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**Independent Review of Education – Initial request for views
Early Years – the organisation for young children**

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1. Introduction to the organisation and context of submission

- 1.1 Early Years - the organisation for young children¹ (hereafter 'Early Years') is the largest voluntary organisation in Northern Ireland working with and for all young children. It is a membership-based, non-profit making organisation.
- 1.2 It has been working since 1965 to promote and develop **high quality**, evidence-informed, cross community early childhood services for young children, their families and communities. Our vision is that children are strong, competent and visible in their communities; physically and emotionally healthy; eager and able to learn; and respectful of difference.
- 1.3 Early Years is seen as a key partner in the delivery of all early intervention and pre-school services in Northern Ireland. We provide a range of information, training, and advice and support services for parents, early childhood care and education providers, management committees and boards, employers, local authorities, departments and agencies. We have successfully worked in some of the most divided areas in Northern Ireland and internationally.
- 1.4 Projects and activities relate to child focused community based health and education; tackling social and educational inequalities; working with young Traveller children and their families; community development; working with children, practitioners, management boards, parents and carers to respect the various forms of difference in our society; and the impact of conflict on young children.
- 1.5 The membership of Early Years, in reflection of the vital role played by early childhood service deliverers, encompasses providers across the community, voluntary, social economy and private sectors. In addition to the considerable social benefit provided, the sectors represented also deliver a significant economic contribution in terms of employment and volunteering opportunities provided.
- 1.6 Early Years also is involved at various Lead, Accountable body, Management Board, Committee and employer levels in a number of Sure Start projects, supporting children 0-4 and their families, across the region.
- 1.7 Early Years welcomes this opportunity to submit information to this Independent Review of Education Panel initial request for views. The organisation would also be willing to further participate in this process to elaborate on anything contained in this submission. Commentary on relevant issues, both to our remit as established above and our practice-based experience, is as follows.

2. Independent Review of Education

- 2.1 Whilst we welcome this exercise by the Panel seeking initial views, we express disappointment at the apparent absence on the Panel of a specific voice/expert representing the previously mentioned vital role played by early childhood development in the educational outcomes for young children. We would further highlight the need to give consideration to delivery partners that include Sure Start and providers across the community, voluntary, social economy and private sectors, as well as the statutory sector.
- 2.2 Information released on, and by, the Panel outlines that it has been tasked with developing a vision for education in Northern Ireland as well as considering such key aspects of education as the **education journey** of children and young people and **support provided to all settings** and those who work in them.

¹ For more see <http://www.early-years.org/>

- 2.3 We strongly emphasise that the work of, and materials and outcomes produced by, the Review Panel (including visions of what good education should look like) does represent all settings, **including early childhood/pre-school service providers as the fundamental first step, beginning from antenatal stages, in the education and skills developmental journey.**
- 2.4 Subsequent sections of this submission on initial views outline key focus areas for Panel attention. The section immediately that follows highlights a particular overriding, and longstanding, issue in relation to early education care and development in Northern Ireland

3. Historical under-investment in early education, care and development

- 3.1 During present and previous budgetary periods we have welcomed measures by the Department of Education relating to such areas of early care and education within the Departments remit as the allocation of much needed additional resources and places for non-statutory participants in the Pre-School Education Programme (PSEP); Shared Education; the Pathway Fund; a Toybox² Traveller project; the Sure Start programme, and Covid related temporary closure and sustainability support packages.
- 3.2 Though, despite such measures and initiatives, the vitally important area of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in Northern Ireland has consistently failed to receive the degree of strategic and budgetary significance that it requires, in contrast to other stages of the education and skills development pathway.
- 3.3 Equally, the sporadic, short-term and short-notice nature of a number of budgetary developments and announcements over recent years, some of which have required mid-year monitoring round processes, have been particularly unhelpful to early childhood service providers in the voluntary, community and private sectors, and Sure Start projects, seeking to effectively plan and prepare their services.
- 3.4 In this respect we endorse such comments made by Nick Garbutt in a recent NICVA ScopeNI article entitled 'Why early education is an investment, not a cost'³ as:

“The problem is not the long-term affordability of sensible measures, but our inability to factor this into budgeting, compounded by the way spending is allocated which contributes to siloed thinking and inter-departmental rivalry in government.

What makes this even more frustrating is that this is one area of policy where we already have enough data to not only come to definitive conclusions about the benefits of the right policies we can also quantify them in financial terms.”

- 3.5 This delayed or insufficient attention in Northern Ireland is in stark contrast to the budgetary priority placed on, and investment made in, ECEC evidenced in other parts of the UK, as well as the Republic of Ireland (see **Appendix I** below), to which we now lag significantly behind in terms of both Early Years policy **and** investment regarding **enhancing supports to families; expanding provision; strengthening linkages with other related health, social development and economic strategies; acknowledging the needs for long-term planning; increased investment; the workforce; and stronger governance and leadership in the sector.**

² <http://www.early-years.org/toybox/>

³ <https://scopeni.nicva.org/article/why-early-education-is-an-investment-not-a-cost>

- 3.6 The development of, and identification of resources for, a childcare strategy for Northern Ireland has been a longstanding commitment area for the Northern Ireland Executive, spanning previous mandates, Programmes for Government and the New Decade New Approach agreement.
- 3.7 It is important to note that, although there have been individual initiatives and measures released within the requisite timeframe, such as 'Bright Start - the Executive's Programme for Affordable and Integrated Childcare Key First Actions' (although this itself only managed limited progression), a devolved Northern Ireland government has not had a finalised, published, adequately resourced and fully operational Strategy relating to ECCE since 'Children First: The Northern Ireland Childcare Strategy', was introduced by then Northern Ireland Office Ministers in September 1999.
- 3.8 The development, release and implementation of a robustly resourced and monitored Northern Ireland Executive 'Care and Early Childhood Development Strategy', aligned with other key devolved, Westminster and international initiatives that expressly meets the needs and requirements of all children from birth, their families and all childcare and early education providers **must be a strategic and budgetary priority for Northern Ireland.**
- 3.9 Early Years appreciates the significant challenges faced by devolved and national administrations in the present political and economic climates affecting Northern Ireland and the wider United Kingdom, which have been greatly exacerbated by covid-19.
- 3.10 There are many reasons why the time is right for a courageous investment in young children and their families. **Now is the time** to work and think differently, to build upon recent successes, and maximise on evidence based excellence and innovation, through a clear focus on investment in accessible, affordable and high quality early care and education infrastructure that has a real impact on outcomes for children and their families.
- 3.11 The next NI Executive budget currently being developed, and consulted on, by the Department of Finance, represents a move from a single-year budget, as in previous years, and will shape public services for the next three years. Particularly reflecting the fundamental role of the sector during, and as part of the recovery from, the COVID pandemic, **now is a vital opportunity** for us all to highlight the importance of early childhood development to educational outcomes for young children and engaging young children, their families and their communities, which will also benefit the wider society and economy that will form significant elements of young children's developing lives.

4. Significance of robust investment and return on investment

- 4.1 The economic and social significance of a robust approach to early childhood from the earliest stages is well outlined across and a number of national and international bodies and sources. It is illustrated particularly well by the work of **Professor James J. Heckman**⁴ (outlined further in the **Fig. 1** below), whose recent research evidences a 13% per year return on investment in high quality birth to five programs, a rate substantially higher than a 7-10% return previously established for pre-school programs serving 3 to 4 year olds.
- 4.2 Heckman's research is especially relevant because he began his research by investigating the economic return of job retraining programmes for steelworkers.

⁴ <https://heckmanequation.org/>

- 4.3 He realised that those programmes were largely ineffective because it was more difficult for the steelworkers to learn new skills at a later age and because there were fewer years to recoup the cost of retraining.
- 4.4 Then he made a surprising change in his thinking. Having started at one end of the age spectrum, Heckman soon ended up at the other end.
- 4.5 He analysed the investments made in early childhood programs and found that, for the same cost there are far greater gains to be had when children are younger with a constant level of investment.
- 4.6 Heckman states that one can make a bigger difference and have more of an impact with younger children because the skills they learn in the very early years set a pattern for acquiring life skills later and achieving better outcomes in education, health, social behaviors, and employment.

Fig. 1 – The Heckman Equation - return on investment findings



- 4.7 The economic and social significance and relevance of affordable, accessible and high quality early childhood care, learning and development is as important now as it has ever been. Alarming figures around levels of child poverty are also significant reasons for the need for urgent and sufficient action. Recent (February 2020) 'Study of Early Education and Development (SEED): Impact Study on Early Education Use and Child Outcomes up to age five years' Research⁵ by Edward Melhuish and Julian Gardiner evidence the relevance of early education and development to children from the 40% most disadvantaged families.
- 4.8 Investment in early childhood care, education and development and a solid infrastructure **must be seen as just that, as investment**; as an opportunity for children to reach their full potential, but equally, as an economic driver for this country in terms both of employability and foreign direct investment. It must be perceived to be as important as Corporation Tax and as important as investment in Primary education. Early childhood care, learning and development must be a priority in Northern Ireland.
- 4.9 Without the comprehensive investment needed now in Northern Ireland towards supporting parents, families and all providers the Executive vision of affordable, accessible and high quality child care will not be achieved, fees to families will increase and current providers and places in communities that need them will be lost.
- 4.10 The education, health, safety, wellbeing and prosperity of all our children and young people are fundamental aspects of governmental commitments domestically, to the United Nations and on the Rights of the Child specifically. Budgetary reductions can never be used to excuse ineffectively protecting these rights.

5. Focus areas for Panel attention

5.1 Better subvention and support to service providers and families

- 5.1.1 A substantial amount of conversation and debate at various political and public levels has focused on the cost of early childhood care, learning and development.
- 5.1.2 Providers across the voluntary, community, social economy and private forms of provision equally encounter daily challenges to deliver affordable, accessible and high quality services to young children, their families and communities. In the face of rising costs, pressures and requirements around staffing; salaries; pensions; higher ratios than statutory counterparts; qualifications; training; professional development; premises; equipment; inspection and regulation requirements; and rates and overheads, they continually strive to minimise how these additional costs are passed on to parents in the form of increased fees.
- 5.1.3 Given these significant costs associated with the provision of high quality early childhood care, learning and development, the focus at Government budgetary and strategic level should be on reducing the impact on families of the such costs through better subvention and support, to the service providers and also to families. Some further ways in which this can be addressed are elaborated on in the following sections.

⁵https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/867140/SEED_AGE_5_REPORT_FEB.pdf

5.2 Capital investment

- 5.2.1 Pre-school providers across the remit of early childhood provision throughout the region operate services from a variety of premises. A considerable amount of voluntary and community providers operate within community centres or church halls. Other forms of locations for service delivery across the sectors include premises within the school estate, mobile units, privately owned buildings or purpose built centres. There is a considerable desire amongst relevant providers for the ability to improve and/or expand on their service provided.
- 5.2.2 There is an urgent need for serious, significant investment in capital which recognises the important role of early childhood development providers in the educational outcomes for young children in working with families and communities and which secures the essential infrastructure towards improving and expanding services provided. Present approaches towards capital have focused more on building temporary classrooms, with limited or no investment in buildings or ICT.

5.3 Workforce training, skills, qualifications and professional development

- 5.3.1 Intrinsically connected to the quality of provision, towards the best outcomes for children, is the training, qualification and skillsets of those delivering the early childhood services and the need for a diverse workforce with a variety of specific needs supported.
- 5.3.2 The early childhood education and care sector here offers enormous expertise and experience in relation to early childhood development. However, there is a wide and diverse spread of qualifications evident across the sectors. Qualitative and quantitative data that Early Years has regularly received back from our members and others in the sector has evidenced clear barriers encountered by providers in terms of cost, availability and accessibility in relation to qualifications, training and continuous professional development. Qualitative feedback also has demonstrated issues in relation to academic versus competency based training, upskilling and customised training in response to need. All of these further emphasise the considerable need for effective strategic approaches to this area.
- 5.3.3 A longstanding call by Early Years has been for greater recognition of, and a much more creative and innovative approach to, the early childhood care and education workforce, training and professional development than present that reflects what the workforce in turn brings to the education and care of children and overhauls how vocational and academic training, the profession and career development are addressed in schools, institutions and colleges.
- 5.3.4 Early Years, and partners in the sector, have therefore also called for an adequately resourced and supported training, qualifications and continuous professional development strategy for *the entire workforce across sectors working with young children (addressing recruitment, retention and progression)*, that also recognises the experience many staff will already possess. This would bring Northern Ireland finally into line with the other regions of the UK who have already explored such areas (such as the £153m early years sector workforce related investment in England in 2021) and also help to avoid further training, qualification or professional development costs associated with quality childcare are not reflected in increased fees.

5.3.5 Such a workforce strategy would seek to:

- Bring a more strategic approach to leadership and governance in the sectors;
- Overhaul how the respective workforces embraced within the studies, and training and career development are viewed;
- Recognise the experience many staff will already possess - providing a place for those who wish to take a qualifications route as well as those who wish to take an experiential route;
- Cover general training but also specific training for children with additional needs;
- Cover how vocational and academic training, qualifications and continuous professional development are addressed and how qualification bodies, training providers and other stakeholders co-operate and collaboratively engage;
- Address sharing of practice, networks and peer supported learning;
- Address appropriate remuneration;
- Pave the way for investment in a Transformation Fund to support the development of the workforce.
- Develop a new approach to third level qualifications based on the concept of social pedagogy.
- Adequately support volunteers, apprenticeships and students (including mature students);
- Be clearly outcomes focused;
- Effectively address monitoring and evaluation;

5.3.6 Workforce development, as well as matters covered in the next section (5.4) of this submission on pre-school provision, have been areas that the Department has committed to address nearly 10 years ago (2013) in the '**Learning to Learn**' substantive departmental early education policy framework (see **Appendix II** below on key Learning to Learn actions and areas still of relevance to the work of this Panel).

5.4 Addressing present inequities within pre-school funding

5.4.1 The Pre-School Education Programme (PSEP) in Northern Ireland aims to provide one year of high quality funded pre-school education, in the year before compulsory education, to every child aged 3 to 4 years whose parents want to avail of it.

5.4.2 The PSEP is funded by the Department of Education via the Education Authority (EA), which carries out the operational and administration functions of the Programme. In order to meet demand across the region the PSEP was designed as a partnership between the statutory and voluntary and community and private pre-school sectors. Funded places are therefore available in a range of centres, including nursery schools, nursery classes/units in primary schools and voluntary and private playgroups and day nurseries which are part of the Programme.

5.4.3 The role played by the voluntary and community and private sectors in the PSEP is considerable.

5.4.4 Statistical information, based on NI school census data, for each year relating to pre-school enrolments in Northern Ireland is published on the Department of Education website⁶.

5.4.5 Final full year data for 2020/21, released initially in February 2021 and revised 28 May 2021⁷, illustrates that there were 7,464 pupils (32.3% of the total 23,112 funded pre-school pupils) in voluntary and private settings and that voluntary and private pre-school settings comprised almost half (48.3% - 362) of the total 750 funded settings. This is further illustrated in the **Tables 1 and 2** below.

Table 1: Breakdown of funded pre-school settings by sector 2020/21

Setting type (sector) – funded pre-schools	Settings	%
Voluntary and private	362	48.3
Nursery Schools	95	12.7
Schools with funded nursery units	248	33.1
Schools with funded reception classes	45	6
Total	750	

Table 2: Breakdown of funded pre-school pupils in settings by sector 2020/21

Setting type (sector) – funded pre-school pupils	Pupils	%
Voluntary and private	7,464	32.3
Nursery Schools/nursery classes	15,468	66.9
Reception classes	180	0.8
Total	23,112	

5.4.6 The following **Table 3** also, based on 2019 HSC Trust data, further illustrates the significance of the role played by the voluntary and community and private sectors in early children education, learning and development.

Table 3: Numbers of relevant settings/places: Childcare in Northern Ireland

Type of Formal childcare	Age of children (approx.)	Number of registered places	Number of settings
Day nursery	0 to 4	15,500	320
	5 to 12	6,300	
School age childcare	4 to 12	7,000	220
Playgroups	3 to 4	13,500	410
Crèches	0 to 4	1,300	70
Childminders	0 to 12	15,000	2,500
TOTAL		59,800	3,500

⁶ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/school-enrolments-overview>

⁷ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/Revised%2028%20May%202021%20-%20Annual%20enrolments%20at%20schools%20and%20in%20funded%20prescho....pdf>

- 5.4.7 In addition to the above figures, the EA website⁸ also states that “*Both (i.e. statutory and voluntary/private) sectors are equally valued for their contribution to the education of children, with both following common curriculum guidelines and subject to the same inspection standards*”. All settings in the PSEP programme are also inspected by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI).
- 5.4.8 Yet, despite such published statistical information reflecting the role of the voluntary, community and private sectors and stated acknowledgments of parity of status and value, this seeming parity is not extended to, or reflected in, the funding applied to the sectors for pre-school provision where the statutory sector receives considerably more than their voluntary/community or private counterparts.
- 5.4.9 The voluntary and independent sectors deliver high quality pre-school provision, and this has been reflected in overall ETI findings and the value placed on the role they play. We would therefore strongly recommend that this area of expenditure be reviewed for funding to be equitable and manageable and for a common approach to funding a pre-school place to be introduced.
- 5.4.10 A further related area of concern within the area of pre-school education and care funding held by Early Years is that the issue of underage children (below the year before compulsory school starting age) per year within the statutory pre-school sector, which is an inappropriate form of provision for such young children, has as yet not fully been tackled. Yet at the same time the region is experienced a trend in reducing places in the voluntary and independent pre-school sectors.

5.5 Need for common approaches to inspection, regulation and other support services

- 5.5.1 Early Years welcomed the move of strategic responsibilities for such areas as child care to the Department of Education in 2016 in the hope that this would fully represent a seamless policy in relation to a child’s educational and developmental journey, starting from pre-birth.
- 5.5.2 This was because we saw, and still see, enormous opportunities, with this shift of policy responsibilities, together with intentions in relation to structural reforms to the health system, to review the nature, role, remit and responsibilities of care, early education and early childhood development in Northern Ireland. We believe that this can also have positive budgetary implications as well. Some examples of inconsistencies in approaches encountered in the current systems are provided in the following sub-sections.
- 5.5.3 Nursery schools and classes (statutory) operate under the EA. They are, as noted previously, inspected by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). This takes place once in every three to five years.
- 5.5.4 Pre-school playgroups and daycare/day nurseries must be registered by the relevant local Health and Social Care Trust (Department of Health) and will have annual inspections by Trust personnel. However, these playgroups and daycare or day nurseries (encompassing voluntary, community and private provision), if offering funded PSEP places as discussed in section 5.4 above, additionally are also inspected by the ETI every three to five years.

⁸ <http://www.eani.org.uk/schools/pre-school-education-programme/>

- 5.5.5 Moreover, in terms of the same age group of children concerned, playgroups and daycare/day nurseries must apply an adult/child ratio of one adult for every eight children, whereas for their statutory counterpart the ratio is one adult for every 13 children.
- 5.5.6 Early Years, being a member based organisation, has a robust area member branch structure embedded within the organisations structure. A common area of feedback received through our representative branch level structures has also been relating to Trust based support funding for **children with additional needs at pre-school level**, not only in that financial support offered does not presently cover the costs of the full support required, but also, and more significantly, inconsistencies in operation in approaches, and access, to such support between Trust areas.
- 5.5.7** A further longstanding call by Early Years relates to the significant need for a wider review of the pattern of pre-school provision across Northern Ireland to ensure consistency of approach, fairness and equality of opportunity, with the premise underpinning all forms provision always being inclusion.
- 5.5.8 This call was based on the position that pre-School policy here in Northern Ireland has in the main been developed based on research for the general population of Pre-School children without taking account of vulnerability, expanding provision on a part time basis (12.5 hours) for the past twenty years.
- 5.5.9 A need for current unacceptable inconsistencies experienced in approaches to inspections, ratios, registration and regulation and supports in and between areas to be adequately addressed has been an issue consistently raised by our member providers.
- 5.5.10 This could include and highlight such areas as the importance of streamlining the inspection, ratio and regulation systems (presently involving such bodies as Trusts, the Department of Health and the Education Training Inspectorate) so that for the future there is greater synergy in one system with clear read across to all settings that provide care and development opportunities for children.
- 5.5.11 In addition to having positive budgetary implications, such streamlining of approaches to early education, care and childhood development would also reflect and align with a number of UNCRC articles, UN Sustainable Development Goals incorporated in 'Transforming Our World - the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' and other European Commission early childhood recommendations.

5.6 Supporting high quality early childhood services in areas of greatest need

- 5.6.1 Early Years has been an active and effective partner with the Department in the delivery of the Pathway Fund. The Pathway Fund⁹, in operation since 2016, is open to all providers of registered Early Years education and learning services focused on children 0-4 that does not duplicate activity funded under the PSEP or other such sources of funding, but can be used to enhance or extend existing provision.
- 5.6.2 Our experiences from this, and from other related sources of funding, is that demand for such streams of potentially eligible participants far exceeds the limited amounts of funding available.

⁹ <https://www.early-years.org/sustainability-support>

- 5.6.3 Equally, Early Years, as noted in the introductory section of this submission, also is involved at various Lead, Accountable body, Management Board, Committee and employer levels in a number of Sure Start projects. We strongly support the work of this initiative in aiming to give every child the best possible start in life by offering the broad range of services focusing on family health, early years care and education and improved well-being programmes for children aged 0-4 and their families, across the region.
- 5.6.4 We firmly recommend that **the development of, and support for, funding which adequately provides for and sustains high quality early childhood services in areas of greatest need** is established as a consistent, long-term budgetary priority. We again make reference here to the relevance of the previously mentioned (paragraph 4.7) SEED Research by Edward Melhuish and Julian Gardiner in support of this point.

5.7 Shared education and the cost of division

- 5.7.1 The issue of the cost of division in Northern Ireland is likely to be more substantively addressed in other submissions to this inquiry.
- 5.7.2 Given the largely segregated nature of the system here, and the longstanding reputation of our organisation for implementing shared, cross-community services, Early Years is delighted to have been involved in a 'Sharing from The Start'¹⁰ project bringing positive attitudinal and behavioural change amongst children, parents, teachers and the wider community through the implementation of purposeful, direct and sustained curriculum-based contact between children of predominantly different religious backgrounds and different ethnic or socio-economic backgrounds.
- 5.7.3 The 'Sharing from the Start' project, led by Early Years working in collaboration with the National Childhood Network and the Fermanagh Trust, involves early years settings throughout Northern Ireland and the Southern Border counties forming cross-community and/ or cross border partnerships. The children taking part in joint curricular classes, improving educational outcomes and promoting good relations. The initiative is supported by the European Union's PEACE IV Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).
- 5.7.4 Now in its fifth year the project has (years 1 to 4) engaged with 106 different settings, 206 teacher/practitioners and 8,820 children.
- 5.7.5 We therefore also firmly emphasise the importance of shared education and associated partnership working being high on the list of priorities as part of the work of the Panel.

6. Expression of interest in the further participation in the process

- 6.1 Early Years welcomes this opportunity to contribute to this initial request for views from the Panel. The organisation would also be willing to further participate in this process to elaborate on anything contained within this short submission.

¹⁰ <https://www.sharingfromthestart.org/>

Appendix I. Comparative look at key relevant ECCE measures across UK jurisdictions and the Republic of Ireland

Republic of Ireland	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth Early Years Division within DCECIY Policy and funding supports for ELC and SAC Services Pobal Annual Early Years Sector profiles (ELC and SAC) – covering programmes, settings, children, staffing, qualifications & fees Increased investment over successive budgets, particularly Budget 2022, incl. operating costs, quality measures, worker pay, offsetting fees. ECCE (2 year) pre-school programme. Access and Inclusion model (AIM) – inclusion and disability. National Childcare Scheme (NCS). Community Childcare Subvention Plus (CCSP) programme. Commitments within Programme for Government and the National Development Plan 2021-30. First 5 – Whole of Gov Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-28 – incl. focus on CPD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secretary of State for Education. Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Children and Families). Childcare Act DfE regular Childcare and Early Years (under 5s) statistics – provider & parent surveys (every 2 yrs), provision (annual) & 30 hrs (termly). DfE strategy 2015-2020: World-class education and care. Extended funded places re: disadvantaged 2yos. Early Years National funding formula (EYNFF). Extension of funded provision from 15 to 30 hours for working parents of 3-4 yr olds. Focus on developing the workforce – ‘Early Years Workforce Strategy’. Support for local authorities to deliver high performing children’s services. £100m early years capital fund. DfE social mobility plan focuses on early years as 1 of 5 core ambitions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister for Children and Young People. ELC policy responsibility with Children and Families Directorate. ELC commitments within Programme for Government. ‘Blueprint for 2020: the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland’. 600 hrs to 1140 hours of funded early learning and childcare for all 3 and 4 yr olds, and eligible 2 yr olds, by 2020. Scots Gov multi-year commitment to provide local authorities additional funding for expansion of funded early learning and childcare and capital for buildings and equipment. Funding follows the child. Commitment to investing in and improving quality and skills in workforce. Public media childcare recruitment campaign. 100% rate relief for day nurseries. Work towards all workers in funded ELC being paid Scottish Living Wage from August 2020. Commitments for additional graduates Funding for children with additional needs to access ELC entitlement. Various external stakeholder groups on strategic high quality ELC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister for Health and Social Services. Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services. Early Years one of the cross cutting priorities in Prosperity for All – National Strategy Commitment (Welsh PfG) to 30 hrs (20 on top of existing 10) of funded ECEC for working parents of 3 & 4 yr olds, for up to 48 wks of yr by 2020. 10 Year Childcare, Play and Early Years Workforce Plan. Early Years Outcomes Framework to ensure coordination, programmes and policies are making a difference and support planning and evaluation. 100% rates relief for day nurseries. £60m investment to support growth and sustainability of sector and high-quality jobs in sector, including Welsh-medium provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ECEC (since 2016) and SureStart responsibility within Department of Education. Pre-School Education Programme (PSEP) non-compulsory funded places in the year before compulsory Primary education (90% of all 3yos in funded pre-school education – 20/21 stats). Learning to Learn Framework (2013) ‘Bright Start – Key First Actions. Draft ‘Delivering Social Change Through Childcare: A Ten Year Strategy for Affordable and Integrated Childcare 2015 – 2025’ (consulted on 2015 – never finalised) Draft PfG Framework 2016 – 2021 (consulted on 2016 – never finalised, but Executive Departments working from document using PfG outcomes frameworks. Early Intervention Transformation Programme (EITP) DSC/Atlantic Philanthropies Signature Programme. Minimum Standards for Childminding and Daycare. New Decade New Approach

Appendix II. Key commitments and areas within ‘Learning to Learn’ (2013)

Learning to Learn: A Framework for Early Years Education and Learning

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/framework-early-years-education-and-learning-october-2013>

Vision and Goals

4.4 In support of the DE vision “every young person achieving to his or her full potential at each stage of his or her development” the framework reflects the two overarching goals for education:

- Raising standards for all
- Closing the performance gap, increasing access and equality

There are three enabling goals to achieve the overarching goals. They are:

- Developing the education workforce
- Improving the learning environment
- Transforming the governance and management of education

Policy Objectives

4.6 In support of the policy aim, the policy objectives are to:

- provide equitable access to high quality early years education and learning services;
- support personal, social and emotional development, promote positive learning dispositions and enhance language, cognitive and physical development in young children;
- provide a positive and nurturing early learning experience, as well as a foundation for improved educational attainment and life-long learning;
- identify and help address barriers to learning, and reduce the risk and impact of social exclusion and the need for later interventions; and
- encourage and support parents in their role as first and ongoing educators

Early Years Education and Learning Principles

4.7 The following principles underpin the planning and delivery of early years education and learning services, and collaborative working across a range of services and sectors outside the remit of the Department of Education.

- **The early years education and learning needs of all children is the key focus of provision** - the individual characteristics and needs of each child are recognised and respected and early years education and learning provision helps them develop cognitively, emotionally, physically and socially.
- **Education and learning begins at birth** - the importance of the home learning environment, and children’s overall experiences from birth, in improving educational outcomes is recognised and supported through working in partnership with parents and carers as the child’s first and ongoing educators.
- **Children and their families are entitled to high quality, age appropriate early years education and learning services and opportunities** - delivered in safe and inclusive environments, led by a skilled workforce, and evaluated against quality standards where the importance of play in its own right, and as a pedagogical tool is recognised.
- **The rights of children and their families are respected** - early childhood is a significant and distinct time in life and as such it should be nurtured, respected, valued and supported in its own right and for the significant foundation it provides for future and lifelong learning.
- **Equality of opportunity and inclusion are essential characteristics of quality early years education and learning** - all children, regardless of their special educational needs, disabilities, gender, cultural, religious, socio economic, or linguistic backgrounds are provided with practical, challenging activities in a stimulating environment which help them achieve their potential.

- **Collaborative working** among the statutory, voluntary, and other relevant sectors and professional bodies will play an important part in securing improved outcomes for young children in their early years - recognising that children are provided with other opportunities to learn and develop outside funded and formal education provision (such as childminding and day care).

ACTIONS

Overarching Goal: **Raising Standards for All**

Outcome: All children benefit from a high quality early years education and learning experience and acquire a positive disposition for further learning.

Key Action 1.1	The Department will redefine the pre-school programme to focus on children in their pre-school year.
	a) Legislating to differentiate between pre-school provision for children in their final pre-school year and other provision to ensure open enrolment procedures for admission to pre-school education apply to children aged at least 3 years and 2 months.
	b) The Department will develop potential options for a two year old programme which could operate across a range of funded pre-school settings subject to need and capacity.
	c) Legislating to remove the ability of primary schools to admit underage children to reception classes.

Overarching Goal: **Closing the performance gap, increasing access and equality**

Outcome: All children **progress and develop equitably**, with **appropriate support** for children who face barriers to learning.

Enabling Goal: **Developing the Education Workforce**

Outcome: The **workforce is appropriately skilled, competent and supported** to deliver effective early years education and learning services to **all children, their parents and families.**

Key Action 1.6	The Department will establish appropriate support mechanisms to achieve the highest standards of pre-school provision through collaboration and dissemination of best practice.
	b) Developing an 'Excellence in Early Education Fund'
	c) Liaising (with DHSSPS) around the current qualifications relevant to early years education and learning particularly around literacy and numeracy.
	d) Developing a programme of continuous professional development for principals, teachers and staff in Foundation Stage and funded pre-school settings with a focus on the pedagogy of play and leadership and management. Training for Management Committees will also be developed for funded pre-school settings.

Enabling Goal: **Improving the Child's Learning Environment**

Outcome: High quality education and learning services delivered in **safe, nurturing and accessible environments in partnership with parents and carers** as their child's first and ongoing educators.

Key Action 1.9	The Department will over time standardise patterns of attendance as part of the Pre-School Education Programme
	b) Assessing the potential implications of and options for standardised patterns of attendance as part of wider considerations of area based planning for pre-school provision.