table 12.1: Supply-side funding from central funds for children aged from 0-3 (0.1) and children aged from 3 to the start of primary schooling (0.2) [IEA, Table 10, page 59]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of supply-side funding</th>
<th>Level 0.1</th>
<th>Level 0.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funded places subsidy</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff salary subsidy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital grants for acquisition and improvement physical plant</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource grants</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:

● Supply-side funding is available

n/a Funding from central funds does not exist

**Key Demand-Side Strategies**

Currently, demand-side funding is made up of two elements: tax credits and childcare vouchers (Stewart & Gambaro, 2014). Tax credits, in the form of the childcare element of Universal Credit, allow low-income families to be reimbursed for up to 85 percent of their childcare costs (GOV.UK, 2016f). Parents must pay up-front childcare costs and claim for reimbursement through tax relief. The amount parents can claim back depends on their family circumstance and household income. Parents earning under £16,105 a year can claim up to £2,780 per child (but no more than 85 percent of their
childcare costs) and parents earning over £40,000 cannot claim tax credits. The amount parents can claim is reduced by £0.41 for every £1 of income.

For wealthier parents, childcare vouchers are the only demand-side funding available (GOV.UK, 2016g). These employer-supported childcare vouchers allow parents working for participating employers to take part of their salary in childcare vouchers, thus reducing their taxable income and decreasing their tax payments by up to £930 a year per parent. Parents who are eligible for tax credits can choose to take childcare vouchers in addition, if their employer supports it. The childcare voucher scheme is used mainly for children not covered by the “free entitlement,” i.e., those under the age of 3, and only the larger employers favor it. Following the introduction of the tax-free childcare scheme (described in the following paragraph), no new employers will be able to apply to participate in the voucher scheme beginning April 2018.

As of April 2017, the new “tax-free childcare” scheme was introduced and gradually rolled out nationally (GOV.UK, 2016h). Under the tax-free childcare scheme, the government pays 20 percent of the childcare costs up to a maximum of £10,000 per child. This is the equivalent of the tax that most people pay—20 percent—hence the name “tax-free.” In this way, it amounts to roughly the same saving for parents. The benefit over childcare vouchers is that tax-free childcare will be available to more than twice as many working parents as childcare vouchers because it does not rely on the employer participating in the scheme and is available to self-employed parents. However, it will not be available to low-income parents (those earning under £120 [$152.62] per week), as they can instead claim the maximum amount of tax credits. Eligible parents will have an online account, which they pay into to cover the cost of childcare. For every £0.80 that the parent pays in, the government pays in £0.20. ECEC providers then charge this online account for all childcare costs.
Table 12.2: Demand-side funding from central funds for children aged from 0-3 (0.1) and children aged from 3 to the start of primary schooling (0.2) [IEA, Table 11, page 61]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of demand-side funding</th>
<th>Level 0.1</th>
<th>Level 0.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tax credits/relief</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vouchers</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced fees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family allowances</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
● Demand-side funding is available
n/a Demand-side funding does not exist

Description of Key Private Funding Sources

Parents paying for hours outside of their allowed government-funded hours are the main source of private funding for private and charitable ECEC settings. Public settings (nursery schools, nursery classes and Reception classes in primary schools) do not usually offer extra hours, thus, if parents want more hours of childcare they pay for services in the private and voluntary sector. Moreover, all parents of children under 2 years old, and the 60 percent most advantaged 2-year-olds, pay for their childcare in the private and voluntary sector, as there are no government-funded hours available to them.

Both public and private ECEC settings can generate revenue from private funding sources by providing additional services. For example, they can charge parents for the provision of meals or optional extra activities, such as baby yoga or music lessons. They can also rent out their facilities to members of the community for a fee.
Recent Changes in Funding

There were frequent changes in funding between 1997 (the introduction of 12.5 government-funded hours a week for all 4-year-olds) and 2010 (when the Coalition Government was elected, after which there was relative continuity as regards to funding policy) (West & Noden, 2016). Between 1997 and 1999, funding for public settings (nursery schools, and nursery classes and Reception classes in primary schools) was distributed on the basis of the population of under-5s living within the Local Authority, regardless of how many attended ECEC provision. This resulted in Local Authorities with more demand for ECEC provision, typically areas with a high proportion of low-income families who needed to return to work, having lower-quality provision. From 1999, 65 percent of funding for ECEC was distributed based on the number of 4-year-olds in ECEC provision, with the remainder distributed on the population of under-5s as before. In this way, Local Authorities with more ECEC provision benefited to a greater extent than those with less. Private and voluntary settings, on the other hand, received a flat rate for each 4-year-old in attendance from a grant that was not included in the overall education budget.

From 2004 (when government-funded hours were extended to include all 3-year-olds), the funding strategy was changed so that both public and private settings received funding from the Local Authority’s overall education budget—though private settings often received a lower hourly rate for the government-funded hours than public settings. Moreover, as the funding came from the overall education budget, ECEC services had to compete with other areas within the education budget (such as primary schools and secondary schools) for funding allocations. In addition, education services as a whole had to compete with other Local Authority duties, such as road repair and care for the elderly, for their budget. For this reason, the Dedicated Schools Grant was formed in 2006, which split education into three blocks—Schools, Early Years, and High Needs Children. Each of these blocks was ring-fenced by central government, meaning that the Local Authority had to spend the money in each block on the services it was
dedicated to. The aim of this was to ensure “greater certainty about education funding, including the free entitlement by removing it from the local government finance system and paying it direct to Local Authorities as a grant” (DfES, 2006, p. 22). This meant that all government-funded hours in both the public and private sector were paid for from the DSG, with the hourly rate for each setting defined by the Local Authority.

Nonetheless, Local Authorities were at liberty to share this funding between settings as they saw fit, thus, as before, private and voluntary settings often received less government funding than public settings. To counter this, the Early Years Single Funding Formula was introduced in 2011, which required the Local Authority to set the same hourly rate for both public and private settings. As discussed above, the Early Years Single Funding Formula was replaced by the Early Years National Funding Formula in September 2017, with the aim of reducing variance in the hourly rates paid to ECEC providers across Local Authorities.

Affordability of ECEC (Percent of Wages)

A general picture of the cost of childcare to the parents as a percentage of their income is difficult to present, as many benefits are income-tested, meaning that the net cost of childcare as a percentage of the parents’ wages varies as their wages do. To illustrate, example families will be used to explain the data (OECD Family database, PF3.4). For a family where both parents work, with a household income of 150 percent of the national average wage, and two children—aged 2 and 3—in full-time care, childcare costs would take 34 percent of the household income. This is because the 2-year-old child would not qualify for government-funded hours, as the family’s household income places them outside of the 40 percent most disadvantaged families, and they are not eligible for the tax-free childcare scheme (i.e., tax credits). Thus they only have childcare vouchers available to them. In contrast, in a family where only one parent works, with a household income of 50 percent of the national average wage, still with two children—aged 2 and 3—in full-time care, childcare costs would take only 8 percent of the household income. The family now qualifies for government-funded hours for
the 2-year-old as well as the 3-year-old, because their household income places them among the 40 percent most disadvantaged families, and they can claim the maximum amount in tax credits. In this way, low-income families spend a much lower proportion of their income on childcare compared with those with higher incomes.

**Parental Choice**

Parental choice is a key feature of English ECEC, with a member of a professional organization noting, “In England, you’ve got the choice of doing what you think is best for your child, and your funding will go with you.” Indeed, parents have complete choice over which setting their child attends. Settings decide whether to offer government-funded hours, but virtually every setting does. Thus, parents can choose to take up their government-funded hours in almost any setting in their area, public or private. In general, parents are satisfied with the quality (64 percent) and flexibility (80 percent) of childcare in their area (DfE, 2016d). Of parents who do not use childcare, only 2 percent cited reasons relating to quality or availability of childcare providers, with the highest proportion (73 percent) saying they’d rather look after their child themselves.

Parental choice has become a much higher priority after the extension to 30 hours of government-funded care in 2017, as parents are worried about young children spending long days in group-based provision. The government is in the process of facilitating wrap-around care with childminders and other ECEC providers to increase flexibility and choice for parents. As of yet, no plan has emerged of how this will be done. However, many childminders do not want to provide government-funded hours, as the average hourly rate paid for government-funded hours (around £4) is lower than the average hourly rate charged to parents by childminders (around £5). In order to facilitate wrap-around care, the government would have to incentivize childminders to provide government-funded hours, most likely through increasing the rate for childminders to make providing government-funded hours a more viable option. This
will be a major challenge, as it would mean giving childminders a higher hourly rate than that which is currently paid to other settings.

**Durability of Funding Over Time**

From 1997 to 2010, under the Labour government, annual central government spending on ECEC more than tripled, from £2,094 million ($2,698 million) to £8,016 million ($10,328 million). However, with the global economic crash in 2008-09 and the change in government in 2010, funding has decreased each year since (Stewart & Obolenskaya, 2015). Notably, this has not come at the expense of coverage, as government-funded hours and funding for parents, in the form of childcare vouchers and tax credits, could not be removed without voter protest. In fact, in the case of government-funded hours, they were extended to include the 40 percent most disadvantaged 2-year-olds. Instead, funding reductions have come at the expense of salaries and professional development. In other words, funding for the provision of services is guaranteed and, to an extent, durable over time, but funding to ensure the quality of those services is less dependable.

**Equitable Distribution of Funds**

The Early Years Single Funding Formula was introduced in an attempt to ensure equitable distribution of funds between public and private providers. Although public and private providers do not receive the exact same hourly rate—with private providers receiving an average of £4.03 ($5.19) per hour for 3- and 4-year-olds and public providers receiving an average of £4.47 ($5.76) per hour—this is indicative of the children served at each setting, as more children with SEND attend public provision (GOV.UK, 2017b) and these children get supplemented rates. However, there remains some variation between Local Authorities, which can choose to move money in or out of the Early Years block of the Dedicated Schools Grant, and set the hourly rate, as they see fit. Thus, while the national average hourly rate is £4.47 ($5.76) for public providers, some Local Authorities pay as little as £2.50 ($3.22) an hour, whereas others pay over
£6.50 ($8.38). With the introduction in 2017 of the Early Years National Funding Formula, the distribution of funds among Local Authorities will become more equitable. Indeed, with a national basic hourly rate and additional supplements to account for the children served and an area adjustment, any variation in funding should reflect the actual costs incurred by providers, as opposed to resulting from differing priorities between Local Authorities.

**Innovations**

The introduction of the Pupil Premium, which was extended to the Early Years Pupil Premium in September 2015, was a landmark government policy. ECEC providers receive an extra £300 ($386.56) per year for every disadvantaged child they serve. This represents an innovation that has the potential to enrich the development of disadvantaged children. However, its effects in the early years have not yet been established through research, and the amount per child is low in comparison to the £1,320 ($1,700) given for disadvantaged children in primary schools. One academic respondent commented, “If you have just one child, £300 is not a lot of money, but if you have ten children you really can do something,” suggesting that perhaps the amount of money was not sufficient to fulfill the policy’s potential benefit to disadvantaged children except in the aggregate. Nonetheless, Early Years Pupil Premium has only existed for two years, and is likely to increase in the years to come.

**Contributions to Equity and Efficiency**

The English ECEC system is universal for 3- and 4-year-olds, with additional funding for disadvantaged children and families. This can be seen in the extension of government-funded hours for the 40 percent most disadvantaged 2-year-olds, the Early Years Pupil Premium, and the supplements included in the Early Years National Funding Formula, all of which give more money settings serving disadvantaged children.
Moreover, by providing settings serving disadvantaged children with more money, but not defining how the settings should spend that money, the system is made more efficient. ECEC settings are at liberty to decide what additional services would be best suited for their community; for example, some settings choose to spend their Early Years Pupil Premium on additional language help for immigrant children, while others spend it on computers and iPads for the classrooms. In this way, money is being spent on services that are appropriate to the community. However, an evaluation of Pupil Premium in primary education recommended that more support be given to schools to evaluate the effectiveness of their use of Pupil Premium to ensure that the money is being spent efficiently (Sutton Trust, 2015).

**Challenges**

The global economic crash in 2008-09 created a challenge for ECEC funding. All 3- and 4-year-olds were entitled to government-funded ECEC, so services could not be cut. Moreover, the Labour Government 1997-2010 repeatedly emphasized the importance of early education, so to begin cutting back on ECEC services would have been unpopular with voters when the subsequent Coalition and Conservative Governments took office. Instead, services remained stagnant until 2014, when the government-funded hours were extended to disadvantaged 2-year-olds. Following this, in 2015, the Early Years Pupil Premium was introduced. Now, in 2017, government-funded hours are being extended again to 30 hours for children of working parents. Thus, it appears that ECEC is recovering from the austerity measures. However, little funding is available for improvement of the quality of services. Indeed, the recent Early Years Capital Funding Application Round (2017) was the first widely available capital funding for ECEC settings and it is aimed to help settings expand their facilities to accommodate the additional government-funded hours, rather than to improve the quality of existing provision.
The Early Advantage

Part 6
Systemic Outputs: Sustaining Services
Chapter 13: Family, Community, and Primary School Linkages

Key Points

- Strong, frequent linkages between ECEC settings and parents and communities is not mandated through legislation. Nonetheless, community involvement is expected by Ofsted inspectors. This is another example of the way the Ofsted inspection creates requirements that are not laws. There is guidance from governmental bodies for effective strategies to increase parental engagement and community links.
- ECEC provision in schools often has strong links with parents and communities through the school’s Board of Governors, which must contain parent representatives by law. Moreover, the location of Reception classes within a school eases the transition from ECEC to primary education because children and families have daily contact with others in the primary school and use all of its facilities, e.g., the gym and assembly hall.
- Linkages between settings and families/communities are not as stringently defined in the private sector as they are in public, although the Ofsted inspectors will inquire into them as part of routine inspection in all sectors.
- Parents are always involved in the two national child assessments: the Two-Year-Old Check and the EYFS Profile.

Integrating Families

The main way in which parents and carers are involved in ECEC is through the two child assessments in early childhood—the two-year-old check and the EYFS Profile. Both of these must be shared with parents. First, practitioners discuss the child’s development with parents in order to collect evidence for the child assessment. Following this, the outcome of the assessment is fed back to the parents and a second discussion about the child’s development is held. As per statutory guidance, practitioners must discuss the two-year-old check and the EYFS profile with the parents.
(DfE, 2017a). The guidance also recommends further discussions between parents and practitioners if the development of a child is cause for concern.

In addition, school-based provision, such as nursery schools, nursery classes, and Reception classes, must have parent governors on their school boards, along with teacher representatives and Local Authority representatives (DfE, 2016e) on their boards. The school board’s purpose is to ensure effective provision, and thus having parents on the board allows them to understand the views of parents and take them into consideration when making decisions. ECEC provision that is not located within a school is not required to have a school board; however, many settings choose to set up a parent committee which meets regularly.

Discussions between parents and practitioners for the purposes of child assessment, and parent representatives on the school boards for provision located within a school, are the only mandated forms of parent involvement. However, evidence of frequent parental engagement in all ECEC settings is expected during Ofsted inspections; in order to get an inspection rating of “outstanding,” settings must have “highly successful strategies for engaging parents, including those from different [demographic] groups, in their children’s learning both in the settings and at home” (Ofsted, 2015a, p.38). Moreover, the Ofsted inspector will ask to speak with parents to hear their view of the provision in that setting in order to inform their judgement. Ofsted encourages frequent parental engagement, which it considers it to be vital to allowing practitioners and parents to share information about a child’s development more freely, and supporting consistent learning approaches at home and school. As such, although it is not mandated, settings must demonstrate their ability to engage parents in their children’s ECEC in order for their provision to be considered high quality. As covered in Chapter 9, Ofsted inspection reports are made publicly available online and a poor report can lead to the setting being closed. For this reason, although frequent parental engagement is not a legal obligation, it is a requirement for settings that wish to succeed.
Settings can involve families in any way they choose, so long as they can demonstrate it is successful. No data is collected on the types of strategies employed by settings, but there are recommendations for programs and strategies that have been found to be effective through evaluations. For example, the Education Endowment Foundation, an independent grant-making charity, has an Early Years toolkit which summarized educational research for early years practitioners. This includes a section on parental engagement that recommends “approaches that encourage parents to read and talk with their children at home or to participate in activities in the early years settings; programs that focus directly on parents themselves; and more intensive programs for disadvantaged families or families in crisis” (EEF, 2016, p.1).

**Integrating/Linking with Communities**

There is no expected linkage between ECEC settings and communities in either the Ofsted inspection handbook or the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory guidance. This is because in England, the main link between settings and the community is through the parents of children. Therefore, the links of an individual setting to its local community (religious, ethnic, socio-economic status) are only through the parents of the children, who come from the community and de facto represent it.

Mandatory community links were found in Sure Start Children’s Centres, which were developed in 2004 from Sure Start Local Programmes on the principle of community involvement. They were originally designed to be centers of high-quality integrated services serving the most disadvantaged communities in England, so that by 2010 there was at least one Children’s Centre in every Local Authority (DfE, 2010b). Children’s Centres in the 30 percent most disadvantaged areas of the country had a statutory responsibility to provide at least 10 hours of ECEC services five days a week, and support a childminder network. Children’s Centres in the 70 percent least disadvantaged areas could choose to provide ECEC services but were mandated to at least provide drop-in activity sessions, such as stay-and-play sessions. In addition to the
ECEC services, all Children’s Centres were expected to provide wider community services, including Child and Family Health Services (such as antenatal and postnatal support, information and guidance on breastfeeding, and speech and language therapies) and Employment Services (including information on training, facilities for training, and information on employment opportunities). Moreover, Children’s Centres were encouraged by central government and the Local Authority to set up an advisory board to “bring forward the views and detailed local knowledge held by parents and the local community” (DfES, 2007, p.2). Membership for these boards was recommended to include parents, the local community, and any service providers in the community who may wish to join, such as social care workers or health visitors. These advisory boards had no responsibility for budgets, staffing, or commissioning of services; their role was to identify the priorities of the community and ensure that the services met local needs and were contributing to improving children’s outcomes. As such, early childhood services were completely integrated within the community.

Following the economic crisis in 2008-09 and the change in government in 2010, Local Authority budgets were reduced, meaning that some Children’s Centres were closed, and many had the provision of their services transferred to the voluntary and charitable sector with reduced provision. A national evaluation of Children’s Centres found consistent, positive effects on children’s cognitive and social development, as well as on family functioning and maternal mental health (Sammons et al., 2015). The same evaluation found that centers whose budgets were reduced had fewer positive effects on children and families compared to centers that maintained their budgets.

**Integrating/Linking with Schools**

There are many non-mandated practices that link early care centers with schools, such as “transition days” between center-based and school-based provision. These typically involve groups of young children visiting the location of the school they are about to begin with their current ECEC teachers and occasionally with their parents.
The most important mechanism to smooth the transition between ECEC and primary education is found in the curriculum: the EYFS curricular framework is designed to follow smoothly into the National Curriculum for Primary and Secondary Education. Three of the “specific areas” of learning and development outlined in the EYFS—Literacy, Mathematics, and Understanding the World—are aligned with the three “core subjects” of the National Curriculum for Primary and Secondary Education (English, Mathematics, and Science). As such, skills and knowledge learned at ECEC can be built upon when the child reaches school. Moreover, such continuity of curriculum demonstrates that an understanding of child development and the importance of continuity is at the heart of the EYFS.

This smooth transition is further supported by the co-location of all Reception classes (the last year of the EYFS) in primary schools. Although some parents choose for their children to attend nursery classes (ages 3 and 4), which take place in schools, others choose non-school settings such as private day nurseries or childminders for their younger children. All children then must attend the Reception class in school (mandatory at age 5). Communication and cooperation between staff are key to successful transitions between ECEC and school, as well as child’s feeling of belonging to the school (Bulkeley & Fabian, 2006). In this way, co-location of ECEC Reception classes in primary schools aids in facilitating children’s transitions into primary education by enabling communication between teachers and making the children accustomed to the school environment. Moreover, the EYFS profile completed by the Reception teacher (the assessment of a child’s development at age 5) must be passed on to the Year 1 teacher, forming the basis for a dialogue between the Reception teacher and the Year 1 teacher. Locating the last year of the EYFS in the primary school has many advantages for teachers as well, including shared CPD sessions on topics such as science or child protection alongside the fact that Reception class teachers use the same Staff Common Room as do teachers of Years 1-6.
Innovations

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) represents an innovative approach to increasing the effectiveness of ECEC provision. Founded by the education charity Sutton Trust, and with start-up money from the government, the EEF explores research-based practice in ECEC, including identifying parental engagement strategies that increase child outcomes. On average, the parental engagement programs included in the EEF early years toolkit have a positive impact of approximately five additional months’ child development over the course of a year (EEF, 2016).

Contributions to Sustainability

Including a section on parental involvement in the framework for inspection guarantees that settings will make an effort to engage with parents and communities. As the Ofsted reports are published publicly, settings make every attempt to increase their inspection score. Moreover, seeking the views of parents and community members ensures that ECEC settings are providing services that are wanted, thereby increasing efficiency and sustainability by reducing unnecessary spending on services that parents and the community do not value.

Challenges

Many ECEC settings are run by private providers, and therefore other settings in the area are viewed as “the competition.” This presents a barrier to collaboration and community links. Moreover, many parents feel that ECEC is a service and that it is not their responsibility, or may simply be too busy, to get involved with the provision. For this reason, settings need effective strategies to increase parental engagement.

In addition, Early Years Teachers are trained on EYFS, not on the Ofsted handbook, so parental engagement does not form a large proportion of their training, which focuses more on children’s learning. For this reason, teachers often think it is less important (or not their job) to include parents and community in their practice.
Chapter 14: Research, Demonstration, and Evaluation

Key Points

- The Labour Government (1997-2010) invested heavily in educational research in ECEC through direct grants to researchers and through funding national research organizations such as the Economic and Social Research Council or the Education Endowment Foundation. Unfortunately, the financial crisis in 2008-09 forced the government to withdraw many research funds in order to concentrate on the delivery of entitlement services. Nonetheless, research, pilot programs, and evaluations are still conducted and are used by the government to inform policy, and used by practitioners to guide practice.

- The DfE collects cohort data on the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (at age 5) of every child in ECEC in England annually. This is the first data point in each child’s national profile of educational assessments at ages 5, 7, 11, 16, and 18.

- In addition to this, the DfE takes annual surveys of ECEC providers (looking at staff numbers and qualifications, salaries, premises, and numbers and demographics of children served) and parents of children in ECEC (looking at experience of ECEC provision, reason for choice of provision, and uptake of government-funded hours).

Research

In general, the DfE funds large-scale research studies monitoring outcomes and effectiveness, whereas research councils and other private grant awarding bodies fund more theoretical research into pedagogy and specific ECEC practices such as those related to welfare. The DfE collects cohort data on the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (at age 5) of every child in ECEC in England annually. In addition to this, they take annual surveys of ECEC providers (looking at staff numbers and qualifications, salaries, premises, and numbers and demographics of children served) and parents of children in ECEC (looking at experience of ECEC provision, reason for choice of
provision, and uptake of government-funded hours). These datasets are all used to monitor the quality, equity, and sustainability of the ECEC system and to provide feedback on the implementation of certain policies; for example, by analyzing the uptake of government-funded hours by socioeconomic status of the family, the government can see if disadvantaged children are receiving the beneficial effects of ECEC provision. These datasets are often combined with national data from Ofsted inspections to ensure equitable provision, i.e., that disadvantaged children are just as likely as their more affluent peers to be in high-quality provision.

The DfE also funds, but does not itself carry out, large-scale value-added studies evaluating the effectiveness of early childhood services. A well-known example of this was the Effective Preschool, Primary, and Secondary Education (EPPSE; Sylva et al., 2014), which followed more than 3,000 children from nursery (around age 3) through the school system until they made their post-16 education, training, or employment choices, in order to identify the effectiveness of ECEC provision and its impact on children’s education over the long term. The EPPSE study found that attending ECEC provision in England increased educational attainment throughout the education system in comparison to children who did not attend. Moreover, it improved their social and emotional development. This research was used to justify the provision of government-funded ECEC hours and has been used in the formation of many other policies, including the EYFS statutory guidance.

Moreover, the DfE funds a “what works” network of seven independent research centers, which research a variety of policy areas, two of which pertain to education and early childhood services (the Education Endowment Foundation and the Early Intervention Foundation). These centers collate existing evidence on the effectiveness of policy programs and practices and produce high-quality synthesis reports in order to ensure that government decision-making is shaped by high-quality, independently assessed evidence.
Finally, research funding is available from research councils, such as the Economic and Social Research Council, and charitable bodies, such as the Sutton Trust. These often study more theoretical aspects of ECEC practice, including identifying effective teaching strategies or indicators of high-quality practice. The findings of these studies are not always applicable to policy, but are often considered when the government decides how best to implement a policy or when reviewing regulations.

**Pilot (Demonstration) Efforts**

Pilot schemes typically precede the nation-wide implementation of new policies. A recent example of this is the extension of the government-funded ECEC hours entitlement, which was run in eight Local Authorities in order to troubleshoot challenges to implementing long day care and identify effective solutions. Pilot schemes often result in additional guidance for practitioners and Local Authorities in implementing the policy, and occasionally lead to changes in the proposed policy. Thus, pilot efforts are largely conducted with the purpose of enhancing effective policy implementation.

**Program Evaluations**

Similar to the large-scale longitudinal studies funded by the DfE, the government funds large-scale evaluations of programs. These evaluations are commonly used to identify areas of change needed in programs, to cancel the programs altogether, or to justify spending on policies. A prominent example of this was the National Evaluation of Sure Start (National Evaluation of Sure Start, 2012), which found no consistent effects on child development. Following this evaluation, there were a number of closures of Sure Start Children’s Centres and massive changes for those that stayed open, with the direction of change guided by the evaluation research.

An ongoing large-scale evaluation is the Study of Early Education and Development (SEED), which aims to evaluate the effectiveness of early education on children’s
outcomes (thus updating the EPPSE research) and the value for money of providing funded early years education to disadvantaged 2-year-olds (Speight et al., 2015).

The DfE also funds “arms-length” agencies, such as the Education Endowment Foundation, which, in addition to being a “what works” center, runs rigorous, randomized-control trial intervention evaluations. These intervention evaluations are used to inform policymakers and ECEC practitioners about effective practice and are used to justify the allocation of funding in Local Authorities.

**Innovations**

At the beginning of this century, government researchers were taken out of centralized research groups in each ministry and relocated to the policy sections of the ministries. In this way, researchers work specifically on one or two policy areas in close proximity to the policy teams, thus making it easier for research to feed into the policy process.

**Contributions to Sustainability**

The government’s research program, although scaled down in size, is important for sustainability because many of the funded projects demonstrate the positive outcomes of ECEC services. Positive service evaluations enable the DfE to make a strong bid to the Treasury (which controls all funds that support services). Through these research efforts, ECEC is now recognized as a successful means to foster child development and to narrow the gap between rich and poor children. For instance, the introduction of the “free entitlement” of ECEC for 3- and 4-year-olds was justified in government documents because of “research evidence on the beneficial effects of early education” (HM Treasury, 2003).

Collection, analysis, and publication of early years data enables careful monitoring of sufficiency of provision as well as uptake by demographics. This allows the government to detect challenges in equity and coverage and so initiate remediation. This also contributes to the sustainability of the system by allowing the government to target
services where they are most needed and spend money on policies that are found most effective.

**Challenges**

The use of research varies by policy area, with some policies (e.g., the uptake and effect of the government-funded hours) being evaluated on a large scale, and others (e.g., the Pupil Premium for poor children) commanding little-to-no government research attention. One member of a policy-oriented research institute noted that research is used “very effectively in some areas, less so in others; it depends a lot on the minister responsible for that policy, the officials in that area, and the topic area to an extent.” Thus, a change in minister can lead to a reduction in evidence-based policies and policy evaluations.

Moreover, there is a real funding challenge. With the financial crisis in 2008-09, all the ministries made many staff redundant and their research departments dwindled in size. However, research continues to have an impact on policy in the DfE, although on a smaller scale compared to a decade ago when a booming economy and a government committed to research led to many large-scale research studies in the early years. Current policy is informed by a wealth of British research and also by research in other countries, especially in Europe (see Sylva et al, 2016) and the U.S.
Chapter 15: What’s Effective and Why?

The concluding chapters summarize the strengths of ECEC in England while noting tensions inherent in the system that hinder optimal support for children, especially children who are vulnerable due to sociocultural factors or special needs and disabilities. The concluding sections rest upon the compendium of information in Chapters 2-14, drawn from public sources and academic research. The published information was supplemented, and often extended, through interviews with government officials and civil servant at national and also local levels. In addition to government “insiders,” interviewees included prominent “outsiders” such as academic researchers, teacher trainers, professional bodies, and lobby groups that include parents.

The Importance of Context and History in Forging Comprehensive and Marketized ECEC Services

Twin themes emerge from this analysis and are great strengths of English ECEC. First, England has comprehensive, integrated, and free education and health systems for young children and their families, ages 3 to 5+ years. Second, it focuses on quality and equity within the context of parental choice and a somewhat marketized structure wherein public funding follows the child. This approach and the comprehensive set of services it evokes did not emerge immediately; rather, it evolved over time. Indeed, the English welfare state began in the 19th century with widespread concern for the poor, especially those in the industrialized cities. However, it was after the Second World War that the current health and education structures were put in place. The entire nation had contributed to the war effort, and the prospect of world peace provided confidence in an economic future secure enough for free health care for all children and pregnant women. Thus free health services were begun in the 1940s, but the ECEC system was slower to develop. Free ECEC places were given to many children in the 1970s, especially those living in disadvantaged neighborhoods, with an expansion of nursery classes attached to primary schools. Yet still there was uneven and patchy
access, especially in rural areas. Progress was slow but steady, and by the end of the 20th century the government committed itself to one year of universal free early years education for every four-year-old, followed soon by three-year-olds and now two-year-olds (for the 40 percent poorest families) before the beginning of the long-established free Reception class and Year 1 (when children turn 6).

By the turn of this century, ECEC provision was taking place in the public, private, and charitable sectors, with younger children cared for more often in private provision and older children in public. Importantly, the Reception Class had been long established in primary school and was always free for all hours that normal schools were open. With the advent of the free entitlement for 3- and 4-year-olds, the government decided to continue with a patchwork of services, allowing parents to choose the setting they preferred and devising means for the government money to follow the child.

Although a universal system of early education appeared later than that for health, the two are integrated at every level. The Every Child Matters policy (HM Treasury 2003) established structures and regulations for integration at the national and local levels of comprehensive services. The fact that this was led by the Treasury and not by one single ministry ensured the (relatively) smooth integration of national services on the ground, including health, education, and child welfare; no one ministry “owned” the network of integrated services.

With a universal free system in place by 2005, the government began to focus on quality of provision, informed by longitudinal research begun in 1997 and funded by the Department for Education. The longitudinal EPPSE study (Sylva et al 2004, 2010; Sammons et al, 2015) demonstrated the positive benefits of quality, as measured on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales (Harms et al. 1998; Sylva et al 2010). In addition, the EPPSE study showed that quality was higher in settings led by degree-level teachers. In response to findings such as these, the government increased the qualifications needed to manage centers and to lead an ECEC group of children.
Furthermore, the government made grants available to serving staff to increase their qualifications and, more recently, devised new routes of “on the job training” leading to qualified teacher (degree) status. The final plank in the English quality platform is a statutory system of generous ratios, with 1:3 for babies, 1:4 for toddlers, and 1:8 for children 3-5 years old (unless in a classroom in a primary school, where higher ratios apply). Unfortunately, the global financial crisis of 2009 ushered in a new phase of austerity which stopped a decade of momentum in upskilling the workforce, but many serving staff have already benefitted from enhanced training, and the generous ratios remain.

More recently, the main policy goal has shifted from the enhancement of child development for all children to the goal of making childcare more affordable so that parents can work. Not unlike the past, contextual factors contour the shape and nature of ECEC in England. Indeed, the uncertain future caused by the United Kingdom exiting the European Union has put an end to some of the bold (and expensive) initiatives seen at the beginning of the century. However, the commitment to ECEC remains, and in 2016 the government announced plans to extend the 15-hour entitlement to 30 hours for working parents. In 2017, the government issued regulation for building new primary schools so that they are now required to include space for ECEC classrooms. In addition, the government has made new funds available to existing primary schools so they can extend their physical space to accommodate preschool children. It is important to note, however, that although expanding hours and space for ECEC shows an enduring commitment, these new buildings and extended hours will improve access to more hours of ECEC but will not necessarily improve its quality.

The Importance of Data

The entire ECEC system is underpinned by the collection of detailed “administrative” data on children’s development and on the quality of provision in settings, staff training institutions, and even in the Local Authorities that administer the ECEC system. The
child database, coupled with the center/Local Authority inspection databases, provide annual snapshots on the operating of the system. Policymakers, as well as parents, all have access to information about the functioning of the system at every level, making possible dynamic policymaking and engaging the public in the education of their children.

**Extent to which ECEC System is Effective: Evidence from Systemic Outputs**

*Defining the Criteria for Effectiveness*

The effectiveness of a country’s early childhood system can be assessed through monitoring data collected nationally on: (1) the development of the children participating in the system; (2) the enrollment statistics in ECEC services; (3) the quality of provision; and (4) parental employment rates.

England’s system has been shown to be effective at promoting child development. At the end of the preschool period, Reception teachers complete an EYFS Profile for each child before entry to Year 1. In 2016, 69.3 percent of children achieved all the early learning goals specified in the curriculum by the time they left ECEC provision and began primary education (DfE, 2016d). Although at first this percentage may seem low, it is important to reiterate the aspirational nature of England’s early learning goals: they specify a very high level of development, especially in language and pre-literacy. For a country with high levels of immigration of non-English speakers, the fact that nearly 70 percent of children have achieved every learning goal is impressive. As the EYFS Profile is passed on to the Year 1 teacher, appropriate support can be put in place for children who need it.

The ECEC system is effective at encouraging enrollment, with nearly 100 percent of 5-year-olds enrolled, and 90 percent of children over the age of 3 attending some form of formal ECEC provision. Additionally, Ofsted reports an increasing number of settings with good or outstanding quality in their provision for children’s learning and
development, and their leadership. Finally, in terms of encouraging parental employment, 78.6 percent of parents in a couple with children under the age of 5 are in employment and 40.9 percent of lone parents are employed as well (ONS, 2014e).

In summary, England’s early childhood system can be described as effective through monitoring data collected annually and across the country on every child’s developmental status, and on quality in every ECEC center. This vast database is published annually so that the public can monitor performance of the ECEC system, and policymakers can fulfill their responsibility to improve the system and ensure value for money.

Quality

There are two types of quality—structural quality, which refers to facilities and resources of the ECEC setting (including staff qualifications and ratios), and process quality, which refers to the everyday “lived” experiences of children that support their development. In terms of structural quality, England’s ECEC system specifies very generous ratios of children to staff, allowing individual attention to children’s interests and needs. There are also stringent requirements for staff training, which means that each room in a setting for children under 5 is led by an individual with at least two years of specialized Early Years training. Furthermore, government schemes have funded degree-level training with an aspiration that all centers should be led by someone with a specialized Early Childhood degree. The Reception class has always been led by a degree-level teacher, with an assistant trained to level 3.

In terms of process quality, the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum (latest version DfE, 2017) outlines the experiences that children should have to support learning and development. This was developed over many years in consultation with child development experts, practitioners, and parents. It provides goals for children’s development at the end of the preschool period, and a companion document,
Development Matters, outlines the temporal pattern of development within each domain. Although it does not recommend a specific pedagogical style, the works of Susan Isaacs and constructivist psychologists such as Piaget were influential in its design and underpin its focus on active learning through play, exploration, and conversation. In 2009, a new government carried out public consultation on the EYFS, thinking that there would be appetite for sweeping reform. Much to their surprise, they found widespread approval of the curriculum and its associated pedagogy: parents, teachers, and researchers called for minor adjustments but not for the massive curriculum reform that the new minister thought might be recommended. Two of the interviewees from teacher training institutions believed that the popularity of the EYFS is the result of “careful and thorough consultation when devising the entire approach.”

In addition to informing practice, the EYFS is the backbone of the English national inspection service, and many of its criteria are based on it. In 2015, Ofsted reported that 85 percent of ECEC settings were rated by inspectors as “good” or “outstanding” (Ofsted, 2015b). Moreover, a series of Ofsted inspection reports show that the quality of provision has improved year on year; the proportion of settings with high inspection ratings (outstanding or good) has increased 18 percentage points in the last five years. These settings are rated on the quality of their adherence to child-centered practices spelled out in the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum framework (Ofsted 2015a). They are also rated on the quality of their leadership and the extent to which children make progress in the seven areas of learning and development. Inspectors observe practice, interview staff and parents, and scrutinize centers’ documents (e.g., minutes of staff or parent meetings, documentation of individual children’s development, records of weekly or monthly planning).

Not only does Ofsted inspect the quality of individual centers, it also carries out routine inspections of the structures and procedures by which local government administers ECEC. The learning and development of all the children in all Local Authorities is scrutinized by Ofsted, which takes into account the levels of deprivation in each locality.
when making a judgment about quality and also efficiency in the way the ECEC grants from central government are allocated.

**Equity**

To assess the equity of the system, data on the EYFS Profile is analyzed each year by socioeconomic status of the children. As in other countries, poorer children show lower levels of development. However, research by EPPSE (Sylva et al 2010) on a large, national sample demonstrated a disproportionate increase over the preschool years in the knowledge and skills of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, suggesting that ECEC goes some way toward alleviating disadvantage. Indeed, the government provides additional funding to settings catering to disadvantaged children (the “Early Years Pupil Premium” for poverty) and provides free ECEC places for disadvantaged 2-year-olds. To demonstrate increasing equity, scores on national assessments of children at the end of the Foundation Stage have been steadily increasing, with a slight narrowing of the gap between rich and poor. One of the reasons for the “catching up” of poor children may be the national Pupil Premium according to which poor children attract additional funds to any setting their parents choose. Thus national data using the end-of-stage profile assessment confirms the research data from a specific sample cited earlier (Sylva et al 2010) which was based on more robust psychometric tests taken by 3,000 children broadly representative of England.

**Efficiency**

The integration of health, education, and social welfare at the local level (as evidenced in interviews with local government respondents) makes for efficiency because it avoids duplication of effort and there are welcome synergies amongst professionals from different services. In addition, the quality and effectiveness of centers inspected by Ofsted includes the leadership of each center in terms of “value for money” decisions. Since the inspectors inquire into budgets and spending choices, this encourages ECEC leaders to use funds wisely. More specifically, the government has given Ofsted
instructions to check whether the Early Years pupil premium has been spent wisely and with maximum impact. ECEC providers are therefore required to employ efficient strategies to enhance the development of disadvantaged children and monitor the impact of such targeted intervention strategies.

**Sustainability**

Public services in England have a long tradition of accountability; taxation money supports them and the public demands proof that its “tax sacrifice” has been wisely spent and spent in keeping with national needs and values. This efficient approach towards provision also makes services sustainable—cost-effective services are easier to justify and continue. Above all, however, the system is sustainable because government data collected each year on individual children and on the operation of centers shows the ECEC system to be effective in supporting all children to achieve the early learning goals laid out in the EYFS.

Finally, the government has a legal obligation to provide ECEC services to all eligible children as they are specified in Acts of Parliament and other government regulations. Special initiatives for staff (such as free in-service training for ECEC practitioners) come and go according to current policy priority and to the economic state of the country; however, the legal entitlement to free ECEC services cannot be taken away. Before the economic crisis there were many more initiatives for staff development, parental engagement, and infrastructure improvement. However—post-austerity—the provision of free ECEC for 3- and 4-year-olds still remains and has even been extended to disadvantaged 2-year-olds. The free entitlement has also been extended from 15 hours/week to 30 hours for families in which both parents work. These latest advances in ECEC policy support access, but not quality.
Why ECEC Is Effective in England and What Matters?

England has a highly centralized government in which policy decisions are made in Parliament, after discussion in Cabinet. Policies are then implemented, with the Ministries of Education, Health, Work and Pensions (to name the most important three) charged with operationalizing policies through structures, practices, and funding streams. Such centralization has led to a single lead ministry for learning and development of children from birth to Year 1 (Department for Education), a single policy document for the age range (the EYFS), a single agency for inspection and monitoring (Ofsted), and a coherent system of training from the post-graduate level down to two-year courses offered as vocational education to 16-19 year olds. Funding of ECEC is determined nationally and devolved to 152 separate Local Authorities, who are funded directly by central government and then direct supply-side funding to the local providers. The many parts of the system fit together, work together, and are guided by a national system of data monitoring. One of the great strengths of the system is its coherence and integration, with maximum public accountability through publication of national assessment results of children leaving ECEC for Year 1, and through the publication of inspection reports on all providers.

There is an Achilles heel in this system, however, and this is in the workforce. A drive to up-skill the workforce began around the turn of this century but has stalled since austerity appeared in the wake of the global financial crisis in 2008-09. Although the government is committed to a steady increase in the professionalization of the workforce, staff with degrees are still the exception rather than the norm in the private sector. Salaries are not sufficiently competitive, especially in the private sector, to attract the caliber of teachers employed in primary and secondary schools. (The exceptions to this are teachers working in a Reception class). The commitment to generous ratios drives the system towards high quality but it makes ECEC very expensive. Interestingly, the French universal ECEC system (ecole maternelle) pays their teachers...
higher salaries but has less generous ratios than England. Perhaps England has chosen quality of provision (hence generous ratios) over a well-paid workforce?

**Context matters**

Beginning in the mid-1990s, ECEC was viewed as the first stage in life-long education. By establishing itself as a foundational part of a citizen’s educational trajectory, policy attention and increased funding led to a transformation of ECEC in the early decades of this century.

Prior to the 1990s, free early education in nursery and Reception classes in primary schools fell under Education, whereas voluntary/charitable playgroups and private day nurseries fell under Health. Not surprisingly, the two separate departments ran separate inspection systems. In the late 1990s, all ECEC services became the sole responsibility of the Department for Education, where they formed the first phase of life-long education and came under a single inspection agency. With early childhood so firmly established under the education ministry, the next step was an early years national curriculum, and in 1996 the first ECEC curriculum was published for all children over the age of 3. This was followed six years later by a national curriculum between birth and age 3. Finally, the birth-3 years curriculum was joined up with the 3-5+ curriculum, resulting in a unified document for all children between birth and year 1 (age 6). The new, merged curriculum combined the best of the two previously separate documents; the one for babies and toddlers had focused on social-emotional development whereas the curriculum for 3-5 was centered around subjects such as literacy and numeracy. Combining the two made the sum greater than the parts, with more “learning” add to the document for babies and toddlers and more “relationships” added to the document for older children.

However, despite a single national curriculum under a single education ministry, there has always been a mixed economy of public and private provision in England. In the
1900s, ECEC was free if in the state sector, but paid for if in private, with fees ranging from token to very expensive. All this changed in 2000 when the free entitlement was promised. Since then, each entitled early education place has been paid for by the government, no matter where it is located. Important hallmarks of the English system include the free entitlement in a public or private setting, the common curriculum and inspection framework, as well as national assessment of all children. A single system, largely under a single ministry, increases the efficiency and sustainability of services because of strong governmental and public commitment to starting early and starting well.

To summarize, England has had an integrated ECEC system for over two decades with a common curriculum and inspection agency. Ofsted is well-respected by government and parents alike; placing the monitoring of early childhood services under the highly respected Ofsted added to the credibility of the entire ECEC system. Perhaps most important of all, the money follows the child, with parents choosing where to send their children and the funding then allocated to the provision the parents chose.

**Governance matters**

The integrated services run by a highly centralized government guarantee that all children, wherever they live and whatever their social background, have access to early childhood education with similar pedagogical quality, curriculum, and welfare standards—all defined nationally. Moreover, these settings are inspected using a common Early Years Inspection Handbook (Ofsted 2015b) that details quality indicators and assesses effectiveness of practice against the child outcomes set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage framework. Through careful monitoring of child development data, coupled with inspection reports across the country, the Department for Education has powerful tools for managing services and their effectiveness.
Governance of health is similar to education, with regional and local services required to follow the Healthy Child Programme (DOH, 2009) which outlines the standards of services expected for the health of young children and their carers, including how they are most effectively and efficiently provided to families. All children receive the same quality of provision, regardless of their family background or where they live. This further shows the impact of governance on the effectiveness of an integrated early childhood system.

In sum, governance at both the national and local levels, the values and priorities held by government and individual officials, and the organization of early childhood services within government all matter for ensuring a high-quality, efficient, sustainable, and equitable early childhood system. Without effective governance, services will not achieve their aim of boosting child development for all, and economic security in low-income families through employment. Above all, effective governance must deliver the quality of services that is crucial to the effectiveness of the system, as it is the services that have direct impact on children’s development.

**Services matter**

Although the central government sets policy and funding, it is the on-the-ground services that shape child development and family functioning. We interviewed two Local Authority officials and one elected Local Councillor. Although they had high praise for the EYFS and the mandated integrated child services, their on-the-ground experiences were of painful cuts that are diminishing quality. The early childhood budget is no longer ring-fenced when allocations are made within each Local Authority, and often universal services for ECEC are cut in order to make funds available for high-need individuals such as adolescents. The 30-hour free entitlement will remain, as will the generous statutory ratios, but there will be few funds for professional development or for a properly paid workforce—both casualties of the government’s taking its eye off
quality and concentrating instead on coverage (both national and also local government).

Still, services are evidence-led and there are many attempts to use scarce funds wisely. National data is collected on child development, health standards and the quality of ECEC settings, thus the quality of services is continuously being monitored and areas of improvement are identified through this data. In addition, the government funds research into ECEC and takes the outcomes of this research into consideration when forming new policies and reviewing existing ones. Indeed, whenever there is a new policy, the government often sets up and evaluates a pilot project. A good example described by one of the civil servants at our interview was the small group of Local Authorities who have been funded to try out expansion of childcare in their areas from 15 to 30 hours per week: “The experiences of these pilot authorities will be used by the Department when rolling out the policy nationally. Difficulties experienced in the pilot implementation will also be used to identify potential challenges and ways to overcome them.” Therefore, the government can be more confident that when they roll out a service nationwide, it will be effective and they can justify spending on that service. Another way in which the government fosters effective services is to consult both the public and the workforce about new initiatives for improved services and barriers they face when delivering services. One civil servant mentioned “the current consultation on the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile,” which “we will use to guide us [the government] in making revisions to the end of phase child assessment.” These consultations can result in further guidance on the topics, and even amendments to existing policies.

Values matter

The values held by the country and by the government also have an influence on the effectiveness of the system. England’s government is committed to universal provision with targeted enhancements for disadvantaged children; for example, the government-
funded ECEC hours for the 40 percent most disadvantaged 2-year-olds. Moreover, it is committed to providing high-quality, integrated services, and thus the government organized all ECEC services under one department and funds both research and audits the effectiveness of its services. Finally, it is committed to providing services that are appropriate to the needs of the country, thus it holds regular consultations with stakeholders to ensure citizen buy-in. A recent example of this is the consultation on the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, the assessment made by teachers in the Reception class at the end of the ECEC period. One government official told us “the Minister and other officials want to amend the current assessment profile so that it will be less burdensome in terms of staff time. The views of parents and staff will be listened to and the assessment will be amended accordingly.”

Finally, the early childhood system of a country is highly susceptible to the values of government—and not just the government as a whole, but the individual officials responsible for policy formation and delivery of services. If the individuals involved in policy formation and implementation do not view early childhood as important, then the whole system is hindered. Fortunately, in England, early childhood services are seen as a powerful means to promote child development, increase parental employment, and reduce inequalities between disadvantaged children and their more affluent peers. With a booming economy in the first decade of this century, investment was increased dramatically and the integrated system of education, health and welfare was put in place. In the second decade, ECEC is operating on more stringent budgets. Some interviewees, especially from the university sector, decried the failure to increase staff salaries and the status of the workforce. However, a former civil servant said that “the important legacy of the expansion period is that the free entitlement remains, as do the ratios and the new buildings that house ECEC services.” If the institutional architecture, combined with bricks and mortar, remains, then the system will be ready for new investments in more prosperous times. Politicians, voters (who are often
parents and grandparents), and staff in England are all convinced of the value of ECEC for child development, parent employment and equity.

**Economic Conditions Matter Too**

Each of these factors—governance, services, and values—are influenced by contextual factors of the time. In 1997, the Labour government was elected at a time when England’s voters were confident about the economy and believed that the costs of ECEC services would be repaid by better outcomes later in the child’s life. Under the Labour government elected in 1997, child development, parental employment, and equitable outcomes for all children were prioritized, and many services targeted specifically at disadvantaged families were commissioned, such as Sure Start Children’s Centres. When the coalition government was elected in 2009, England’s voters were facing an economic crisis and so the priority shifted more towards parental employment to enhance family incomes rather than promote child development. This led to reductions in open-access (i.e., neighborhood) services for disadvantaged families such as Children’s Centres, and later to the expansion to 30 hours per week of free ECEC to allow parents to work longer hours. Unfortunately, most of the additional hours will be offered by the private sector, which has lower quality (Sylva et al., 2010). Although values influence priorities, economic conditions may in the end be the trump card, forcing cut-backs and hard decisions amongst competing priorities.

**Tensions in the English System**

Although the architecture of the system is sound and there remains a commitment to ECEC as the first phase in lifelong education, there are serious tensions impeding optimal support for all children and families.

**Priorities**
In times of prosperity, the ECEC system can simultaneously serve the goals of child development (early education and development) and parental employment (day care). However, in times of austerity, hard choices have to be made and the current government prioritises childcare over child development. Evidence for this is its extending the free care for all working families from 15 to 30 hours/week. Some academic interviewees suggested that the funds for this extension of free hours would be better deployed in raising quality for disadvantaged children, rather than providing more hours of free care to the middle classes.

Generous Ratios or Higher Salaries?

There is another tension in the choice between more generous ratios and a more highly paid workforce. The English, especially parents, insist on structural quality in staffing ratios, but this comes at the price of a poorly paid workforce. It is difficult for a country to have generous ratios combined with a well-paid workforce; achieving both is like squaring a circle.

“All Get the Same” or “Some Get More”

Until recently, the government put more funds into the state (i.e., public) than in the private sector, leading to higher curriculum and pedagogical quality in state provision (Sylva et al., 2010). Over the last few years, this differential in funding has been eroded in the interest of fairness, i.e., a “level playing field” with both public and private settings getting the same level of funding. One of the leaders of a large professional association told us at interview that equal funding across sectors is one the great strengths in the English system. However, there is a tension between allocating the same funding to all settings or giving higher funding to the settings with more highly qualified staff, i.e., to the state settings, which employ more highly paid staff, especially degree-level teachers. In the past, it was in the state sector that innovations in practice were made and leadership was developed. The tension is between “all should get the
same level of funding” versus “some should get more” in order to innovate practice and to serve children and families who are the most challenging. Interviewees from the university teacher training sector argued that the recent common (i.e., equivalent) funding formula for all settings and sectors would “starve the public settings such as nursery schools which employed the highest-paid staff and offered outstanding and innovative quality.” The nursery schools have been beacons of excellence and have uplifted practice in other settings through dissemination and training activities. With “level funding” they will struggle to continue this leadership and innovation role.

Reforming the Curriculum

The first three tensions all relate to funding constraints; a buoyant economy that enables and prioritizes ECEC investment could diminish tensions between goals, ratios, and sectors. However, the fourth tension pertains to the formality of the curriculum and this does not come with a price tag. The much-loved EYFS is centered on seven domains of child development, each with a set of learning goals that every child should achieve before moving on to Year 1. Teachers in primary schools and many government officials applaud the early learning goals; Ofsted inspectors scrutinize everyday practice for evidence that it supports them. However, some respondents from teacher training institutions believed that we expect too much academic learning from our 4- and 5-year-olds. English children learn to read at a younger age than their peers in almost every other country in the world. It is probably time for a serious review of the ECEC curriculum, perhaps with greater emphasis on 21st century skills of executive function, self-regulation, and teamwork, with less emphasis on the academic forerunners of literacy and numeracy, which are central in the early learning goals of the EYFS (Sylva, et al. 2015).
**Inspection of Practice: Supportive or Destructive?**

The final tension is the elaborate and expensive inspection system led by Ofsted. The English government applauds accountability and Ofsted inspections do indeed hold the providers to account. However, they also make staff anxious and lead to over-emphasis on those aspects of provision that are included in the inspection criteria while de-emphasising those practices (and values) that are difficult to assess in a single inspection visit but nonetheless important. The two headteacher interviewees summed up this tension well by acknowledging the role of Ofsted in improving practice overall but also in “narrowing the curriculum and pedagogy by what appears to be prescription.” They also mentioned wide variation in the expertise of inspectors, caused perhaps by the fact that salaries and professional caliber of inspectors in primary and secondary education are higher than those of inspectors who inspect early years settings. Indeed, England has more than a century of experience in inspecting schools, whereas early years inspection is relatively immature. Headteachers whom we interviewed thought that the aspects of practice that could be assessed via a single inspection visit may be “narrowing the curriculum—staff focus too heavily on what is in the Inspectors’ Handbook.” In other words, they suggest that staff may be “teaching to the test” and not implementing the breadth of curriculum specified in the EYFS.
The Early Advantage

Part 7
Implications
Chapter 16: Implications and Options

Implications for Practice

Recommendations for Scaling Up

The system is already scaled up; what remains to be accomplished is increasing quality, including uplift in salaries and in status of the workforce.

Recommendations for innovation

The EYFS is much loved, but its core structure and goals for development are more than a decade old; as such, they should be reviewed and updated to better reflect 21st-century skills, e.g., pedagogy that fosters executive skills such as planning, self-regulation, and teamwork. Many of the interviewees from professional organizations called for a new curriculum. This is more important in England compared to many other countries because the inspection agency uses the curriculum as the yardstick against which to measure quality.

With more children in more hours of care and at a younger age, innovative forms of childcare should be researched and piloted to suit the needs of very young children and their hard-pressed working parents. One innovation would be “blended care” in which young children spend part of each day in group situations, but with care “wrapped around” this center-based provision provided by childminders in their own homes and in the child’s home.

There is a need for innovation in CPD practice, as recent research across Europe found that effective CPD has a great capacity to improve practice (Sylva et al. 2016). England would benefit from new ways to carry out CPD efficiently and economically. The internet offers the possibility of distance learning, which is cheap, but more interactive methods may be required and research and pilot work needs to be carried out. Although it would be ideal if the government were to fund research and pilot work for
CPD, it is unlikely that government funds will be forthcoming because of the austerity mode under which the government is operating. The practical solution will be for non-governmental and/or charitable institutions to fund innovative research in CPD, and the Educational Endowment Foundation (partly funded by the central government) has begun an ambitious program of research in this area. Good examples of innovative approach to CPD are found in programs that use observational quality rating scales (such as the ECERS or the CLASS) to sharpen the practices of ECEC staff and provide a yardstick for monitoring their own improvement.

**Implications for Policy**

*Recommendations for Scaling Up*

Currently, the government is struggling to staff the extension from 15 free hours to 30 hours, and there are major hurdles in recruiting sufficient numbers of trained staff. One reason for this is the low pay of staff in the private sector, the place where expansion is taking place. Finding more money for better salaries will require changes to the system. Some examples might include: (i) moving funds from primary or secondary education to ECEC, which seems unlikely; (ii) raising taxes—another unlikely scenario; and/or (iii) requiring better-off parents to pay for their children’s early education and care while poorer parents would receive free services from better paid teachers. The third option would require convincing voting parents and grandparents to relinquish their free childcare entitlement, which would be political suicide for any politician. Since none of the options to enhance salaries for childcare staff appears likely, it is predicted that salaries will remain low and that inexpensive, distance CPD will be the only practical solution to up-skilling the workforce.

The system is almost at saturation in terms of enrollment, but not in terms of number of free hours in the entitlement. Virtually all 5-year-olds are enrolled in free ECEC (Reception class) because it is a statutory requirement and enforced by law. Moreover, very high percentages of 3s and 4s are enrolled, although many for just fifteen
hours/week. Although there is no urgent need to enroll more children in the age range 3-5, the uptake by parents of disadvantaged 2-year-olds could be higher, especially those from ethnic minorities who do not always take up their free offer. More work needs to be done to encourage poor parents to take advantage of free ECEC for 2-year-olds because some research has shown it to boost children’s development (Sylva et al. 2010).

**Recommendations for Innovation**

Although access for 3- to 5-year-olds is not a major problem, access to high-quality settings needs to improve. New funding for the private sector will be required to ensure that its quality is commensurate with that in the public sector. Increased funding in the private sector could be spent on CPD, but the main stumbling block to quality in the private sector is salaries. There is an urgent need for new thinking about ways to support higher salaries—across all sectors but especially in the private.

A successful innovation to improve quality of provision has been the Teach First program, which encourages graduates from top universities to take jobs in early years centers as a form of “on the job” training to be a teacher. Although many leave teaching after five years for better paid jobs, this well-publicized and well-regarded means of training is a high-profile way to tempt ambitious and talented individuals (who in the past would not have become teachers) into joining the ECEC workforce. Although not all remain in the ECEC workforce, many do and they are predicted to become future professional leaders.

**Implications for Research**

There is a need to find better ways to recruit and retain a talented workforce. Research, perhaps involving workforce economists, is needed to discover ways to compensate staff at all levels, and to make their jobs more rewarding.
Recommendations for Scaling Up

The government commissions large-scale research to explore the effects of different kinds of ECEC provision, e.g., of varying levels of process quality. The research project known as SEED (Study of Early Education and Development) is a good example of research on ECEC in a nationally representative sample of children born in this century. SEED researchers have documented a rise in quality in the private sector over the last decade and this strengthens the government claim that quality will gradually improve without substantial new funding. SEED should continue to explore the effects of increasing hours of free care, along with the most effective ways to nurture children’s development.

New research is needed on: the impact of the Pupil Premium paid to providers of childcare for each disadvantaged child; the impact of strategies used by providers to involve parents in children’s learning; and the effect of the two-year-old check (does it improve development?).

Recommendations for Innovation

In times of austerity it would be wise for research funders across the spectrum (from government, charities, private donors) to collaborate in funding ECEC research. Some organizations might donate “research staff” and not actual money to enable research in ECEC to thrive. Because the greatest need for innovation in research is to discover means for up-skilling and higher wages, new collaborations with researchers from economics will be welcome.

Implications for Other Countries

Many interviewees told us that the jewel in the crown in English ECEC is its Early Years Foundation Stage framework. This specifies curriculum, pedagogy, staffing, child assessment, welfare requirements—and much, much more—for all children between
the ages of birth and entry to Year 1. However, if the EYFS were no more than a set of guidelines, it would not deliver high-quality services. It is the rigorous monitoring system of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) that ensures good structural and process quality, and adequate staffing and welfare practices. Thus, the Ofsted system of inspections and published reports provides the teeth in such a complex system. Parents can only receive free childcare if the child is enrolled in a center deemed by inspectors as meeting the requirements of the EYFS. This leads to an overwhelming majority of centers following the EYFS guidelines and broadly uniform standards of quality across the system.

The ECEC system in England is based on research evidence, much of it collected or funded by the government. The development of all children is assessed by Health at age 2 years and by Education at age 5+. In addition, the quality of delivery is inspected in all centers whose children receive free childcare. Ofsted provides information to the government about quality of its provision across the country, and to individual settings about their own quality. The regulatory system is expensive but the government believes it is worth the cost because it drives up quality through the power to close providers and to publicize reports on (named) weak and strong centers—both strong incentives for centers to maintain high quality.

Finally, the ECEC system is the responsibility of a large department set within a single ministry (Department for Education). This encourages “joined up” policy and implementation. In areas of overlap, such as in children’s health, Cabinet-level task forces are set up to coordinate policy across several ministries with overlapping responsibilities. Lower-level civil servants in different departments also work together on specific tasks or time-bound committees.
Building Blocks of Effectiveness

The English system has strong policy foundations that stem from a national commitment to a welfare state consisting of free educational and health services that support the development of all children, regardless of social background and intellectual capabilities. At the heart of policy is the Early Years Foundation Stage framework for curriculum and integrated services to which each child is entitled from birth (for health) and from age 2/3 (for education). Parents can choose the setting their child attends and the government’s money follows their choice.

The comprehensive range of services is led nationally through three main ministries, with the Department for Education taking the lead for children’s education and welfare, the Department of Health leading on physical and mental health of families and children, and the Department of Work and Pensions taking the lead on (family) welfare economy. Health services begin during pregnancy and are free at point of delivery. There is sufficient funding for baseline services, and also for targeted services for those with special/additional needs. There are strong coordinating mechanisms at local and national levels, with the Cabinet being the top level of coordination through its inter-departmental working groups.

The EYFS is implemented by a workforce trained at secondary or tertiary level; qualifications are reviewed regularly and the last decade has seen an increase in the mandatory training for staff. Although the workforce is gradually improving, this is one of the weakest components of the system. The training agencies are sound but it remains stubbornly difficult to recruit teachers of the highest quality, especially into the private sector or for the youngest children.

The system has been shaped through consultation with teachers, parents, professional bodies and policy makers. It has clearly articulated curriculum goals and pedagogies, based on research evidence and the practical experience of educators. The curriculum takes into account individual interests and capabilities, and there is continuity with
primary education through the location of the Reception class (the final year of the EYFS) in the primary school itself.

Moreover, the United Kingdom (and England within it) contributes a sizeable proportion of funding to health and education services in early childhood. The percent of GDP has risen, although still not sufficient to guarantee high quality across the board, but especially for younger children. Increasing the calibre of the workforce will require sizeable injection of funds.

Finally, the ECEC system is **data-driven** through national assessments of children's progress and of the quality of preschool settings. These nationally collected data enable continuous monitoring of performance of the ECEC system in achieving the curricular goals of early childhood through well-functioning, self-improving centers and effective administrative structures that support and fund them. It is a self-improving system that is supported by shared public values and guided by a wealth of evidence. To conclude—sophisticated machinery is in place but it needs the oil of finance!
REFERENCES


Appendix 1 - Key Legal Framework Documents

Forster Education Act 1870 – *set the framework for the compulsory schooling of all children aged between 5 and 12 in England and Wales*

National Insurance Act 1946 – *established a comprehensive system of social security, thereby entitling all persons of working age to financial benefits*

National Health Service Act 1946 – *created the National Health Service with free services*

Children Act 1948 – *established a comprehensive childcare service, emphasizing the duty of Local Authorities to provide residential care for any child whose parents were unable to look after them*

Plowden Report 1967 – *nursery provision was to be financed by the government and held in primary schools or separate nursery schools and inspected in same way as primary and secondary provision.*

National Childcare Strategy (1998) – *set out the Labour government’s plans to provide free ECEC provision to all 4-year-olds (later extended to 3-year-olds and disadvantaged 2-year-olds)*

Every Child Matters (2003) – *encouraged integrated services provided by the Local Authority*

The Children Act 2004 – *integrated all services provided by the Local Authority and introduced statutory duties for the Local Authority to provide sufficient accommodation for looked after children and sufficient childcare for working parents*

Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children: a ten year childcare strategy (2004) HM Treasury, Department for Education and Employment, Department for Work and Pensions - *extended maternity leave to 9 months, funded 2,500 childrens centres offering integrated education, care and health, required childcare centres to be professionally led by staff qualified at level 3, new government funding to upskill the workforce, increased tax credits for child care, duty of all local authorities to publish a sufficiency ‘action plan on childcare’*
The Childcare Act 2006 – established Ofsted, which had previously only inspected primary and secondary education, as the inspection and monitoring body for ECEC provision

The Healthy Child Programme (Department of Health, 2009) – sets out the expected standards of health provision for pregnant women and young children

The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum framework (originally published in 2008, revised 2012, 2014 and 2017) – sets out the expected standards and child outcomes of ECEC provision. It also specifies ratios for children of different ages, and the ‘educational’ services that need to be offered to children with special needs or who speak English as an additional language.

The Childcare Act 2016 – made it a legal requirement for all working parents of children 3-5+ to have access to 30 hours of free ECEC provision per week
## Appendix 2 - List of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angela Archer</td>
<td>Plymouth Parent Partnership (Local Authority organization supporting parents)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tony Bertram</td>
<td>Vice President of the British Association for Early Childhood Education (professional membership organization for teachers and other ECEC practitioners)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lucy Butler</td>
<td>Director for Children’s Services, Oxfordshire Local Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Naomi Eisenstadt</td>
<td>Honorary Research Fellow, University of Oxford and Former Cabinet Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Godfrey</td>
<td>Early Intervention Manager, Children’s Services, Oxfordshire Local Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Justine Greening</td>
<td>Secretary State for Education and Minister for Women and Equalities (speech at invited seminar on effective education)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jeremy Hunt</td>
<td>Secretary of State for Health (speech at invited seminar on mental health of children)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tom McBride</td>
<td>Director of Evidence, Early Intervention Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susie Owen</td>
<td>Deputy Director of Early Years, U.K. Department for Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Pascal</td>
<td>Director of Centre for Research in Early Childhood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helen Ruff</td>
<td>Head of ACE Children’s Centre and Nursery School, Oxfordshire</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iram Siraj</td>
<td>Professor of Education at University of Oxford</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teresa Smith</td>
<td>former Head of the Department of Social Policy and Interventions, University of Oxford</td>
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<tr>
<td>Max Stanford</td>
<td>Head of Early Years Research and Evaluation, U.K. Department for Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitty Stewart</td>
<td>Associate Professor of Social Policy at the London School of Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purnima Tanuku</td>
<td>Chief Executive of the National Day Nursery (Membership) Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melinda Tilley</td>
<td>Oxfordshire Elected Official and Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margy Whalley</td>
<td>Headteacher and Director of Pen Green Training Center and Nursery School</td>
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