

Nutbrown review: interim report spells out key messages for qualifications reform ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

Improving literacy and numeracy skills for early years practitioners and bringing in a new licensing system are key issues that Professor Cathy Nutbrown highlights in her interim report published today.

The report, part of the independent review into early education and childcare qualifications, is based on findings gathered during her call for evidence, which involved 982 responses to the consultation, six consultation events around the country and an online survey with Netmums of more than 1,000 parents.

The quality of tuition, the standard of qualifications, and recruitment, retention and career progression are the three key areas of concern highlighted in the report.

The report sets out what Professor Nutbrown has heard so far about these areas and gives ideas about how they might be addressed, which will be investigated further over the next few months, ahead of the final report published this summer.

To work on the developing the final recommendations, Professor Nutbrown has also announced the names of four new members who have joined her expert panel.

They are Stuart Turner, director of Professional Standards at the National Childminding Association, Purnima Tanuku, chief executive of the National Day Nurseries Association, Sharon Curtis, manager of Ellesmere Children's Centre, Sheffield and Fiona Pethick, director of regulation at Ofqual.

Issues that will be considered further include:

- how to develop an effective qualifications structure;
- courses that prepare people for working in the early years, raise standards, provide the right literacy and numeracy skills, and the latest knowledge about child development;
- the case for expanding the role of teachers in the early years, creating new teaching pathways with an early years specialism, linking school and early years more closely.

Professor Nutbrown said, 'Well taught courses and learning routes which lead to reliable qualifications can help early years practitioners to improve their skills, knowledge and personal qualities, constantly developing in their roles.

'This can only benefit young children, both in terms of their day to day experiences in the Early Years Foundation Stage and future learning outcomes.

'My interim report sets out the shared concerns among the workforce about their qualifications system, but I also hope it reflects the pride they take in their work and the hugely positive impacts they are having on the lives of our young children.'

Children's minister Sarah Teather said, 'I welcome Professor Nutbrown's interim report.

'It recognises the passion and professionalism of those working with our youngest children. We know the earliest years of a child's life are so important to their development so it's vital we have a workforce with the right knowledge and skills.'

Professor Nutbrown's key areas for consideration are:

- How do we ensure that complex historical, current and future qualifications do not act as a barrier to training and learning?
- What should the expectations for the content and age-range for early years qualifications and the preparation to achieve them be?
- Should we raise the minimum level of qualifications, and if so to what and by when?
- What is the best way to ensure tutors have up-to-date knowledge and skill and are qualified to the right level?
- How can we ensure that settings are supported to play an effective role in the training of their staff and students on placement?
- What levels of literacy and numeracy should we expect of the early years workforce, and how can we secure these?
- How can we set up clear progression routes for all members of the sector (including black and minority ethnic groups) and support less well-qualified members of the sector to progress?
- Is there a strong case for introducing an early years initial teacher education route, and how might the practical obstacles be

addressed?

- Is there a case for a licensing system and, if so what model might be best?

Commenting on the report Anne Longfield, chief executive of 4Children, said, 'This report is raising important issues for the sector. We welcome the ambition for the workforce that Cathy Nutbrown clearly communicates within the report and her recognition that there will be no quick fix solution to how to standardise early years qualifications and up-skill those working in the sector.'

'It is positive that the review process has involved such meaningful engagement with the sector and has been a very valuable opportunity to test ideas before the publication of the final report this summer.'

'The suggestion of introducing a licence to work in early years is brave and forward thinking and we fully support this. The care and education of our children is of utmost importance and it seems only right that we provide children and their parents with the kind of assurance of quality that we have come to expect as a norm in other professions and positions of trust.'

Dr Hilary Emery, National Children's Bureau chief executive said, 'The report echoes what our networks are telling us, that there is much confusion and concern over the level, quality and variation of child care qualifications.'

'Professor Nutbrown's review provides a much -needed opportunity for everyone to sign up to a consensus that the care and education of young children should be led and practised by reflective, graduate practitioners with strong qualifications and solid knowledge of early childhood development.'

'NCB is keen to see recommendations developed that will transform the current state of affairs. We are committed to supporting the next stage of the review, to train and develop the world-class workforce our youngest children need and deserve.'

-reprinted from Nursery World

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