



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP-0141, 11 July 2016

Children's early years development and school readiness

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Summary

On Tuesday 12 July MPs will take part in a Westminster Hall Debate on Children's early years development and school readiness. The debate will be opened by James Berry MP.

This debate pack includes recent press articles, press releases, Parliamentary Material and links to relevant reports and further reading.

The library briefing [Children: Introduction of 30 hours of free childcare \(England\)](#) sets out the details of the policy for an extra 15 hours of free childcare, and highlights issues regarding its delivery by childcare providers.

The library briefing [Early Intervention](#) contains information and analysis on early intervention policies aimed at parents and children from conception to age five, covering health, education, social development and financial benefits. This paper also looks at broader arguments around early intervention as a policy approach.

[Watch Parliament TV: General Debate on Children's early years development and school readiness](#)

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

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1. Key points

- The Government currently provides significant investment in free early education for young children, a key aim of which is to support development, address disadvantage and prepare children for later life and school. It has plans to expand this, but there are concerns about funding and implementation.
- Take-up of currently available funded early education is high, but take-up among disadvantaged children is lower than for other children and in the case of two-year-olds, lower than the level the Government aspires to.
- Evidence suggests that quality of early years' provision is high overall, but deprived areas still have lower quality provision.
- Ofsted's assessment in 2015 was that the gap between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers, in terms of early years development and school readiness, was not closing, despite general improvements in outcomes for children as a whole.

2. Background

2.1 What are children in England currently entitled to?

At present, all three and four year olds in England are entitled to 15 hours of free early education for 38 weeks of the year. The Coalition Government extended the 15 hours entitlement to disadvantaged two year olds from certain groups. Children can take their entitlement at any participating early years' provider or providers with spaces, including schools, private nurseries, childminders or children's centres. Local authorities are under a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient childcare places available. Funded provision is only part of the picture, as many parents pay for extra hours in excess of current entitlements.

Early years settings must follow the statutory [Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\) framework](#), which covers children up to the age of five, including those in school reception classes.¹ Among other things, the EYFS aims to:

- ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe
- promote teaching and learning to develop 'school readiness' and equip children for future progress through school and life.²

2.2 Evidence on impact of early education and care

A recent [National Audit Office \(NAO\) report](#) published in March 2016 summarises the available evidence on the impacts of early education and care:

Research shows good-quality early education helping children's speech and language development; literacy and numeracy; social development; and readiness for school. Existing evidence also suggests that good-quality early education can have a disproportionately positive effect on children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

[...]

There is less evidence for the beneficial impact of early years education on 2-year-olds, but the Department is funding a study to evaluate its effectiveness.³

¹ DfE, [Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage](#), effective September 2014

² Adapted from DfE, [Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage](#), effective September 2014, Pp. 5

³ NAO, [Entitlement to free early education and childcare](#), HC 853 Session 2015-16, 2 March 2016, Pp. 17

2.3 Current policy developments

The Government plans that an extra 15 hours – taking the total up to 30 hours per week for 38 weeks of the year - will be available nationally across England from September 2017 for eligible working parents of three- and four- year olds. The [Childcare Act 2016](#) provides the legislative framework for these changes.

In the November 2015 Spending Review, the Government announced an extra £300 million to increase the national average funding rate for free childcare for 3 and 4 year olds to £4.88 (although the actual rate paid to providers will be determined by local authorities), as well as allocating £50 million from the Department for Education's (DfE's) capital budget to support the creation of early years places.

However, there are concerns that childcare providers could struggle to provide the additional hours, with recent surveys of childcare providers finding around a fifth to a quarter of respondents are not planning to offer the extended entitlement, and a further third to a half unsure if they would.⁴

The Government's plans are discussed in more detail in the Library briefing paper, [Children: introduction of 30 hours of free childcare \(England\)](#).

2.4 Commentary and analysis

Take-up of funded places

The March 2016 NAO report found that “take-up of free childcare for 2-year-olds is substantially lower and access for some groups remains difficult. Parents of disadvantaged 2-year-olds, of whom there are some 270,000, are less likely to use the free entitlement with only 58% doing so, against a Departmental aspiration for 73% to 77% take-up”.⁵ The NAO notes that the DfE is taking action on this, including the use of an “innovative communications strategy” and commissioning research to identify barriers parents face.⁶

⁴ National Day Nurseries Association, Annual Nursery Survey 2016 - England, February 2016, pp 3 and 11; 'Pre-school Learning Alliance, Childcare providers fear closure over 30-hour offer', survey reveals, press release, 20 April 2016

⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 6

⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 6

The NAO conclude that take-up of the existing 15 hour entitlement among 3- and 4- year olds between 2010 and 2015 was high overall, particularly in the least deprived areas (at 98%) but was lower in more deprived areas (90%). They said that the DfE didn't know enough about local markets to conclude how much variation was caused by the availability of childcare places, and how much by parental demand.⁷

Supply of places

The NAO report found:

- Local authorities (LAs) had generally focused on improving the quality of existing early years providers rather than encouraging new providers into the market.
- They have limited means of incentivising new providers to enter the market or existing ones to expand, although some have successfully used capital funding to address these issues.
- There are gaps in the information LAs have to 'manage the market'.
- Stakeholders were broadly positive about expanding the 3 & 4 year old entitlement to 30 hours for some families, but there were concerns about funding and implementation.
- This expansion could put further implementation of disadvantaged 2 year old provision at risk.
- LAs were "likely to find it challenging to provide the necessary number of places in some areas if demand is as high as anticipated".⁸

The DfE published an analytical report, [Review of childcare costs](#), in November 2015, in the context of the plans to give some families 30 hours' entitlement.⁹ This identified a number of strengths in the overall childcare market:

- Overall, it functioned "reasonably effectively"
- Supply in the market was healthy and had grown in recent years; "most providers report breaking even or making a profit, and exit rates from the market are low".
- Barriers to market entry and exit appeared "moderate to low".¹⁰

On market challenges:

- The market was fragmented, highly localised, labour-intensive and with mostly small providers with limited scale economies

⁷ NAO, [Entitlement to free early education and childcare](#), HC 853 Session 2015-16, 2 March 2016, ., pp. 17

⁸ *Ibid.*, pps. 9-11

⁹ DfE, [Review of childcare costs: the analytical report An economic assessment of the early education and childcare market and providers' costs](#), 25th November 2015 Reference: DFE-00295-2015

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Pp. 7

- Formal childcare prices have outstripped inflation for the past decade, with costs for over two year olds rising on average by 69% (nurseries) and 65% (childminders) in the last ten years, compared to an increase in the consumer price inflation of 28% over the same period.
- One in five parents who have not accessed childcare cite cost as the key barrier.
- There was considerable potential for efficiency across the sector as a whole – examples of how this might be achieved included: using higher child-staff ratios (but within the statutory constraints – which vary dependent on age of children and other factors); using “more variable staffing models to recognise peaks and troughs in occupancy”; increasing overall occupancy rates.

The DfE’s analysis was questioned by some sector representatives. In [article](#) in *Nursery World* on 21 March 2016, Neil Leitch, CEO of the Pre-school Learning Alliance¹¹ is quoted as saying:

‘The Government has described its review as “the most comprehensive bottom-up analysis of the cost of childcare provision in the country”, and yet not only are we as a sector unable to scrutinise a key piece of underlying research, but we are now told that no-one at the DfE – the department responsible for ensuring that the 30-hour scheme is funded adequately – has this information at all.

‘Given the number of other concerns we have about this report – such as the use of 2012 data for key information like wages, rents and utility costs, and the unrealistic assumption that childcare providers will work to statutory ratio limits – it’s now clear that this review is an unacceptably poor foundation on which to base critical funding decisions, decisions that will determine whether the 30-hour scheme will succeed or fail.’¹²

Quality and impact of current early years provision

Early years settings are subject to inspection and quality assurance by Ofsted, in line with Ofsted’s [Early years inspection handbook](#).¹³ In its most recent [2015 annual report](#) on the early years sector (published July 2015) the inspectorate noted overall improvements, but that these were not ‘narrowing the gap’ between more and less disadvantaged groups:

While it is encouraging that outcomes for children from disadvantaged backgrounds are rising in line with the peers, there is no sign of the gap narrowing in any substantial way.

[...]

¹¹ The Pre-school Learning Alliance [describes itself](#) as “the largest and most representative early years membership organisation in England”.

¹² ‘[DfE does not possess the data used in childcare costs report](#)’ in *Nursery World*, 21 March 2016.

¹³ Ofsted, [Early years inspection handbook from September 2015](#), updated 28 August 2015.

Across the country, 85% of early years registered providers are now good or outstanding, a dramatic increase of 18 percentage points in five years. As a result, many more parents now have a better chance of finding a high quality early education place in their area [...]¹⁴

To address the 'disadvantage gap', Ofsted's view was that there needed to be a "step change [...] improving individual providers of early education will not be enough. Improving readiness for school will require a combination of system leadership, more focused challenge from Ofsted and greater leadership from primary schools."¹⁵

The NAO similarly reported that "[b]ased on Ofsted ratings, the quality of early years settings has been improving but deprived areas still have lower-quality provision".¹⁶ On school readiness, they concluded that "the Department does not routinely measure the impact of free childcare on later educational outcomes" but that it had commissioned research on the impact of early education for some two year olds.¹⁷

¹⁴ Ofsted, [Early years report 2015](#), 13 July 2015, Pps 6 & 9

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 21

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Pp. 7

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Pp. 7

3. Press Articles

The Guardian, 15 June 2016

[30-hour free childcare pledge in jeopardy, say MPs](#)

Committee says childminders could decide not to offer additional hours owing to concerns they would be left out of pocket

The Telegraph, 15 June 2016

[MPs warn Government's 30-hour free childcare plan is at risk](#)

The Government's commitment to offer three and four-year-olds 30 free hours of childcare a week may be in jeopardy if not enough childminders and nurseries are willing to offer up places, a group of MPs have warned.

Nursery World, 27 May 2016

[30 hours childcare risks widening the gap in the early years](#)

Better-off families are set to benefit from 30 hour childcare at the expense of poorer families, warns a new analysis by think tank CentreForum.

Nursery World, 9 May 2016

[A third of children not 'school-ready' for Reception](#)

Nearly a third of children are not arriving 'school-ready' for their first days at reception class and some are not even toilet trained, a survey suggests.

The Guardian, 20 April 2016

[Nurseries 'could close' due to government's 30-hour free childcare plan](#)

Increase in free care for three to four-year-olds could see cuts in level of care for other age groups and negative financial impact on businesses, study says

The Independent, 2 March 2016

[Funding for childcare has been cut in real terms, National Audit Office reveals](#)

David Cameron had promised to double the number of free hours offered to parents at the general election

The Guardian, 15 February 2015

[Number of childminders in England falls by 10,000 in five years](#)

Labour says decline is putting pressure on places and raising costs, while childminder agencies scheme has been a 'total flop'

Children and Young People Now, 8 December 2015

[The implications of the Spending Review on services for children](#)

Measures announced in the Chancellor's Spending Review will result in core funding for councils falling 24 per cent in real terms over the next four years. How will this affect children, young people and their families?

The Guardian, 25 November 2015

[Stricter rules on free childcare cut number of eligible families by third](#)

Upper income limit lowered to £100,000 per parent and working hours threshold doubled to 16 hours a week in cost-saving measure

Financial Times, 27 October 2015

[Northern Powerhouse project challenged by 'early years gap'](#)

England's north-south divide is entrenched almost from birth, according to a report that highlights the stark gap in achievement of pre-school children from the poorest families in London and northern areas.

The Guardian, 18 October 2015

[No pre-school, no child benefit, Tory thinktank says in report on poverty](#)

Bright Blue, a liberal Conservative pressure group, argues poverty can be cut if parents send their children to pre-school education centres

Children and Young People Now, 12 October 2015

['Baffling' DfE report raises fears over free childcare expansion](#)

A Department for Education review has been unable to quantify the costs of providing childcare, prompting concerns from the early years sector that the planned expansion of the free entitlement will be underfunded.

Children and Young People Now, 12 October 2015

[A fair fee is critical to free childcare expansion](#)

The past few weeks have seen mixed messages coming from the government over the expansion of the free childcare policy.

Children and Young People Now, 14 September 2015

[Ofsted early years reforms: a case of improvement or 'schoolification'?](#)

The introduction of a single framework for school and nursery inspections and the abolition of Ofsted's dedicated early years director has triggered questions over its commitment to early years and childcare.

The Guardian, 8 September 2015

[Free childcare pledge may lead to fewer nursery places, says union](#)

The government's high-profile pledge to double the amount of free childcare for working parents may backfire, after school leaders warned that a "perverse outcome" of the policy could be state schools cutting the number of nursery places they offer.

The Telegraph, 8 September 2015

[New childcare laws 'may lead to nurseries taking in fewer children'](#)

Parents run the risks of struggling to find a nursery offering 30 hours of free childcare because of concerns with funding, headteachers have warned.

Children and Young People Now, 31 August 2015

[Driving the childcare agenda: Julia Margo, chief executive, the Family and Childcare Trust](#)

The Telegraph, 24 July 2015

[Children at risk as nurseries face funding squeeze, report says](#)

Children are at risk of not being properly looked after as nurseries face squeeze in funding

The Independent, 13 July 2015

[Nursery schools have been 'colonised by the middle class', says Ofsted chief](#)

Sir Michael Wilshaw believes the trend preserves a performance gap between middle-class children and those from disadvantaged homes in Britain.

4. Press Releases and blogs

Professional association for childcare and early years (PACEY), 26 May 2016

[Widening the early years gap](#)

A Report published today by CentreForum examines the potential impact of the changes to childcare policy.

Entitled *Widening the gap? The impact of the 30-hour entitlement on early years education and childcare*, the report raises a number of key findings:

- **Those on higher incomes are the main beneficiaries:** following the introduction of the 30-hour childcare entitlement, Tax-Free Childcare, and Universal Credit, CentreForum expects a two parent family on the national living wage and earning £19,000 per year to receive 20 per cent less childcare subsidy for a child aged 3 or 4 years than a two parent family with annual earnings of £100,000
- **Working Tax Credit is not being claimed:** Around 85 per cent, over two million parents, do not claim the childcare element of Working Tax Credit despite being potentially eligible
- **15 hours does not necessarily equal quality:** Childcare under the current 15-hour entitlement does not automatically offer the high level of quality that would be required for the disadvantage attainment gap to be substantially reduced
- **Extending the entitlement is likely to further impact quality:** Extending the entitlement to 30 hours per week for working families is therefore likely to create additional strain on quality. The national average funding rates announced do not indicate a sufficient investment in raising quality through substantial workforce development
- **Disadvantaged children are most at risk:** Children of parents on low incomes do not qualify for the entitlement, but there is a danger that greater competition for places could result in these children struggling to access even their core entitlement to 15 hours per week of early education
- **There is little evidence that the 30 hours will substantially improve maternal employment rates:** Instead, extending free entitlement is likely to carry a considerable level of 'deadweight' as existing childcare arrangements are simply replaced by government-funded provision.

Commenting on the report, **Liz Bayram, Chief Executive, Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years** says:

"We know how important high quality childcare is, and the impact it has on a child's development. Research from across the globe clearly shows that better trained and qualified childcare professionals provide better outcomes for children, particularly for disadvantaged ones.

“It is unacceptable that the quality of early years provision is substantially lower in deprived areas, and that less than half of the poorest children in England are ready for school, compared to almost two-thirds of other children. High quality early education would go some way in narrowing this gap.

“Government should heed CentreForum’s warning that extending the entitlement to 30 hours per week for working families is likely to exacerbate the current strain on quality. We know that high quality childcare makes the most difference, particularly for children from low income families. There is an opportunity to use the Government’s forthcoming consultation on the early years funding formula to ensure that providers are incentivised to deliver the new entitlement.

“The Government has already made a public commitment to work in partnership with the sector to publish a workforce strategy in 2016, but to date we have seen little progress. Going forward, this must be a priority, as the main driver of quality in a setting is its workforce.”

National Audit Office (NAO), 02 March 2016

[Entitlement to free early education and childcare – National Audit Office](#)

The Department for Education has made significant progress in providing 15 hours of free childcare to more parents of 3- and 4-year olds and parents of disadvantaged 2-year-olds, according to the National Audit Office. It has not yet, however, achieved full value for money because it cannot track the effectiveness of its substantial investment of £2.7 billion.

Most parents of 3- and 4-year olds take-up free childcare places for their children, and the quality of provision, as measured by Ofsted, has increased in recent years. The Department’s measure of children’s outcomes at age 5 has also shown steady improvement. In 2015, 66% of children reached a good level of development compared to 52% in 2013. However, the Department cannot link this data to the quality of individual childcare settings children have attended, and from 2017 the current measure of development is being halted.

In 2017, the Department will also double the number of hours of free childcare that working families with 3- and 4-year-olds are entitled to, from 15 to 30 hours per week, estimated to affect 390,000 families.

The NAO has identified a number of risks to the successful implementation of the new entitlement to 30 hours of childcare, which the Department will need to consider as it pilots the new offer. The NAO found that childcare settings are concerned about the levels of funding that will be available. Although they are keen to offer the new entitlement, some providers may choose not to if the funding is not right. There is also a risk that childcare settings could choose to offer additional hours to 3- and 4-year-olds by reducing the number of disadvantaged 2-year-olds they look after, as 2-year-olds are more

expensive to care for. This would jeopardise the Department's aims to improve educational and other outcomes for the very children who could benefit most from free childcare.

The 15 hours of free childcare currently offered to parents of disadvantaged 2-year-olds has been in place since September 2013. However, many parents of children in this age group are still not using the entitlement. Only 58% of parents have taken up the offer against the Department's aspiration for take-up levels between 73% and 77% and some groups are less likely to know it is available. The Department, for example, found lower levels of awareness among Bangladeshi, Somali and Polish communities. There can also be good reasons why parents choose not to use free childcare; for example, some parents believe 2-year-olds are too young to go to nursery.

The review found that funding for free childcare has stayed the same since 2013-14 meaning that providers have faced real-term cuts. The Department has announced new average funding rates at levels which are designed to encourage efficiency, however, it does not know how efficient providers currently are, following the freeze in funding in recent years.

Local authorities are responsible for ensuring that there are sufficient free childcare places but gaps exist in the information to manage supply. There were also gaps in the information available for parents to make decisions about where to use free childcare, helping to explain why many parents are confused about their options.

“Many parents and children are benefitting from the entitlement to free childcare, but the Department does not yet know what long term outcomes it is getting for its investment of nearly £3 billion a year. In rolling out the new entitlement the Department should use and evaluate its pilots to make sure that certain groups do not inadvertently lose out. It is particularly important that the number of disadvantaged 2-year-olds accessing free childcare continues to rise, in line with the Department's own aspirations.”

Amyas Morse, head of the National Audit Office, 2 March 2016

Family and Childcare Trust, 23 February 2016

[Childcare rises in line with inflation, but shortage of free early education places worsens in new research](#)

Working parents are offered a brief respite from steeply rising childcare costs, as the Family and Childcare Trust's annual Childcare Survey shows average prices rose just above inflation throughout Britain for the first time in eight years.

Not so lucky are those parents seeking a free early education place for their three or four year old, with many more councils reporting gaps, despite Government plans to expand the free offer from 2017.

In England, the number of local authorities reporting a lack of free places for three and four year olds has more than doubled - from 23 in 2015 to a staggering 59 in 2016 – a drop of over two thirds. Already, an estimated 41,300 three year olds are missing out on their free early education.

The Family and Childcare Trust's annual Childcare Survey – sponsored by Computershare Voucher Services and Community Playthings - also shows a steep decline in the numbers of English local authorities reporting enough after-school childcare. Just 9 per cent said they had enough, compared to 28 per cent in 2011.

Julia Margo, chief executive at the Family and Childcare Trust said: "Parents will breathe a sigh of relief that childcare costs have only risen in line with inflation over the last year.

"But we are very concerned that thousands of three year olds are missing out on existing entitlements before the expanded 30 hours of free childcare is even piloted. Extra free childcare is of no use to working parents if they can't find a place for their child. To make childcare really work for parents, we want to see the right to an early education place brought in line with the right to a school place."

Julian Foster, Managing Director at Computershare Voucher Services, who sponsor the annual childcare survey, said:

"Childcare represents a huge expense for many households, so it's good news for parents if the pace of cost increases has slowed. When childcare provision is both effective and affordable, we create happier households, empower parents to work and provide better opportunities for children as they grow up.

"It is crucial that the industry, third sector and government work together to ensure that good childcare is available to families across the country."

Other key findings from the annual Childcare Survey include:

- Just 45 per cent of councils in England had enough childcare for parents who work full time, despite obligations under the Childcare Act 2006. In Scotland, a meagre 13 per cent reported having enough childcare for these parents.
- Only 15 per cent of councils in England had enough childcare for disabled children, compared to 21 per cent in 2015.
- A part-time nursery place (25 hours) for a child under two rose by 1.1 per cent last year, and is now on average £116.77 a week in Britain. However, in London, the most expensive region, prices for the same place rose by 2.2 per cent in one year.
- The combined price of a part-time nursery place for a child under two and an after-school club for a five year old is now £7,933 a year. This represents a third of the median gross salary of a nurse, and 22 per cent of a soldier's.

- This year there are 11 local authorities where the average cost for part-time childcare exceeds the Working Tax Credit support cap, leaving the poorest working parents having to pay an average of £81.53 a week, or £4,240 a year out of their own pocket.
- For the first time in its annual Childcare Survey, the Family and Childcare Trust has calculated the number of childminders per 1,000 children aged under five in each area in Britain. There are big differences between areas, with four childminders per 1,000 in Hull compared to 24 per 1,000 in Bromley. Childminders will be crucial to delivery of the 2017 extension to free early education.

The Family and Childcare Trust is continuing to call for an end to short-termism and piecemeal childcare policy, and urges the Government to undertake a comprehensive review of the childcare system so that it supports all working parents and delivers for employers and the economy.

Notes to editors:

Average weekly childcare costs by region and nation, 2016

Region/Nation	Nursery 25 hours (under 2)	Nursery 25 hours (2 and over)	Childminder 25 hours (under 2)	Childminder 25 hours (2 and over)	After-school club 15 hours	Childminder after-school pick up
East of England	£113.51	£110.88	£104.13	£104.08	£51.89	£63.04
East Midlands	£116.63	£109.15	£98.79	£98.74	£44.80	£58.65
London	£158.73	£148.74	£148.12	£146.81	£54.39	£88.17
North East	£109.49	£102.20	£97.76	£97.29	£48.20	£59.68
North West	£102.44	£101.08	£88.67	£88.21	£45.80	£55.95
South East	£137.88	£133.32	£117.58	£116.86	£50.81	£71.49
South West	£116.24	£111.63	£104.77	£103.53	£51.49	£63.49
West Midlands	£110.80	£106.91	£95.43	£93.06	£46.92	£59.64
Yorkshire and Humberside	£97.42	£93.60	£92.71	£91.16	£45.78	£55.56
England regional average	£118.13	£113.06	£105.33	£104.42	£48.90	£63.96
Scotland average	£111.13	£104.06	£102.50	£102.02	£53.21	£65.98
Wales average	£110.16	£109.07	£96.51	£96.53	£45.40	£57.16
Britain average of regions and nations	£116.77	£111.88	£104.27	£103.48	£48.97	£63.53

Changes in childcare costs between 2015 and 2016

	Nursery 25 hours (under 2)	Nursery 25 hours (2 and over)	Childminder 25 hours (under 2)	Childminder 25 hours (2 and over)	After-school club 15 hours	Childminder after-school pick up
England regional average	0.7%	1.3%	0%	0.2%	2.1%	-1.9%
Scotland average	1.0%	4.1%	2.1%	2.7%	8.5%	2.2%
Wales average	5.6%	5.4%	0.3%	0.3%	-8.7%	-4.7%
Britain average of regions and nations	1.1%	1.9%	0.2%	0.4%	1.6%	-1.7%

The annual *Childcare Survey* plus childcare profiles for each parliamentary constituency in Britain will be available online from 00.01hrs GMT Wednesday 24 February at <http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/childcare-survey-2016>

The annual *Childcare Survey* is sponsored by Computershare Voucher Services and Community Playthings.

Early Years Careers, 5 February 2016

[Are nurseries doing enough to narrow the gap in development?](#)

Are nurseries doing enough to narrow the gap in development?

What is your nursery doing to narrow the gap in children's learning and development?

Narrowing the gap

Children learn and develop at their own pace, yet are some children falling behind their peers. What can childcare settings do to *narrow the gap*? Narrowing the gap in children's development is not just a practitioner's job it is also a manager's job to be across this as well.

Nurseries have a priority to encourage and support the development of all children. Two-year-olds from disadvantaged backgrounds are now able to access a quality early education through Nursery Education Funding; alongside all three and four year olds for fifteen hours per week. This funding was introduced in an attempt to narrow the development gap between children from different backgrounds; ensuring that children whose parents are unable to afford nursery fees are still able to access some early learning prior to starting school. Research has shown that Nursery Education Funding is supporting those children from disadvantaged backgrounds to access the same opportunities as their peers. So why is there still a noticeable gap in achievement?

Funding to help narrow the gap

Nurseries can apply for funding through the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP), for any disadvantaged three and four year olds. This funding can be used to enhance play opportunities or the learning environment for these children, in order to **narrow the gap** in development. However accessing this information from parents can be time consuming and difficult. Parents may not see the importance of registering their child for this funding, as they are not in direct receipt of the funding. It is important for practitioners to explain to eligible parents the impact that this funding could have on the learning of their child. The funding can help to buy equipment or pay for trips out into the community, something a child may not be able to do often. Accessing this funding can really benefit children's learning opportunities and help to narrow the gap between children from differing backgrounds.

Everybody's job to narrow the gap

It is important that all practitioners, including managers, which are involved with the child know where he/she is developmentally. OFSTED will want to see evidence that all practitioners are working together to *narrow the gap* in achievement. This can be evidenced through a child's learning journey showing a breadth of learning-rich activities and opportunities for development. Tracking tools will support practitioners in identifying areas that require support, and next steps will enable the child to further their learning through their individual interests. Practitioners should ensure that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are given the same opportunities to feel part of a community; this may include offering a reduced price or payment plan to support parents financially when paying for nursery essentials such as a pre-school uniform.

Getting children ready for school

Narrowing the gap in development is a high priority in ensuring each child is school ready by the end of pre-school. Children that are seen to be 'falling behind' prior to school may have difficulties during the transition period. Practitioners can support children in preparation for school by working with parents to meet particular milestones. Parental influence can have an impact on a child's development, with more and more campaigns supporting home learning. Save the Children promote the importance of home learning through their "Read on Get on" campaign; in which they encourage parents to read at home with their children to develop literacy and language skills. Practitioners and parents can work together to **narrow the gap** in achievement.

With the introduction of the 30 hrs free children, there will be more emphasis on the impact of the increased funding on narrowing the gap in children's development. Ofsted are also very keen to see how nurseries are evidencing this information, therefore, evaluate your tracking tools and see if they provide you with the relevant information.

Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), 2 October 2015

[North-South divide hits young children as early as five](#)

Less than half the children born into the poorest families in the North reach a good standard of development by the time they are five years' old, according to a new report.

The poorest children born in the North are also falling behind their peers born in to poverty in London, in a stark 'early years gap'. Just 47 per cent of the poorest children in the North achieve a good level of development in their early years – their peers in London enjoy a 12 percentage point head start, where 50 per cent meet the standard.

In its annual [State of the North report](#), IPPR North looked at what is required to create a successful northern economy. It found the potential of its people is being held back at all stages of their lives starting before they even reach school.

Closing the gap in early years achievement is one of 11 benchmarks against which progress of the Northern Powerhouse should be assessed to benefit people living and working in the North.

The report also found:

- 55% percent of young people in the North attain the standard of 5 GCSEs A*-C, including English and Maths – but this fell to only a third (33%) for those receiving free school meals.
- The Norths productivity trails the national average by 10.6 per cent. The report says the north has to halve the productivity gap between itself and the UK as a whole, rising by £8.50 from £26.73 to £35.20 over the long term.
- While cities dominate the North's economy, there are pockets of highly qualified workers and high productivity workers in areas such as York, North Yorkshire and East Riding (77.2 per cent), Cumbria (76.8 per cent) and Cheshire and Warrington (75.0 per cent), which surpasses the national (72.9 per cent) and northern rates (70.5 per cent)
- The North has a lower proportion of well-qualified workers, but when combining the five northern city regions have almost as many well qualified individuals (3.6 million) as London does (3.7 million). The demand for skilled workers in the North is forecast to increase, with three quarters of new jobs available – equivalent to 2.4m people – by 2022 requiring OCF level 3 or above.

Ed Cox, Director at IPPR North, said:

"If the Northern powerhouse is to drive national prosperity, these figures show the challenges it must overcome to become a reality. We will never become a powerhouse economy when are children and young people have such a poor start in life. It will atek a generation of investment: not only in new railways and motorways, but in the human capital of the North – in education and training, starting with the youngest.

If the Northern powerhouse is to be successful, economic powers must be devolved to all corners of the North to allow businesses and policymakers to develop an economy that supports more productive, resilient and sustainable growth: jobs that pay well, prosperity that is shared and opportunities for all.

5. Parliamentary Coverage

5.1 PQs

[Children: Day Care](#)

Asked by: Reed, Mr Jamie

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when her Department expects to confirm to childcare providers the rates to be paid to them when delivering 30 hours free childcare per week for three and four year olds.

Answering member: Mr Sam Gyimah | **Department:** Department for Education

We have already announced increased annual investment of £1 billion for the early years entitlements within the ring-fenced Dedicated Schools Grant by 2019-20, which includes £300 million per year from 2017-18 to uplift the average funding rate paid to providers. The increase to the funding rate is based on robust evidence from the Review of the Cost of Childcare. We have made clear our commitment to maximise the amount of this funding which reaches frontline childcare providers, and will consult on proposals for achieving this as part of our consultation on early years funding reform later this year.

Local authorities, in consultation with their Schools Forum, are responsible for deciding how best to distribute the early years entitlement funding across their locality. They also set their own local rates of funding for their early years providers.

07 Jul 2016 | Written questions | 41695

[Children: Day Care](#)

Asked by: Reed, Mr Jamie

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to ring-fence the funding rate paid to providers of free childcare for eligible three and four year olds.

Answering member: Mr Sam Gyimah | **Department:** Department for Education

We have already announced increased annual investment of £1 billion for the early years entitlements within the ring-fenced Dedicated Schools Grant by 2019-20, which includes £300 million per year from 2017-18 to uplift the average funding rate paid to providers. The increase to the funding rate is based on robust evidence from the Review of the Cost of Childcare. We have made clear our commitment to maximise the amount of this funding which reaches frontline childcare providers, and will consult on proposals for achieving this as part of our consultation on early years funding reform later this year.

Local authorities, in consultation with their Schools Forum, are responsible for deciding how best to distribute the early years

entitlement funding across their locality. They also set their own local rates of funding for their early years providers.

07 Jul 2016 | Written questions | 41677

[Childcare](#)

Asked by: Karin Smyth

What progress the Government has made on providing 30 free hours of childcare per week for three and four year-olds.

Oral questions - Lead

Answering member: The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Mr Sam Gyimah) | **Department:** Education

We are delivering at great pace on our commitment to provide parents with 30 hours of free childcare for three and four-year-olds. With cross-party support, we have already taken the Childcare Act 2016 through Parliament. We announced in the November spending review that we would invest an additional £1 billion a year into the system from 2019-20—more than ever before—and we are not waiting until 2017 to deliver on our commitment: around 5,000 children from eight areas will get their 30 hours a year from this September.

04 Jul 2016 | Oral answers to questions | 612 c600

[Children: Day Care](#)

Asked by: Loughton, Tim

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when her Department plans to publish the findings from areas piloting 30 hours of free childcare.

Answering member: Mr Sam Gyimah | **Department:** Department for Education

We are currently commissioning the evaluation of early implementation of 30 hours free childcare. An invitation to tender was published in May 2016 with a view to awarding the contract to a successful bidder by the end of June 2016.

The evaluation will focus on generating learning that can be used by Early Implementers and all local councils ahead of national implementation in September 2017.

13 Jun 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 40077

[Teachers: Pre-school Education](#)

Asked by: Qureshi, Yasmin

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to increase the number of qualified early years teachers in nurseries.

Answering member: Mr Sam Gyimah **Department:** Department for Education

The department delivers early years initial teacher training places through the National College for Teaching and Leadership. There are four training routes available: undergraduate, assessment only, graduate entry and graduate employment based. To encourage take up, the Department funds course fees, pays bursaries to eligible trainees on the graduate entry route and provides financial support to employers for those trainees on the graduate employment based route.

As part of our thinking on the early years workforce strategy we will be considering how best to continue to grow the graduate workforce, including supporting improved career progression.

09 Jun 2016 | Written questions | 39347

[Children: Day Care](#)

Asked by: Knight, Julian

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the per pupil fee for the planned introduction of 30 hours free childcare will be the same for each local authority.

Answering member: Mr Sam Gyimah | **Department:** Department for Education

At the Spending Review we announced the average funding rates will be increased as we promised during the General Election campaign. The new rates will be £4.88 for 3- and 4-year-olds and £5.39 for 2-year-olds. The Childcare Review has provided strong evidence that provider costs vary substantially across different parts of the country. There is therefore a strong rationale for varying funding rates between areas. We know, however, that there are historical inconsistencies and inefficiencies with the current funding system for 3- and 4-year-olds. We will introduce a national funding formula for early years so that funding is transparently and fairly matched to need and fairly distributed between different types of providers and different parts of the country.

13 Jun 2016 | Written questions | 39275

[Children: Day Care](#)

Asked by: Danczuk, Simon

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate her Department has made of the proportion of (a) private, (b) voluntary and (c) independent nurseries which will provide the additional 15 hours of childcare under the provisions of the Childcare Act 2016.

Answering member: Mr Sam Gyimah | **Department:** Department for Education

The Department for Education publishes data on the number of children benefitting from funded early education places by type of provider and local authority. The latest information can be found in the Statistical

First Release **Provision for children under five years of age in England:** January 2015 (SFR20/2015).

As part of our ongoing development of our 30 hours implementation plans we are consulting extensively with key stakeholders, including representative organisations and other individual providers.

The government will continue to support the growth and creation of new places to deliver the 30 hours funded entitlement through investing at least £50 million of capital investment to support the creation of additional early years places. This is in addition to our commitment to capital funding to create nursery provision as part of new Free Schools which we estimate will create at least 4,000 places.

13 Jun 2016 | Written questions | 39245

[Children: Day Care](#)

Asked by: Mulholland, Greg

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential financial effect on nurseries in deprived areas of her plans to increase the free childcare entitlement to 30 hours per week.

Answering member: Mr Sam Gyimah | **Department:** Department for Education

The government conducted a 6 month long review of the cost of childcare provision in 2015 - the most in depth analysis of this market we have ever had, and was described by the National Audit Office as "thorough and wide-ranging". This assessed the costs of different types of providers across the country, including nurseries in deprived areas. The review is available online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-childcare-costs>

Based on this information we announced at the 2015 Spending Review that the government would provide £300 million per year for a significant uplift to the average funding rates paid for the 2-, 3- and 4-year-old entitlements from 2017-18. Together with the funding announced at last summer's Budget, we will be investing over £1 billion more per year by 2019-20 to fund our commitments on the entitlements.

We will also be introducing a national funding formula for the early years so that funding is transparently and fairly matched to need and fairly distributed between different types of providers and different parts of the country. We will be consulting on detailed proposals later this year.

13 Jun 2016 | Written questions | 39058

[Children: Day Care](#)

Asked by: Mulholland, Greg

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what representations she has received from local authorities on the ability of those authorities to fund an increase in free childcare entitlement to 30 hours per week.

Answering member: Mr Sam Gyimah | **Department:** Department for Education

The Department is consulting on key elements of the operation and delivery of the 30 hour extended free entitlement. This includes how the entitlement will be delivered, and how it will meet and be responsive to the needs of working parents. To date we have received over 1000 responses from a wide range of childcare providers, local authorities and provider organisations. We will use these views to inform our thinking as we move to delivering the 30 hours policy. The consultation is available at: <https://consult.education.gov.uk/early-years-funding/childcare-free-entitlement>

We know there are historical inconsistencies and inefficiencies with the current funding system for 3- and 4-year-olds. That is why we will introduce a national funding formula for early years so that funding is transparently and fairly matched to need and fairly distributed between different types of providers and different parts of the country.

13 Jun 2016 | Written questions | 39057

[Children: Day Care](#)

Asked by: Mulholland, Greg

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what representations she has received from small childcare providers on her plans to increase free childcare entitlement to 30 hours per week and the ability of those providers to fund care places.

Answering member: Mr Sam Gyimah | **Department:** Department for Education

The Department is consulting on key elements of the operation and delivery of the 30 hour extended free entitlement. This includes how the entitlement will be delivered, and how it will meet and be responsive to the needs of working parents. To date we have received over 1000 responses from a wide range of childcare providers, local authorities and provider organisations. We will use these views to inform our thinking as we move to delivering the 30 hours policy. The consultation is available at: <https://consult.education.gov.uk/early-years-funding/childcare-free-entitlement>

We know there are historical inconsistencies and inefficiencies with the current funding system for 3- and 4-year-olds. That is why we will introduce a national funding formula for early years so that funding is transparently and fairly matched to need and fairly distributed between different types of providers and different parts of the country.

13 Jun 2016 | Written questions | 39056

[Pre-school Education](#)

Asked by: Mahmood, Mr Khalid

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to encourage nurseries to teach early language skills.

Answering member: Mr Sam Gyimah | **Department:** Department for Education

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework sets the standards for the provision of learning, development and care for children from birth to five year olds that all registered early years providers such as maintained nurseries must follow. Within the EYFS, there are several areas of learning and development that shape the educational programme in the early years settings, one of which is communication and language.

The EYFS makes clear that children should be given opportunities to experience a rich language environment to help them develop the confidence and skills they need to express themselves and to speak and listen in a range of situations. The EYFS requires practitioners to ensure all children have the opportunities to learn and develop a good standard of English language to ensure they are ready to benefit from the opportunities available to them when they begin primary school.

We have also worked closely with 4Children to develop the **What to Expect, When?** guide which illustrates to parents and early years providers the tools they can use to help their children's language development from birth to five years old, and can be found at: <http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/2015/03/what-to-expect-when-a-parents-guide/>

The Department for Education has also awarded £5.3 million to voluntary and community sector organisations of which a number are supporting staff to develop strong pedagogical approaches to language development and early literacy.

12 Apr 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 32246

[Pre-school Education: Admissions](#)

Asked by: Ali, Rushanara

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make it her policy to make the entitlement to an early education place a legal requirement.

Answering member: Mr Sam Gyimah | **Department:** Department for Education

English local authorities have a statutory duty under section 7 of the Childcare Act 2006 to secure a free early education place of 15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year for all three- and four-year-olds and two-year-olds who meet the eligibility criteria. The early education

entitlement is not a legal requirement for parents, and we know that the current model is extremely successful, with 99% of four-year-olds and 94% of three-year-olds taking up a place. And, Based on survey data collected from local authorities in the autumn of 2015 it is estimated that 182,000 two-year-olds - around 72% of eligible children - have taken up a place on the two-year-old programme.

The Secretary of State has a statutory duty under the Childcare Act 2016 to secure an additional 15 hours a week of free childcare for 38 weeks of the year for working parents of three- and four-year-olds.

The Secretary of State will discharge the duty in clause 2 of the Childcare Act, the duty to secure 30 hours of free childcare for working parents, through all local authorities in England. Local authorities will, therefore, be required to secure childcare provision free of charge to qualifying children.

17 Mar 2016 | House of Commons | 30663

[Literacy: Pre-school Education](#)

Asked by: Sheerman, Mr Barry

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the contribution of nurseries to improving literacy rates.

Answering member: Mr Sam Gyimah | **Department:** Department for Education

The early years are a critical stage for a child's development. Nurseries have an important role in helping to ensure that all children start school with the knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.

All three- and four-year-olds are entitled to 15 hours a week of quality early education, free of charge, to prepare them for school and improve their life chances. This is extremely successful with 94% of three-year-olds and 99% of four-year-olds taking up the current free entitlement. From September 2017, we are introducing 15 hours of free childcare a week for the working parents of three- and four-year olds, on top of the existing early education entitlement.

The latest Early Years Foundation Stage Profile data reveal that an increasing proportion of children are achieving a good level of development at age five: 66% in 2015, compared to 52% in 2013.

In the specific area of literacy, 76% of children achieved at least the expected level in reading and 71% did so in writing in the academic year 2014/15.

Parents also have an essential role to play in their child's development. In September 2015, we re-launched our popular guide for parents '**What to expect, when?**' to include a strengthened focus on language, communication and literacy.

15 Mar 2016 | Written questions | 30751

[Children: Disadvantaged](#)

Asked by: Godsiff, Mr Roger

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that children from the poorest families have not fallen behind their peers when they start school.

Answering member: Mr Sam Gyimah | **Department:** Department for Education

We want every child, regardless of birth or background, to fulfil their full potential. Good quality early education can positively affect a child's later attainment, which is why local authorities in England have a legal duty to ensure all three- and four-year-olds and the most disadvantaged two-year-olds are able to take up a funded early education place free of charge.

Each eligible child is entitled to 570 hours of free early learning a year, equivalent to 15 hours a week of early education for 38 weeks per year. Government figures show 99% of four-year-olds and 96% of three-year-olds are accessing free childcare. Survey findings also indicate 70% of disadvantaged two year-olds are taking up the offer.

The early years pupil premium, which was introduced in April last year, provides nurseries and schools delivering the early education entitlement for three- and four-year-olds with an extra 53p an hour for each eligible child to help them improve the outcomes of disadvantaged children and close the gap in school readiness between disadvantaged children and their peers.

08 Mar 2016 | Written questions | 28892

[Free Childcare](#)

Asked by: Jenny Chapman

It really is all about delivery. The Minister talks about meeting all parents' needs, but already 59 local authorities say

they do not have the places to meet current obligations to three-year-olds, never mind the additional hours. What is he going to do?

Oral questions - Supplementary

Answering member: Mr Gyimah | **Department:** Education

Once again, I shall give a dose of reality: 99% of four-year-olds and 96% of three-year-olds are accessing the existing 15 hours of childcare. I am happy to compare our record with that of the previous Labour Government. After 13 years in office, it had provided 12.5 hours of free childcare. In half that time, the Conservative party has provided 30 hours of free childcare. Labour never offered anything for disadvantaged two-year-olds; we have a programme for disadvantaged two-year-olds. We are investing more than any previous Government. It might not like it, but it must accept it: the Conservatives are the party of childcare.

07 Mar 2016 | Oral answers to questions | 607 c6

[Free Childcare](#)

Asked by: Chloe Smith

The Minister is right to talk about incentivising providers to come forward, and this is a big opportunity, but may I urge him to take into account the needs of different types of provider—childminders, as well as nurseries and all the other types of setting—all of which should be able to take part in this larger and exciting opportunity?

Oral questions - Supplementary

Answering member: Mr Gyimah | **Department:** Education

I totally agree with my hon. Friend. One of the great things about the UK childcare market is the diversity of provision—childminders, nurseries, school nurseries—available to parents, as it means we can meet all parents' needs, especially when it comes to work. We will make sure that flexibility for parents is at the heart of how the 30 hours is delivered.

07 Mar 2016 | Oral answers to questions | 607 c5

[Free Childcare](#)

Asked by: Carol Monaghan

The National Audit Office report published last week raised concerns about how the 30 hours of childcare for some three and four-year-olds could impact on current provision for disadvantaged two-year-olds. What steps will be taken to ensure that increased provision for one group will not impact on the good work being done with disadvantaged two-year-olds?

Answered by: Mr Gyimah | **Department:** Education

The hon. Lady asks a good question, and the answer is that there will be no adverse impact on the offer for two-year-olds. We were the first Government to introduce 15 hours of free childcare for disadvantaged two-year-olds, and that will carry on. We have increased the hourly rate for the funding for two-year-olds and ensured that the early-years pupil premium continues, so that two, three and four-year-olds who are particularly disadvantaged do not fall even further behind.

07 Mar 2016 | Oral questions - Supplementary | House of Commons chamber | 607 c5

[Free Childcare](#)

Asked by: Joan Ryan

I have heard nothing today to assure me that when parents seek the 30 hours free childcare they will be able to find them. I do not know if the Minister is aware that in Enfield since 2010 482 early-years childcare

places have been lost and 114 providers have disappeared. When parents are looking for those places, I would be very surprised if they are there on the ground. What will the Minister do to ensure that he can meet the promises his Government have made?

Oral questions - Supplementary

Answering member: Mr Gyimah | **Department:** Education

I am afraid I have to disagree with the right hon. Lady. In the previous Parliament, the childcare sector created 230,000 new places. I am confident that with record investment the sector will rise to the challenge of delivering the 30 hours. It is about time that we stopped talking down the childcare sector and recognise the continued growth of the industry.

07 Mar 2016 | Oral answers to questions | 607 c5

[Engagements](#)

Asked by: Jeremy Corbyn

That is not much help to the 41,000 children who are not benefiting from what they were promised by the Government.

Let us look further on in the educational life of children. According to the Government's own figures, half a million children in primary schools are in classes of more than 31, and 15,000 are in classes of more than 40. We are all aware of the importance of both pre-school and early-years education to giving all our children a decent start in life, yet half a million are living in poverty, and many are in oversized classes. Is it not time for a serious Government intervention to sort this problem out?

Answered by: The Prime Minister

Let me bring the right hon. Gentleman up to date with the figures relating to all those areas.

Introducing the extra hours of childcare is obviously a huge operation for the childcare providers, but although the National Audit Office report said that only 58% of disadvantaged two-year-olds were accessing the free childcare offer, the latest information shows that over 70% are doing so.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned the number of teachers, and overcrowded classes. There are 13,100 more teachers than there were in 2010, because we have invested in Teach First and in bursaries, and we have made sure that teaching is a worthwhile career. As for school places, I want to answer the right hon. Gentleman, because there are actually 453 fewer schools that are full

or over capacity than there were in 2010—so that is progress—and there are 36,500 fewer pupils in overcrowded schools.

Why have we been able to do that? We have protected education funding. We have protected the money that followed every pupil into a school. We introduced the pupil premium, and that was the first time

that any Government had recognised the extra needs of children from the poorest backgrounds. We have done all that, so our school system is growing, there are more places, and there are fewer overcrowded schools—all because we have a strong economy and the right values in place.

02 Mar 2016 | Prime Minister's questions - Supplementary | House of Commons chamber | 606 c942

[Engagements](#)

Asked by: Jeremy Corbyn

The Treasury website describes it as a “long-term plan”. Well, it is certainly that, because it was announced in 2013 and is apparently not going to be introduced until next year. Why is the Prime Minister’s promise of 30 hours free childcare for three and four-year-olds not available for one in three working parents who want their children to be cared for in a pre-school?

Answered by: The Prime Minister

First, on tax relief on childcare, we lost a court case against some of the existing providers, so there was a delay. The tax-free childcare will come in in 2017. As for the 30 hours, as I have said, there will be some pilot schemes this year and full implementation next year, which is in line with what we said in our manifesto. I am delighted that the right hon. Gentleman is helping me to promote Government policy. When I became Prime Minister, of course, I think we had only 10 hours of childcare; then it went up to 12, then 15 and now to 30. Those are the sort of things you can do if you have a strong economy with a sound plan. If you are getting your deficit down and your economy is growing, you are able to do all those things. I am glad that we are able to talk about them.

02 Mar 2016 | Prime Minister's questions - Supplementary | 606 c941

[Pre-school Education](#)

Asked by: Baroness Jowell |

To ask Her Majesty’s Government what policies they intend to implement in recognition of the contribution of the first 1,000 days of a child’s life to its subsequent academic and other attainment.

Answering member: Lord Nash | **Department:** Department for Education

As the Prime Minister made clear in his speech on 11 January 2016, the government understands the importance of those first crucial years of life and that we need to get parenting and the early years right if we are to improve children’s life chances. The government will be publishing a Life Chances strategy in the spring which will set out a comprehensive plan to fight disadvantage and extend opportunity, including policies to give children the best start in life.

The government is already implementing a range of policies which recognise the contribution of the first 1001 days of a child's life to its subsequent academic and other attainment, which are detailed below.

Healthy Child Programme

The evidence based Healthy Child Programme is the universal service offered to every family. Delivered by health visitors, the programme centres on a series of screening tests, immunisations, developmental reviews, and information and guidance to support families of children aged 0-5 years. Since October 2015 there have been five mandated child development reviews, to provide a national standard format to ensure universal coverage and ongoing improvements in public health. Effective implementation of the Healthy Child Programme should lead to readiness for school and improved learning.

Best Start in Life programme

One of Public Health England's (PHE) national priorities is to ensure that every child has the best start in life, so that they are ready to learn at age two and ready for school at five. The Best Start in Life programme provides national leadership to support local areas to take a whole system approach to commission and provide evidence based services and interventions which improve child health outcomes and reduce inequalities. PHE also has published a range of professional guidance for best practice to support families in the first 1001 days.

Integrated Review (IR)

In 2013, DfE ran a joint Integrated Review pilot with the Department of Health (DH) which focused on two-year-olds in registered childcare settings. This was to test out the most effective way of undertaking the early years progress check with the universal DH Healthy Child Programme and providing parents with a holistic review of their child's development. In 2015, we provided funding to support the roll out of the IR by all local authorities in England. We are currently piloting the second phase of the IR with eight local authority pilot areas to test different local models of how early years practitioners can collaborate with health professionals to identify parents of two year-olds not in registered childcare settings, so that their children can also benefit from an Integrated Review.

Early Learning for Two Year Olds

There is a strong body of evidence that shows good quality childcare and pre-school provision, especially from age two and upwards, has positive benefits on children's all round attainment and behaviour. For this reason the government introduced the early learning for two-year-olds programme in September 2013 for 130,000 of the most disadvantaged children in England. In September 2014, the programme was later expanded to 260,000 of the most disadvantaged children in England. The programme is becoming increasingly popular amongst eligible parents.

Education

Asked by: Paterson, Steven

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress her Department is making on early intervention programmes to reduce educational inequality.

Answering member: Mr Sam Gyimah **Department:** Department for Education

We recognise the vital importance of early intervention, particularly for the most disadvantaged members of society and the crucial role played by education and children's services in promoting good outcomes for children and families. The latest Early Years Foundation Stage Profile results available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/early-years-foundation-stage-profile-results-2014-to-2015> show that the proportion of children achieving a good level of development in relation to the most deprived areas, SEN, free school meal eligibility, term of birth, first language and ethnicity is improving. The proportion of children eligible for FSM has increased from 45% in 2014 to 51% in 2015 and the gap between FSM and other children has narrowed from 18.9 percentage points in 2014 to 17.7 in 2015.

30 Nov 2015 | Written questions | 902430

Pre-school Education: Staff

Asked by: Thornberry, Emily

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the Government plans to increase the number of qualified staff working on early education settings.

Answering member: Mr Sam Gyimah | **Department:** Department for Education

The extended free childcare entitlement for working parents of three- and four-year-olds will provide eligible parents with 30 hours of free childcare per week. The government provides guidance in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, which sets out the ratios within which providers must operate. We expect providers to recruit accordingly, and that the market will respond to demand in local areas. The childcare market has proven that it is adaptable as demonstrated by the increase of 230,000 places since 2009. The timetable for implementation of the extended entitlement ensures that the market has time to expand.

The quality of provision is central to ensuring benefits to children, and the main driver of quality in a setting is its workforce. The qualification levels of the childcare workforce has risen over recent years and we want the sector to continue to attract highly qualified staff with a strong aptitude for working with young children to deliver good quality childcare.

We are taking steps to improve the process for those training to become Early Years Educators and Early Years Teachers. In 2016, the government will review progression routes within the sector to determine what more can be done to enable good quality staff to maximise their potential and forge a successful career within early years. This will build on existing investments in staff training and development that have brought high performing schools and private, voluntary and independent providers together to share good practice and improve transition into school for young children.

18 Nov 2015 | Written questions | 15624

[Pre-school Education](#)

Asked by: Thornberry, Emily

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to change the rules on staff-pupil ratios in early education settings.

Answering member: Mr Sam Gyimah | **Department:** Department for Education

There are no plans to change the staff: child ratios for providers registered on the Early Years Register. Lord Nash made clear, during passage of the Childcare Bill in the House of Lords, that we are committed to keeping the existing ratios.

18 Nov 2015 | Written questions | 15420

[Pre-school Education](#)

Asked by: Cunningham, Alex

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that children develop good early language skills before they reach primary school.

Answering member: Mr Sam Gyimah | **Department:** Department for Education

The government recognises a key part of raising the standard of education for all children is to ensure they receive a good level of development in literacy and numeracy before they start school. The government has taken the following steps to ensure children are developing good early language skills before they reach primary school:

The Early Years Foundation Stage sets the prime areas of learning which early years providers must follow. This includes a focus on communication and language. The Early Years Foundation Stage requires providers to understand the needs of every child and support them as necessary to make progress. The Early Years Foundation stage is available online at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/335504/EYFS_framework_from_1_September_2014_with_clarification_note.pdf

The numeracy and literacy skills of staff working with our youngest children are key to supporting children's progression. We have improved early years qualifications and encouraged high-quality entrants with good numeracy and literacy skills into the profession through setting clear criteria for level 3 training courses and introducing early years initial teacher training.

The government has invested over £50 million funding through the Early Years Pupil premium, an additional £5.3 million to sector organisations under the VCS grants and a one off grant of £5 million to teaching schools and their childcare provider partners to support staff development. Many of the projects funded through departmental grants are supporting staff to develop strong pedagogical approaches to language development and early literacy.

16 Sep 2015 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 9973

[Child Development](#)

Asked by: Baroness Perry of Southwark

Does my noble friend agree that this Government have done more to help very young children to have the maximum opportunity in their education than any Government in the past?

Oral questions - Supplementary

Answering member: Baroness Evans of Bowes Park

Indeed I agree with my noble friend. In fact, the Government are spending over £2 billion a year on early intervention. We have the pupil premium, which is helping to improve educational outcomes, and the early years pupil premium, which is helping to narrow the attainment gap for 3 and 4 year-olds from disadvantaged backgrounds. Crucially, we now have a million more pupils in good or outstanding schools, because we know that education is key to the life chances of young people in this country.

16 Sep 2015 | Oral questions - Supplementary
| House of Lords | 764 c1844

[Poverty and Life Chances Review](#)

Asked by: Field, Frank

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she has taken in response to the recommendations of the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances, published in 2010.

Answering member: Mr Sam Gyimah | **Department:** Department for Education

This government wants to see every child fulfilling their potential and succeeding in life.

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions recently announced that this government will focus on improving life chances by tackling the root causes of child poverty. It believes that action to ensure that parents can work and to improve educational attainment across the board will make the biggest difference to the lives of children, now and in the future. The Welfare Reform and Work Bill, introduced to Parliament on 9 July, includes a new statutory duty for government to report on these two key drivers of children's life chances.

The government agrees with the view set out in the Independent Review that what happens before children start school is crucial in their development and later attainment. The Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education Project has shown a child has a greater chance of getting better exam results, and ultimately earning higher wages, by receiving pre-school education. That is why in 2010, the government extended the number of hours of free early education to which all three- and four-year-olds are entitled from 12.5 to 15 hours a week.

Since September 2013, the most disadvantaged two-year-olds across England have been able to access their 15-hour-a-week funded early learning place a year early. The Government has also introduced additional funding to support disadvantaged three and four year olds in early years settings through the Early Years Pupil Premium. This has been designed to close the gap at ages 3 and 4 between the additional support disadvantaged children get at age 2 through the free entitlement and the additional support they get in school through the school-age Pupil Premium.

At the Budget, the Government reconfirmed its manifesto commitment to help hard-working families reduce the cost of childcare which will make it easier for parents to work if they would like to, knowing that their children are well cared for.

The Government will set out more information about improving the life chances of children in a Life Chances Strategy in due course.

21 Jul 2015 | Written questions | 7422

[Children: Day Care](#)

Asked by: Harpham, Harry

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if the Government will use Sure Start centres to provide additional childcare as part of its policy of extending free childcare to 30 hours per week.

Answering member: Mr Sam Gyimah | **Department:** Department for Education

Children's centres provide a valuable service. They have the potential to make a critical difference to young families at vulnerable and challenging times in their lives. Local authorities are best placed to determine what children's centre services best meet the needs of their local community, including the role they should play in delivering childcare provision.

16 Jul 2015 | Written questions | 6248

[Pre-school Education](#)

Asked by: Anderson, Mr David

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to ensure that early years education is adequately funded on a per capita basis for the lifetime of the Parliament.

Answering member: Mr Sam Gyimah | **Department:** Department for Education

The government recognises that it is important that funding for the early education entitlement is fair and sustainable for providers. The government has therefore launched a review of the cost of providing childcare. The objective of this review is to inform decisions on the level of funding that providers require in order to deliver quality childcare provision at good value to the taxpayer and consistent with the government's fiscal plans.

A call for evidence to inform the review was launched on 15 June and will close on 10 August. This is part of the process of gathering the necessary evidence to inform the review which will report in the autumn. The call for evidence is available online here:

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/cost-of-providing-childcare-review-call-for-evidence

The Department for Education regularly speaks to Her Majesty's Treasury about all aspects of funding for early years.

07 Jul 2015 | Written questions | 5164

[Pre-school Education](#)

Asked by: Anderson, Mr David

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on maintaining at current levels per capita funding for early years education.

Answering member: Mr Sam Gyimah | **Department:** Department for Education

The government recognises that it is important that funding for the early education entitlement is fair and sustainable for providers. The government has therefore launched a review of the cost of providing childcare. The objective of this review is to inform decisions on the level of funding that providers require in order to deliver quality childcare

provision at good value to the taxpayer and consistent with the government's fiscal plans.

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The Department for Education regularly speaks to Her Majesty's Treasury about all aspects of funding for early years.

07 Jul 2015 | Written questions | 4822

[Pre-school Education](#)

Asked by: Wright, Mr Iain

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what research her Department has (a) commissioned and (b) evaluated in the last five years on a link between brain development and nurturing in early years; and what additional resources her Department is providing in (i) Hartlepool, (ii) North East England and (iii) England to ensure infants' brains are stimulated and developed.

Answering member: Mr Sam Gyimah | **Department:** Department for Education

The Department for Education recognises the importance of brain development and nurturing in the early years. Research shows that high quality early education, in conjunction with effective parenting skills, has a positive influence on children's confidence, their capacity to learn, and contributes to a sense of well-being and self-worth. The foundations for human development – physical, intellectual and emotional – are laid in early childhood. It is for this reason that the department has invested so heavily in the early education entitlement for all three- and four-year-olds as well as the most disadvantaged two-year-olds. The department has also brought forward a Childcare Bill to give families where all parents are working an entitlement to 30 hours of free childcare for their three- and four-year olds.

The department has commissioned and evaluated a significant amount of research on early education, which encompasses consideration of a range of issues such as child development and nurturing. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, which all registered early years providers must follow, recognises that good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation that children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up. The EYFS is based on evidence considered by Dame Clare Tickell in her 2011 review. A report of the evidence can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-early-years-foundation-stage-review-report-on-the-evidence>

A number of other important reviews have also informed this department's policy on early education. These include reports by Graham Allen MP in 2011 on early intervention and Professor Sir Michael Marmot in 2010 which highlighted the important lifelong effects that the early years (starting in the womb) has on many aspects of health and well-being, educational achievement and economic status. The reports can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-intervention-the-next-steps--2> and

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61012/earlyintervention-smartinvestment.pdf

<http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review>

The department also published research in 2014 on the CANparent trial, a government initiative to examine the development of a universal offer of parenting classes to enhance parenting skills and increase confidence. The report can be found at:

http://www.canparent.org.uk/sites/default/files/Trial_evaluation_final_report_09_07_14.pdf

Child development in the early years remains a key research priority for this department. A major piece of longitudinal research, Study of Early Education and Development (SEED), has been commissioned to evaluate the effectiveness of the current early education model in England. SEED will specifically examine the impact on child development of providing funded early years education to two year olds from lower income families. The study will follow the progress of over 5,000 children from the age of two, up until the end of key stage one at the age of seven. SEED will update evidence from the highly influential Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) that has provided crucial evidence of the benefits of high quality early years education. A full impact report is due in 2020.

Although we do not have a separate funding stream to "ensure infants' brains are stimulated and developed", the department continues to invest heavily in the early education entitlement for all three- and four-year-olds and the most disadvantaged two-year-olds. The early years pupil premium (EYPP) was introduced in April 2015 and provides additional support for disadvantaged three- and four-year-olds accessing the government-funded entitlement hours.

For three- and four-year-olds, the 2015-16 initial funding allocation for the existing entitlement and the early years pupil premium is:

	3/4-year-old entitlement	EYPP	Total
Hartlepool	£2.99 million	£135,000	£3.13 million
North East England	£92.89 million	£2.98 million	£95.87 million
England	£2.18 billion	£50 million	£2.23 billion

These data are published and are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2015-to-2016>

Funding allocations for 2015-16 for two-year-olds will be announced in July 2015, as this is the first year of participation-based funding for two-year-olds. The hourly rate for two-year-olds was announced in October 2015 for all local authorities. Children in Hartlepool will receive £4.85 per hour and the national average hourly funding rate is £5.09. This data is published and is available at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/392709/Hourly_rates_for_2-year-olds_2015_to_2016.pdf

Local authorities are funded for the early years entitlement and the EYPP through the Dedicated Schools Grant. In consultation with their Schools Forum, local authorities are responsible for deciding how best to distribute this funding across their locality. They also set their own local rates of funding for early years providers and should set rates in close consultation with providers.

07 Jul 2015 | Written questions | 4687

5.2 Debates

[Education, Skills and Training](#)

HC Deb 25 May 2016 | 611 cc542-644

[Life Chances Strategy](#)

HL Deb 11 May 2016 | 771 cc1748-1772

[Conception to Age 2: The First 1001 Days](#)

HC Deb 17 Dec 2015 | 603 cc1783-1811

[Child Poverty](#)

HC Deb 15 Sep 2015 | 599 cc254-278-WH

[Free Childcare and Nursery Providers](#)

HC Deb 24 Jun 2015 | 597 cc311-6WH

5.3 Public Accounts Committee Inquiry

Report published 15 June 2016

- [Report: Entitlement to free early years education and childcare](#)
- [Report with oral evidence: Entitlement to free early years education and childcare \(PDF 608KB\)](#)

The Department for Education has made significant progress in providing 15 hours of free childcare to more parents of 3 and 4-year olds and parents of disadvantaged 2-year-olds, according to the National Audit Office. It has not yet, however, achieved full value for money because it cannot track the effectiveness of its substantial investment of £2.7 billion.

Most parents of 3 and 4-year olds take-up free childcare places for their children, and the quality of provision, as measured by Ofsted, has increased in recent years. The Department's measure of children's outcomes at age 5 has also shown steady improvement. In 2015, 66% of children reached a good level of development compared to 52% in 2013. However, the Department cannot link this data to the quality of individual childcare settings children have attended, and from 2017 the current measure of development is being halted.

In 2017, the Department will also double the number of hours of free childcare that working families with 3 and 4-year olds are entitled to, from 15 to 30 hours per week, estimated to affect 390,000 families.

Risks in new 30 hour entitlement

The National Audit Office (NAO) has identified a number of risks to the successful implementation of the new entitlement to 30 hours of childcare, which the Department will need to consider as it pilots the new offer. The NAO found that childcare settings are concerned about the levels of funding that will be available.

Although they are keen to offer the new entitlement, some providers may choose not to if the funding is not right. There is also a risk that childcare settings could choose to offer additional hours to 3- and 4-year-olds by reducing the number of disadvantaged 2-year-olds they look after, as 2-year-olds are more expensive to care for. This would jeopardise the Department's aims to improve educational and other outcomes for the very children who could benefit most from free childcare.

6. Further Reading and Reports

Public Accounts Committee, [Free Entitlement to Early Years Education inquiry](#), 15 June 2016

Centre Forum, [Widening the Gap](#), May 2016

National Audit Office (NAO), [Entitlement to free early education and childcare](#), 2 March 2016

Family and childcare Trust, [2016 Childcare Survey](#), 23 February 2016

Ofsted, [Early years report 2015](#), 13 July 2015

Early Intervention Foundation, [The Best Start At Home](#) 27 March 2015

Nuffield Foundation, [Early years education and childcare](#), 2015

Institute of Fiscal Studies, [The impact of free early years education for 3 year olds in England](#), October 2014

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