

'More great childcare': A guide to the Government's childcare reform proposals ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS:

The long-awaited Government response to Professor Cathy Nutbrown's review of early education and childcare qualifications goes much further than her recommendations.

WORKFORCE

Early Years Teachers

The Government wants more graduates in the early years. The report acknowledges the Early Years Professionals have helped improve the quality of education, but public recognition of their status is low.

- Early Years Teachers will be introduced to build on the EYPS programme.
- Early Years Teachers will be specialists in early childhood development
- Existing EYPs will be recognised as the equivalent of Early Years Teachers
- Early Years Teachers will be seen as equivalent to Qualified Teacher Status, but will not have QTS
- Early Years Teachers will have to meet the same entry requirement as primary school trainees - C grade in English, Maths and Science GCSE - and pass the same skills tests from September 2014
- The first Early Years Teachers will start training in September 2013, using EYP standards amended to more closely match Teaching Standards.

Early Years Educators

In future, entrants to the profession will train at Level 3 to become Early Years Educators. Only qualifications which meet rigorous criteria set by the Teaching Agency will earn the Early Years Educator title.

All Early Years Educators will be required to have a minimum Grade C in GCSE English and Maths. They will often act as assistant to Early Years Teachers.

The Government's aspiration is for group childcare to be delivered by Early Years Educators and Early Years Teachers, and that parents will recognise these qualifications as benchmarks of quality.

- The Teaching Agency will consult on new, tougher criteria for new qualifications this spring, to be published in summer
- Awarding bodies will introduce new qualifications in September 2014
- An apprenticeship route will be offered, with some bursaries available for better qualified apprentices from September 2013 to become the first Early Years Educators and support delivery of the two-year-olds programme
- The new criteria will not be applied retrospectively, so previous qualifications will retain their status.

RATIOS

Changes to ratios in England to allow providers with better-qualified staff to offer more places will be introduced. The report says the Government wants to shift the focus from the quantity of staff towards the quality of education and care. Ratio rules have remained largely unchanged since the 1970s.

Providers will only be able to take on more children if they employ high quality staff.

A consultation launched last week (see box) will consult on the qualification requirements, which would allow nurseries and childminders to do this from September 2013.

Nurseries

The proposals on ratios are:

- 1:4 for babies and one-year-olds (up from the current 1:3 ratio)
- 1:6 for two-year-olds (currently 1:4).
- The ratios for three-to-five-year-olds will remain at 1:8, or 1:13 if led by a graduate - the Government wants to see more 1:13 teacher-led sessions in nurseries.

Childminders

Government sees the ratios as too restrictive and also wants to give childminders more flexibility over ratios. At the moment, childminders can look after six children, no more than three under-fives and only one under one. Childminders will still only be able to look after a total of six children:

- The number of under-fives they can care for will increase from three to four
- They will be able to look after two babies under one
- There will be an 'explicit allowance' for overlaps between children so that childminders can exceed these new ratios by one for reasonable periods of time.

REGULATION

Ofsted will be given an enhanced role in early years improvement, with more HMIs devoted to early years and more emphasis on learning and development and children's progress. Changes to regulation and inspection will require legislation.

Inspections

- Ofsted will have greater freedom to target weaker providers.
- More flexibility in terms of when inspections are scheduled as opposed to the current four-year cycle.
- Providers will be able to request and pay for an early re-inspection if they believe their service has improved.
- Ofsted will inspect the new childminder agencies, plus a sample of individual childminders. Those who do not join agencies will continue to be inspected individually.
- HM Chief Inspector will set out plans for improvement of early years inspection this spring.

Welfare and safety

The report says that current regulations are too preoccupied with 'relatively trivial issues'. The safeguarding and welfare sections of the EYFS framework are 'overly complicated'.

- Floorspace regulations will be removed, along with requirements such as a staffroom and a place where staff can talk to parents.
- Unnecessarily prescriptive regulations will be replaced with a general welfare and safety requirement.
- Proposals will be published soon.

Local authorities

The report says that local authorities often duplicate Ofsted's role in inspecting providers taking free entitlement, and sometimes offer conflicting guidance. The £160m they retain from the free entitlement funding is in part spent on this work and could go to the frontline.

- Ofsted will be the sole arbiter of quality and fitness to offer the free entitlement.
- Local authorities will lose their quality improvement role and focus on ensuring that the most disadvantaged children are accessing early education that meets their needs.
- Constraints on training, such as the obligation to use only local authority-approved first aid training, will be removed to ensure competition.

DIVERSITY OF PROVISION

Childminder Agencies

The Government will enable the creation of childminder agencies to encourage more people to become childminders and provide a framework of training, support and quality improvement. The agencies will:

- Provide regular training and quality assurance
- Match supply and demand, helping to fill places
- Take on administrative tasks
- Be registered with and inspected by Ofsted
- Joining an agency will not be compulsory
- Agencies could be run by nurseries, schools, or childminders
- Agency arrangements will be piloted in 2013
- Agencies will be operating by 2014, subject to parliamentary approval.

Schools

The Government wants to see many more schools offering provision for under-fives. It points to France, where ecoles maternelles take

children from two. It will remove barriers to schools improving their offer to younger children.

- The requirement for schools to register separately with Ofsted to take under-threes will be removed, subject to legislation.
- Statutory processes for schools to change their age range will be reformed, to make it easier for them to offer early years provision for two-year-olds.
- More nursery classes led by a teacher will be encouraged for younger children.

CONSULTATIONS ON RATIOS AND REGULATIONS

The consultation on early education and childcare staff deployment asks for views on how ratios could be changed to allow staff to look after more children in early years settings. The consultation asks for thoughts on how to link ratios to quality and what qualifications staff should hold to allow nurseries to have more flexibility over ratios.

The Focus on Enforcement consultation will inform Government's review of how regulation for childcare providers is enforced. The aim is to drive up standards while removing complicated bureaucratic requirements which result in practitioners spending less time with children, and to provide better protection for children and greater clarity for providers.

RESPONSE TO THE NUTBROWN RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Teaching Agency should develop a more robust set of 'full and relevant' criteria for qualifications **Accepted**
2. All qualifications commenced from 01/09/2013 must meet the new criteria **Accepted in principle** (but from 01/09/14).
3. Plan for a single early years qualification should be abandoned **Accepted**
4. Consider the best way to badge qualifications so that people recognise under what criteria it has been gained **Accepted**
5. All staff counted in ratios to be qualified to level 3 by 2022 **Under consideration and subject to consultation**
6. Minimum of 50% of staff at level 3 from September 2013 **Under consideration and subject to consultation**
7. Minimum of 70% of staff at Level 3 from 01/09/15 **Under consideration and subject to consultation**
8. Level 2 English and Maths should be required for Level 3 courses **Accepted in principle**
9. Tutors should be qualified to a higher level than the course they are teaching **Accepted in principle**
10. All tutors should have regular CPD and contact with early years settings **Accepted in principle**
11. Only settings rated 'good' or 'outstanding' should be able to host students on placement **Accepted in principle (but 'normally' rather than 'only')**
12. Colleges and training providers should look specifically at a setting's ability to offer high-quality placements **Accepted**
13. DfE should research the number of BME staff at different levels and engage with the sector to address issues **Keep under review**
14. Newly qualified practitioners should have mentoring for at least six months, from outside if the setting is rated below 'good' **Accepted in principle**
15. A suite of online induction and training modules should be brought together by the Government **Accepted in principle but no action by Government (the sector should seek to draw this together)**
16. New early years specialist route to QTS, specialising in birth to seven, should start from September 2013 **Not accepted (see main article)**
17. EYPs should be able to access routes to QTS as a priority **Not accepted (see main article)**
18. Consider how to increase graduate pedagogical leadership in early years settings **Accepted**
19. Not recommending licensing system **No action for Government**

Related news:

Petitions against change to adult:child ratios attract over 50,000 signatories ^[3], Nursery World, 11 Feb 13

Childminders' professionalism at risk with introduction of agencies ^[4], Nursery World, 11 Feb 13

Why we are introducing childminding agencies ^[5], Nursery World, 5 Feb 13

Children and Families Bill: nurseries win right to call in Ofsted inspector ^[6], Nursery World, 5 Feb 13

'More Great Childcare': a guide to the key points ^[7], Nursery World, 29 Jan 13

Related link: Foundations for quality: The independent review of early education and childcare qualifications ^[8]

Region: Europe ^[9]

Tags: regulation and legislation ^[10]

reform-proposals

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/13/02/more-great-childcare-guide-governments-childcare-reform-proposals> [2]
<https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/news/article/more-great-childcare-a-guide-to-the-government-s-childcare-reform-proposals> [3]
<https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/news/article/petitions-against-change-to-adult-child-ratios-attract-over-50-000-signatories> [4]
<https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/news/article/childminders-professionalism-at-risk-with-introduction-of-agencies> [5]
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