

Briefing from the National Children's Bureau

Contact:

Zoe Renton, Head of Policy, Public Affairs, and Information, National Children's Bureau zrenton@ncb.org.uk 020 7843 6005

Heather Ransom, Senior Policy and Public Affairs Officer, National Children's Bureau hansom@ncb.org.uk 020 7843 6013

Introduction

The Childcare Bill places a duty on the Secretary of State for Education to ensure the provision of 30 hours per week of free childcare over 38 weeks of the year for three and four-year-olds of working parents. This includes the 15 hours of free early education currently available for *all* children aged 3 and 4 and therefore doubles provision for eligible children. It also places a duty on local authorities to publish information about the provision of childcare and related services in their local area.¹

The National Children's Bureau (NCB) welcomes an expansion of the free entitlement to 30 hours per week and wants to work with the government to ensure that provision is inclusive, high quality and supports good outcomes for *all* children. However, more detail is required as to how the scheme will operate and be implemented. The quality of early education and childcare has a long-term impact on children's future development, influencing how well they do at school, the quality of their health and well-being, and their achievements later in life.² In order for early education and childcare to be of the highest quality, there must be sufficient funding for childcare places and significant investment in the early years workforce, to ensure that all who work with young children are well-qualified and experienced.

During the passage of the Bill, we will be seeking the following commitments from government:

- The development of a workforce improvement plan to improve training and qualifications of early years practitioners and to increase staff capacity through recruitment and retention;
- The funding review to take into account the costs of providing *good quality* childcare that meets the needs of *all* children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

¹ Regulations are expected to set out that only families where both parents, or the lone parent, are in work, and where household income is less than £150,000, will be entitled to this extra provision.

² HM Government (2011) [Early Intervention: The Next Steps](#).

The quality of early education and childcare

The positive effects of early education and childcare can only be realised where provision is of a high quality.³ Despite this, many young children, particularly those who are disadvantaged or have SEND, are attending poor quality settings or are unable to access provision that meets their individual needs.

- More than one in four two year olds (28%) are attending settings delivering the free entitlement to early education that have not been judged good or outstanding by Ofsted;⁴
- Early education provision by childminders and Private, Voluntary and Independent providers in deprived areas is less likely to be 'good' or 'outstanding' than that available in wealthier areas;⁵
- 60% of parents of disabled children do not believe that childcare providers can cater for their child's disability.⁶

Early education and childcare provision should be good quality in order to achieve outcomes for young children and narrow the gap for the most disadvantaged. Key to this is a well-qualified and confident workforce – the evaluation of the Graduate Leader Fund showed that settings employing a graduate leader improved the quality of provision, compared with settings which did not – and fully funded childcare places so that providers can cater to the needs of *all* children.⁷ It is essential that both of these areas of childcare policy are addressed prior to the full implementation of the 30 hour childcare offer in September 2017.

Questions for the Minister:

What framework will be used to assess whether a provider can deliver the additional 15 hours of free childcare? Will only good or outstanding settings be able to deliver this provision?

Will providers delivering the additional 15 hours of free childcare need to meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage?

Improving the quality and capacity of the early years workforce

A well-qualified, confident and experienced workforce is central to the delivery of early years services that improve young children's outcomes, with the greatest impact on the most disadvantaged. Nuffield Foundation has recently reported on a strong relationship between the level of staff qualifications, the quality of provision as judged by Ofsted, and outcomes for young children.⁸

Whilst there are signs of gradual improvement in the quality of the early years workforce, a significant minority of practitioners continue to work in the sector despite not holding a Level 3 qualification, the minimum qualification

³ Sylva K, Melhuish E, Sammons P, Siraj I, Taggart B (2014) The Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education Project: [Students' Educational and Developmental Outcomes at Age 16](#) by for (EPPSE 3-16+)

⁴ Department for Education (2014) [Provision for children under 5 years of age January 2014](#) (table 15)

⁵ Ofsted (2014) The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills Early years

⁶ Family and Childcare Trust/Every Disabled Child Matters/Contact A Family (2014) [Parliamentary Inquiry into childcare for disabled children](#)

⁷ Mathers, S et al. (2011) [Evaluation of the Graduate Leader Fund: final report](#). DfE

⁸ Nuffield Foundation (2015) [Early Education and Childcare](#): lessons from evidence and future priorities

recommended by Professor Nutbrown in order to deliver high quality services to young children and their families.⁹ In addition, whilst evidence shows that employing a graduate leader improves the quality of provision; since the Graduate Leader Fund ended in 2011, there has been no dedicated national funding available for local authorities to support the training and qualifications of early years practitioners. This has provided little opportunity for the Private Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector, in particular, to train graduate leaders.¹⁰

- 14% of Private Voluntary and Independent settings employ a graduate.¹¹
- A third of childminders do not hold a Level 3 qualification; nor do 13-16% of staff in group settings.¹²
- 14% of childminders and 4% of staff in group settings are unqualified;¹³

Moreover, challenges in delivering the free entitlement are being compounded by a significant increase in staff vacancies, which are most acute in disadvantaged areas. Between 2011 and 2013 there was a 42% increase in staff vacancies in full daycare settings; and 59% increase in staff vacancies in sessional care settings;¹⁴ with the number of active childminders falling from 48,800 in 2011 to 46,100 in 2013.¹⁵ Failing to address the quality and capacity of the workforce of the workforce would hinder the expansion of the free entitlement.

NCB is therefore calling for the expansion of free childcare to be supported by a workforce improvement plan that sets out how the government intends to recruit and train new practitioners, and retain existing practitioners through qualifications and career development support. To inform the plan, the government should review the composition of the workforce delivering the free entitlement in order to ascertain existing and projected gaps in capacity.

Question for the Minister: Will the government be developing a strategy for expanding and improving the quality of the early years workforce?

Funding the expansion of free childcare

The under-funding of childcare places is affecting providers' ability to employ experienced and well-qualified leaders and staff members, and the overall quality of provision.

⁹ In 2012, Professor Cathy Nutbrown from the University of Sheffield was appointed by Department for Education to lead an inquiry that set out a framework for improving the quality of and access to early years and childcare qualifications. Nutbrown, C (2012) [Foundations for Quality](#): The independent review of early education and childcare qualifications. Final report.

¹⁰ Sylva K, Melhuish E, Sammons P, Siraj I, Taggart B (2014) The Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education Project: [Students' Educational and Developmental Outcomes at Age 16](#) by for (EPPSE 3-16+)

¹¹ Data did not specify whether this was the graduate leader or no. Department for Education (2014) [Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey 2013](#)

¹² Department for Education (2014) [Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey 2013](#)

¹³ Department for Education (2014) [Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey 2013](#)

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Evidence shows that current funding does not cover the full costs of the current 15 hours of free early education and childcare:

- Research by Ceeda for the Pre-School Learning Alliance estimated that PVI providers face a *total funding deficit of £177 million* for the provision of the universal free entitlement for three and-four-year-olds¹⁶;
- The National Day Nurseries Association has estimated that in delivering the free entitlement, nurseries accrue a deficit of £800 per child per annum for three and four-year-olds.¹⁷

If providers cannot absorb additional costs, this underfunding will result in increased costs for parents and/or a decrease in the supply of childcare places. This shortfall, along with the lack of investment in the workforce, is affecting providers' ability to deliver good quality provision, particularly for young children who may have SEND or additional needs. If new funding arrangements, following the implementation of the 30 hours, fail to cover the costs of childcare, providers will struggle to significantly expand the quantity of childcare places whilst at the same time guaranteeing high quality provision for all children and equal access to children with SEND.

NCB welcomes the government's commitment to review funding arrangements with a view to increasing the hourly rate paid to providers to cover the cost of each place. This must be a thorough review that takes into account the costs of providing *good quality* childcare that meets the needs of *all* children, including those with SEND.

Question for the Minister: Will the review of funding include consideration of the additional costs associated with delivering childcare to disadvantaged children and children with SEND?

The National Children's Bureau (NCB)

The National Children's Bureau is a leading research and development charity working to improve the lives of children and young people, especially the most vulnerable. We work with children, for children to reduce the impact of inequalities, by influencing government policy, being the voice for 200,000 front-line professionals, and inspiring practical solutions on a range of social issues including health, education and youth justice, through our extensive research and evidence work. Every year we reach more than 100,000 children and young people through our membership scheme, links with voluntary, statutory and private organisations, and the 30 specialist partnership programmes that operate under our charitable status.

For more information visit www.ncb.org.uk

¹⁶ Ceeda (2014) [Counting the cost](#): an analysis of delivery costs for funded early years education and childcare.

¹⁷ National Day Nurseries Association (2015) [NDNA Annual Nursery Survey](#)