

Working for inclusion: the role of the early years workforce in addressing poverty and promoting social inclusion ^[1]

Summary of the EC programme and its findings

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AVAILABILITY

Summary report in pdf ^[2]

Other publications on the ^[3]Working for Inclusion project webpage ^[4]

- Final programme report: December 2010 ^[5]
- Briefing on Working for Inclusion research findings, January 2010 ^[6]
- The child as protagonist: working with the child as agents in their own development and learning, Italian study visit report 2009 ^[7]
- Working with diversity, Scottish study visit report 2009 ^[8]
- Inclusive workforce models for rural and remote areas, Norway study visit report 2010 ^[9]
- Working in an inclusive way with children and families, across agencies and age groups, Poland study visit report 2010 ^[10]

Excerpts:

The two-year Working for Inclusion programme sought to focus attention on and strengthening understanding of how the early years workforce can support social inclusion and address poverty. Research undertaken as part of the programme indicates that the countries with the lowest levels of child poverty and inequality offer publicly-funded universal provision in which care and education are fully integrated.

The programme was funded by the European Commission under the EU Progress (Employment and Social Inclusion) programme with the support of the Scottish Government and led by Children in Scotland with partners and associate partners in nine other countries.

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Research undertaken as part of the programme indicates that the countries with the lowest levels of child poverty and inequality offer publicly-funded universal provision in which care and education are fully integrated. In countries which pay less attention to child poverty and do not fully fund early childhood services, the care and education of young children is often split, both by age (children in the age groups 0-3 and 3-6 years attend different types of services) and administrative function (different ministries are involved with different aims and concepts of work with children). Split services often result in less than ideal early education settings, with inappropriate child:staff ratios and pedagogies that do not take into account the wellbeing and natural learning strategies of young children. In turn, 'childcare' services are often poorly funded and the educational level and work conditions of staff undermine pedagogical quality and intensive outreach to parents and communities.

A second finding from the research was the centrality of a valued, well-qualified and appropriately remunerated workforce. Working for Inclusion research shows that across Europe, childcare workers are almost universally less well paid and less well regarded than those whose role is considered to be education, a situation that needs to change. One potential contribution to addressing this, seen on the Polish study visit, was felt to be the development of a 'pedagogy' or 'social education' model for qualifications that would create a more effective, flexible, and coherent approach to early childhood education and care across Europe.

A third element to emerge strongly from the research was the clear possibility of change, even in challenging economic times. The countries performing best today in terms of balancing quality with equality of access began with split models similar to current practice in many European countries. While a number of the successful countries have well established tax and benefit systems to support integrated early childhood systems, effective integration and universal provision are not based on a nation's wealth alone.

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The programme concluded with a conference, organised with the support of Eurochild, hosted at the European Parliament in Brussels in December 2010.

The clear message to come from the event was the growing sense across Europe that the time for talking is over. Now, practitioners and

policymakers agree, is the time for action, if we are to create and establish early education and care services that will benefit children, parents and communities both now and for years to come.

Region: International ^[11]

Tags: poverty ^[12]

staff ^[13]

diversity ^[14]

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Links

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