

Minds matter: The impact of working in the early years sector on practitioners' mental health and wellbeing ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Access full PDF online ^[2]

Excerpts from Background:

Many of the challenges facing the early years sector in England are, by now, well-known.

Concerns over the adequacy of government funding levels for the various 'free' entitlement offers have continued over recent years, with recent research from independent sector experts Ceeda revealing an overall shortfall of more than £500m across the PVI (private, voluntary and independent) sector. As a result, pay levels in the sector remain low, with the most recent report by the Low Pay Commission confirming that the 'bite' (value relative to the median wage) of the national living wage in the childcare sector was 89.5% in 2017, up from 86.7% in 2015.

With five government ministers having been given responsibility for the early years over the past six years, the early years sector is certainly one used to change. Indeed, the sector has had to respond to a number of significant legislative changes over the past decade: from the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework and the Early Years Single Funding Formula to the implementation of a tougher Ofsted inspection framework; the introduction and subsequent scrapping of a number of government policies such as the relaxation of statutory staff:child ratios and GCSE requirements for level 3 staff; amendments to paediatric first aid requirements, and of course, most recently, the introduction of the new Early Years National Funding Formula.

Each change has brought with it the challenge of remaining up to date and compliant with the latest requirements, while continuing to ensure the day-to-day delivery of high quality care and education on increasingly limited budgets and with a sustained reduction in local authority support. Add to this the growing administrative and paperwork duties placed on those working in the early years – from written observations to grant applications to GDPR privacy notes – and it's clear that the pressure on practitioners is as high as it has ever been.

There is no doubt that societal understanding of the importance of discussions around mental health has increased significantly over recent years. But while a number of surveys have been carried out on the impact of workload, stress and mental health pressures on teachers working in the primary and secondary sectors, very little attention has been paid to the experience of early years practitioners – despite the significant challenges facing the sector.

This survey seeks to fill that gap and provide a comprehensive overview of the impact of working in the early years sector on practitioners' mental health and levels of stress.

Region: Europe ^[3]

Tags: workforce ^[4]

well-being ^[5]

work/life balance ^[6]

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Links

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https://www.eyalliance.org.uk/sites/default/files/minds_matter_report_pre-school_learning_alliance.pdf [3]

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