AGENDA

SELECT COMMITTEE - PUPIL PREMIUM

Friday, 17th November, 2017, at 10.00 am   Ask for: **Gaetano Romagnuolo**

Stour Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone   Telephone   **03000 416624**

Tea/Coffee will be available 15 minutes before the start of the meeting in the meeting room

Membership

Mrs L Game, Mrs C Bell, Mr A Booth, Mrs P T Cole, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Ms S Hamilton, Mr J P McInroy, Dr L Sullivan and Mr M Whiting

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS
(During these items the meeting is likely to be open to the public)

10.00 – Simon O'Keefe (Principal, Stour Academy Trust) (Pages 3 - 64)
10.45am

11.00 – Richard Hawkins (Headteacher, Green Park Community Primary
11.45am   School) (Pages 65 - 68)

12.00 – Sue Nicholson (Executive Headteacher, The Brent Primary
12.45pm   School) (Pages 69 - 72)

          Appendix - Early Years Pupil Premium Project Report (Pages 73 -
          100)

EXEMPT ITEMS
(At the time of preparing the agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public)

Benjamin Watts
General Counsel (Interim)
03000 416814

Thursday, 9 November 2017

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Pupil Premium Select Committee

Biography

Simon O'Keefe, Principal, Stour Academy Trust

From a federation of two schools in 2009 and conversion to a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) in 2012, the Trust now has seven Primary schools across Kent and a further school opening in September 2018. The Trust's model is one of close collaboration and standardisation to ensure effective practice in all schools, enabling staff to work within clearly defined parameters that are common to teams across the MAT. Consequently, our strongest staff play a wider role across all our schools.

The Trust has a positive 'can do' culture that seeks out solutions to overcome barriers to learning. Since its establishment in 2012, the Trust continues to work closely with the Local Authority, supporting schools and sharing best practice, including presentations at various events.

The Trust is featured in the DFE's publication 'Multi-academy Trusts – Good Practice Guidance and Expectations for Growth' and recognised as one of the highest performing MATs nationally.

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Pupil Premium Select Committee

Hearing 4

Friday 17th November 2017

Witness Guide for Members

Below are suggested themes and questions. They have been provided in advance to the witnesses to allow them to prepare for the types of issues that Members may be interested to explore. All Members are welcome to ask these questions or pose additional ones to the witnesses via the Committee Chairman.

Themes and Questions

Simon O'Keefe, Principal, Stour Academy Trust

- Please introduce yourself and offer an outline of the roles and responsibilities that your post involves.

- What is the Stour Academy Trust and what are its values?

- Please provide an overview of Pupil Premium allocation in your schools. Is there a clear rationale for how Pupil Premium funding should be spent, and is this communicated to all stakeholders?

- Please discuss the findings of the recent Ofsted report "Unknown Children Destined for Disadvantaged" (2016). In your view, to what extent is the Early Years Pupil Premium effective in promoting the academic achievement of vulnerable younger children?

- To what extent has Pupil Premium funding been effective in narrowing the attainment gap between vulnerable children and their peers in the Trust's schools?

- In your opinion, what other strategies and interventions – if any – can be implemented to maximise the impact of the Pupil Premium?

- What can KCC do, if anything, to improve the effectiveness of the Pupil Premium in closing the attainment gap between vulnerable children and their peers?

- Are there any other issues, in relation to the review, that you wish to raise with the Committee?

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Unknown children – destined for disadvantage?

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector commissioned this survey to evaluate the effectiveness of local authorities and early years providers in tackling the issues facing disadvantaged families and their young children. Her Majesty's Inspectors paid particular attention to the implementation and impact of national and local policies on the day-to-day practice of early years providers in some of the most deprived areas of England.

Corporate member of
Plain English Campaign
Committed to clearer communication

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Foreword

A child's earliest years, from their birth to the time they reach statutory school age, are crucial. All the research shows that this stage of learning and development matters more than any other.[1]

If we get the early years right, we pave the way for a lifetime of achievement. If we get them wrong, we miss a unique opportunity to shape a child's future.

We know from the outcomes of Ofsted inspections that the overall quality of provision for this age group in England is better now than it has ever been. In March 2016, 86% of all registered early years providers (that is, nurseries, pre-schools and childminders) were judged as good or outstanding.[2] That is a 14 percentage point increase in just five years. We are also finding that the quality of early years education in our primary schools is at least as high.

This raising of standards means that many more parents have a much better chance of finding a high-quality provider in their local area. At the same time, there are more children meeting the government's standard of a 'good level of development' at the end of the Reception Year. In 2015, 66% of five-year-olds achieved this national expectation, an improvement of 15 percentage points since 2013.[3] For many of these children, the future is likely to be promising.

The uncomfortable truth, however, is that although early education is better than it has ever been, it is still not benefiting our poorest children as much as their peers.

We know that nearly half of the children from disadvantaged backgrounds have not secured the essential knowledge, skills and understanding expected for their age by the time they finish Reception Year. Around a quarter are unable to communicate effectively, control their own feelings and impulses or make sense of the world around them to ensure that they are ready to learn.

Yet we also know that it is the poorest children who have the most to gain if they are given the opportunity to master these basic skills before they reach statutory school age – and the most to lose if they are not. By this point, the odds of these children catching up are stacked against them. In 2015, only 44% of children who had not reached the expected level at the age of five went on to securely achieve the

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[1] 'Students' educational and developmental outcomes at age 16, effective pre-school, primary and secondary education (EPPSE 3–16) project', Department for Education, September 2014; www.gov.uk/government/publications/influences-on-students-development-at-age-16.
[2] 'Childcare providers and inspections as at 31 March 2016: key findings', Ofsted, June 2016; www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childcare-providers-and-inspections-as-at-31-march-2016.
[3] 'Statistical first release: Early years foundation stage profile results: 2014 to 2015', Department of Education, November 2015; www.gov.uk/government/statistics/early-years-foundation-stage-profile-results-2014-to-2015.

national benchmark in reading, writing and mathematics at the age of 11.[4] This compares with 77% of children who had achieved the good level of development.

One reason too many disadvantaged children get off to a bad start is that, in too many local areas, they are less likely to access high-quality early education.

In the most prosperous areas, only 8% of children are in early years provision that is less than good. For children living in the most deprived areas, this figure more than doubles, to 18%.[5]

I commissioned this survey to gain a better understanding of how local authorities, schools and registered early years providers were tackling the issue of disadvantage and lower standards for those children in the most deprived communities.

The role of local authorities is paramount. They are charged with meeting the needs of young children through the Childcare Act 2006.[6] This places a duty on councils to improve outcomes for all young children, reduce inequalities and ensure that there is sufficient, high-quality early years provision and childcare for parents locally.

All this demands joined-up thinking. When learning, development and health are so inextricably linked for the under-fives, tackling all forms of inequality should be integrated across the range of local children's services.

This, in turn, requires strong and effective leadership at every level from the council cabinet to those leading early years provision.

When carrying out this survey, inspectors did indeed come across strong leaders who understood the importance of prioritising the early years. They were bringing services together to support disadvantaged families in a way that stood every chance of changing children's destinies for the better. These leaders were removing the existing barriers between health and educational professionals that impeded them working together seamlessly and effectively.

One council had an elected member whose single designated responsibility was to address the needs of disadvantaged children. Unfortunately, this commitment was by no means widespread. More than half the local authorities we visited did not take a coordinated, strategic approach to tackling the issues faced by disadvantaged children and their families.

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[4] 'Education in England: annual report 2016', April 2016, CentreForum; www.centreforum.org/publications/education-in-england-annual-report-2016.
[5] 'Entitlement to free early education and childcare', National Audit Office, March 2016; www.nao.org.uk/report/entitlement-to-free-early-education-and-childcare.
[6] Childcare Act 2006; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/contents.

For too many councils, ensuring that pre-school children from poorer homes were being given a good start was low on their list of priorities. 'They will catch up later' was a common and complacent refrain that inspectors heard.

Even where a strategic plan was in place, around a third of those authorities did not have any specific targets or ambitions for improving the outcomes of disadvantaged children in the early years.

Inspectors encountered local authorities that were hampered by silo-working and unnecessary duplication of effort. Education and health teams within the same council did not know that the other was completing the same assessments for the same children. This poor information-sharing often stemmed from a culture of professional distrust across the different children's services.

Tens of thousands of poor children losing out as over £200 million set aside to fund free places for two-year-olds goes unspent

The government has introduced a number of recent measures to try to reduce levels of inequality and narrow the pre-school educational gap between disadvantaged and better off children. These include funded places for the most disadvantaged two-year-olds[7] and the new early years pupil premium for three- and four-year olds.[8]

Local authorities have been handed responsibility for checking which children in their area are eligible for these different funding streams, as well as for directing the funding to early years providers in their area.

It is encouraging that there has been a 10 percentage point increase in the number of disadvantaged two-year-olds taking up the government offer of free education since I highlighted this issue in my last early years annual report a year ago.[9]

However, there were still around 80,000 children – nearly a third of all those eligible – whose families did not take up a funded place in 2015. That equates to a staggering £200 million worth of potential investment that has failed to reach the children for whom it is intended.

The situation is particularly bad in two local authority areas where the take-up of funded places for two-year-olds was as low as 34%.

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[7] The government's policy on free childcare for disadvantaged two-year-olds expanded in September 2015 to cover the 40% most deprived children and families, doubling from the most deprived 20% in previous years.
[8] 'Early years pupil premium: a guide for local authorities', The Department for Education, March 2015; www.gov.uk/guidance/early-years-pupil-premium-guide-for-local-authorities.
[9] 'Education provision: children under five years of age: statistical first release, Department for Education, June 2016; www.gov.uk/government/statistics/education-provision-children-under-5-years-of-age-january-2016.

I am concerned that, as things stand, no one is being held to account for this scandalously poor performance. As a result, the opportunity to directly influence the future path of thousands of poorer children is being lost.

Our survey found that the most effective local authority leaders had recognised that bureaucracy too often prevented funding getting to those that needed it most. They had, therefore, adapted national systems to make it easier for parents to access these entitlements. They were also working closely with schools and early years providers in their area to ensure that there was a sufficient number of high-quality places available in the most appropriate settings for disadvantaged children.

In other areas, however, local authority leaders said that finding enough early years providers willing to offer sufficient places for funded two-year-olds was a constant challenge. This was partly because many pre-school providers do not want to reduce the number of children whose parents pay a higher rate for their provision to accommodate a greater proportion of children on funded places that provide a lower return. Indeed, only six of the 27 nurseries and childminders we visited prioritised admission for funded or disadvantaged children.

It was also partly because not enough primary school headteachers in their area were willing to show the necessary ambition or take the necessary steps to make this happen. Just five of the schools we visited were taking two-year-olds into their early years classes, despite their premises often being situated in the most deprived parts of the borough.

This is worrying. As I have made clear before, I firmly believe that schools are best placed to lead on the necessary help needed by very young children from disadvantaged homes who are at risk of falling behind.

I say this because we know that a growing proportion of primary schools are already succeeding in reducing the disparity between poorer children and their peers in reading and other core skills between the ages of five and seven. They also have more access to specialist support and are better able to ensure a smooth transition into Reception from Nursery for those children who often find it a struggle to adapt to new routines and a new environment.

Schools have already been given the right to prioritise the poorest children when drawing up their admissions criteria. Furthermore, bureaucracy on schools has been reduced: they are no longer required to register separately with Ofsted to take two-year-olds.

However, it is clear from our survey that obstacles still remain. While in some places, school leaders are stepping up to the plate in increasing numbers, there was a notable reluctance in other areas to do so.

In some local authorities, leaders were thinking of increasingly creative and flexible ways to encourage and incentivise more headteachers to take funded two-year-olds and disadvantaged three-year-olds. One council, for example, was providing a top-up

to hourly funding as well as free training for staff and a one-off 'start-up' fee to help providers purchase new equipment or reorganise the learning environment.

It is clear from our survey that some local authorities, schools and early years settings are making effective use of the funding available to them to give poorer children the good start they so desperately need. Strong leaders at the town hall level, as well as in individual schools and settings, are demonstrably strategic, innovative and committed to making a difference.

However, there was a discernible lack of such ambition in a number of the local authorities we visited. Any potential for improving the prospects of the most disadvantaged young children was too often thwarted by weak leadership, ineffective managerial oversight, duplication and inefficiency. In these councils, government funding was not being used in a sufficiently targeted, coordinated way to make a difference.

It is clear from our findings that action is needed on a national and local level to address these variations and to ensure that the weakest places learn from the best. Early education has the potential to drive social mobility and improve outcomes for the next generation. We should not let them down.

Sir Michael Wilshaw

Key findings

■ **Tackling the issues facing disadvantaged families and their children requires leaders across children's services, health and education to have a broader understanding of what it means to be 'disadvantaged'.** While all of the local authorities, pre-school providers and schools visited could define disadvantage in terms of a family's finances, the most effective went beyond this basic definition. They realised that helping to improve parenting skills and the home environment went hand in hand with providing early education to develop children's understanding and help them make sense of the world.

■ **Being disadvantaged continues to have a considerable detrimental impact on children.** In 2015, just over half of those children from disadvantaged backgrounds secured the knowledge, skills and understanding expected by the age of five. By contrast, more than two thirds of non-disadvantaged five-year-olds achieved the good level of development needed to make a successful start to school in Year 1.[10] Educational outcomes by the age of five are not the only deficits of being disadvantaged. A child's health and the opportunity to access free, funded early education from the age of two can also be affected.

■ **There is a lack of understanding of what success looks like in tackling disadvantage.** All of the leaders spoken to were concerned about a lack of clarity around what success looks like. In particular, leaders were not clear what 'school readiness' means and there was little appreciation of the wider health and social care elements that potentially contribute to educational attainment.

■ **Providing a joined-up service is crucial in tackling disadvantage. Nine of the local authorities visited did not have a coordinated, strategic approach to tackling the issues faced by disadvantaged children and their families.** Weak leadership, lack of management oversight and inaction contributed to this failure. In the best local authorities, information from early identification of need was shared successfully across all children's services to provide the right intervention. Children, parents and families were given the information, support and guidance needed to address all of their most pressing needs. In the worst cases, inspectors found professional distrust and a reluctance to share vital information about a child or family beyond the team that had initially gathered it. In these local authorities, departments targeted different children and families, unknowingly duplicated assessments and, crucially, did not even know whether a child and the family were disadvantaged or not.

■ **Early assessments of children's health, learning and development were not benefiting enough families that were in the most need of support.** Across the local authorities in this survey, around a quarter of their disadvantaged children were missing out on these crucial assessments by health

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[10] 'Statistical first release: Early years foundation stage profile results: 2014 to 2015', Department of Education, November 2015; www.gov.uk/government/statistics/early-years-foundation-stage-profile-results-2014-to-2015.

visitors. Even in local authorities where nearly all of the children had received such checks, only two of those visited had a system for knowing whether these children would then be identified as 'disadvantaged'.

■ **Too few early years leaders prioritised opportunities for disadvantaged children to have access to a high-quality education.** Only eight of the 27 pre-school providers and childminders visited prioritised admission for funded or disadvantaged children, despite being located in the most deprived wards of a local area.

■ **More needs to be done to ensure that additional funding has sufficient impact.** In just under half of the 43 schools and settings visited, leaders, managers and staff had often not identified the children who were entitled to the early years premium, because local authority protocols and delays in payment hindered easy identification. Five of the 16 schools visited found it difficult to account for their use of the school pupil premium in their Reception classes.

■ **Leaders and managers who used additional government funding successfully had a clear rationale for their spending based on an acute understanding of the needs of eligible children**. The strategies in these schools and settings focused on improving children's personal, social and emotional development and their speech, language and communication skills.

■ **The most successful local authorities visited had devised innovative ways to align national funding streams to ensure continuity of entitlement across a child's entire early education.** A common feature was to reduce the number of forms disadvantaged parents had to complete by ensuring that local systems worked on a principle of 'opt out' rather than 'opt in'.

Recommendations

Schools, settings and childminders should:

■ ensure that key information, including early assessments, is shared promptly at points of transition so that the needs of the most disadvantaged children are known quickly

■ review their use of the early years pupil premium to ensure that support is focused on improving the areas of development that will help a child to catch up.

Local authorities should:

■ publish their strategy for meeting the needs of disadvantaged children and families so that local communities are clear about the support available and how its success will be measured

■ work with schools and early years settings to ensure that there are sufficient high-quality and sustainable places available to disadvantaged children and increase the proportion of eligible children who take up the two-year-old offer

- ensure that early years pupil premium funding is devolved quickly to schools and settings with eligible children, ensuring that managers and staff are aware of who has the additional funding from the start

- ensure that the health and development checks carried out at the age of two are completed as a crucial first assessment of children's needs so that they can be used as a benchmark for progress across the rest of a child's early years

- improve information-sharing protocols so that professionals across children's services have ready access to a range of data, particularly about health outcomes, so that early assessment and identification of need lead to timely, effective support.

The Department for Education should:

- review how local authorities are held accountable for their services to disadvantaged children and families, ensuring that 'school readiness' at the end of Reception is clearly defined and used as one measure of each local area's success

- provide a common definition for 'disadvantage children', incorporating a range of economic, health and social indicators, to support a coherent approach to improving the life chances of the most disadvantaged children and families

- require schools and other settings to publish information about the impact of the early years pupil premium, where received, on their website

- align the different funding streams for disadvantaged children and families in the early years so that only one application by parents is needed for continuous funding until a child reaches the end of the Reception Year.

Ofsted should:

- ensure that the impact of additional funding on children's health, learning and development is reported clearly and consistently, including the impact of funding for eligible Nursery and Reception children in schools.

Background

1. The Chief Inspector commissioned this survey to investigate further the concerns reported in Ofsted's 2015 early years annual report about the life chances of disadvantaged children under the age of five.[11] In this survey, Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) evaluated the extent to which local authorities in England challenged and supported schools and registered early years providers.

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[11] Ofsted early years report 2015, July 2015, Ofsted; www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-early-years-report-2015.

HMI also aimed to identify what strategies were making a difference for young children and their families living in the most deprived communities.

2. In January 2016, an online questionnaire was sent out to each local authority to collect information about the strategic direction they were taking to fulfil their statutory obligation to provide early childhood services. Local authority leaders were also asked to share their views of the effectiveness of recent policy initiatives, as they apply in practice on the ground.

3. In March and April 2016, HMI followed up the responses to the online questionnaire by visiting 15 local authorities across the country. These visits focused on the effectiveness of each local area's plans to tackle their specific, identified issues surrounding disadvantaged children and families.

4. HMI also visited 43 early years providers, including schools, pre-schools and childminders, in nine of the 15 local authorities to evaluate whether national and local policies, as presented by locality leaders, were having the desired impact on practice and making a discernible difference to disadvantaged children's outcomes.

Unknown children – destined for disadvantage?

What do we mean by 'disadvantage'?

5. Disadvantage is a complex issue. It can affect children from birth and, left unchecked and unchallenged, can impact negatively on every aspect of a child's life. Poverty is often the driving force, influencing the quality of parenting and home environment that children experience, which in turn shapes their outlook on life. As such, disadvantage can have a long-term grip on families and communities, holding them back generation after generation. Ensuring that the home, health and educational experiences of the youngest children are of the highest quality provides opportunities to reverse this long-term cycle of deprivation.

6. There is no quick fix to such a deep-rooted issue. We did not find a shared understanding of the term 'disadvantage' across or within the 90 local authorities that responded to our questionnaire. At its worst, the survey found that the lack of a shared definition between health, social care and education led to a confused list of priorities for helping those at risk of educational underachievement. If we are to successfully tackle disadvantage head on, everyone needs to be working towards the same goal.

7. The proxy indicator generally used in education to identify disadvantage is children's eligibility for free school meals. This provides a measure by which society can estimate the relative performance between poor children and their better-off peers in maintained schools, academies and free schools. However, this indicator is not used in all countries. Some choose a wider definition that includes the mother's level of education, employment and health.

8. All the local authorities, pre-school providers and schools that inspectors visited for this survey defined disadvantage in terms of a family's economic income. We found these definitions to be closely aligned to the eligibility criteria for additional government funding, such as whether families were receiving tax credits, income support or other benefits. In these instances, children were identified for additional support because they had secured a funded place as a two-year-old or were known to be in receipt of the early years or school pupil premium. Leaders and staff often looked to the allocation of additional monies or services as the only sign of a disadvantaged child.

> One local authority we visited defined a disadvantaged child or family as those receiving free, funded education for two-year-olds, those in receipt of the early years pupil premium and those receiving the schools pupil premium at the age of four or five. They did not class any other child, parent or family as disadvantaged, regardless of where they lived or what else they knew about the wider circumstances affecting the family. In this instance, the local authority had a narrow and blinkered view of their community and the extent of the issues facing it. While leaders and staff knew that not all children and families eligible for funding and support were receiving it, they targeted their limited resources at those who were known to the system rather than seeking out and encouraging more to access their entitlement. Outcomes for disadvantaged children and families in this local authority were weak over time, showing little sign of improvement because early childhood services were being focused on only those who were known and visible.

9. Not all shared such a narrow view. The most effective schools and settings visited had a much wider definition of disadvantage. While the leaders and staff spoken to in these successful providers typically knew what disadvantaged children and families were entitled to receive in monetary terms, they went beyond this when defining what made a child, family or entire community disadvantaged. In these instances, adults used the term 'vulnerable' as a way of describing the unique circumstances surrounding an individual child, group of children or family.

> One school defined disadvantage as an outcome – an over-arching term to describe what would come to be, or continue, if help and support were slow or ineffectual. The leaders in this setting understood that a wide range of circumstances could lead to a child and their family being vulnerable to lower educational achievement, poor health and well-being and a reduced chance of leading a successful and fulfilling life. In this particular community, vulnerability was seen to be particularly prevalent for children who had witnessed domestic violence in the home or were living in households where one or more parents were defined as addicts – whether this be alcohol- or drug-related. Importantly, this insight by the school ensured that they had devised, over time, a curriculum that was rooted in personal, social and emotional aspects of learning. A 'listening

ear' service and programme of more formal counselling were readily available for those children who needed it.

In terms of educational outcomes, these children were monitored closely to ensure that they felt safe and secure and had the right dispositions and attitudes to learn. Assessment information in this school showed that children identified as vulnerable made accelerated progress so that the vast majority caught up quickly with their peers and reached a good level of development by the age of five. Some exceeded this benchmark and all were fully prepared for the demands of Year 1 and a more formal approach to the curriculum.

10. In many of the 27 registered early years providers visited, a child's or family's vulnerability was not considered. For nine of the pre-schools and eight childminders visited, disadvantage was purely whether a child was receiving a funded place. These settings did not consider children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, children who speak English as an additional language or summer-born children as also being disadvantaged. To them, these factors were more about a child's level of development in comparison to the 'typical child', rather than the issues brought about by living in a deprived community. Frequently, this thinking resulted in no bespoke provision for a child to meet their potential and was in direct contrast with the schools taking funded children.

11. The most effective early years leaders could identify at least one child who they thought of as disadvantaged but whose family were not living in a deprived area nor eligible for additional government funding or support. Being disadvantaged in the eyes of these leaders could also be associated with the home environment.

One pre-school setting attached to a children's centre had an agreed policy about the circumstances in which a child and their family would be regarded as 'at a disadvantage'. This included children who were:

■ showing poor speech and language for their age and stage of development
■ being looked after by someone other than their parents, such as grandparents
■ those whose family was known to be involved in crime
■ those who had young or teenage parents
■ those who had older siblings with a wide age gap between them.

This list of circumstances came from an acute understanding of the local community and was developed through strong working relationships with social workers, health visitors and other agencies, such as the police. Leaders in this setting were clear that their working relationships with a wide range of professionals made them more aware and, ultimately, more responsive to the exact needs of children in the locality.

12. Not every provider inspectors spoke to had a knowledgeable view of what it meant to be a disadvantaged child or family in today's society. For instance, managers of registered providers who did not take funded children spoke of disadvantage in terms of the vulnerability these families would bring to their businesses rather than the barriers to learning they would have to help the child overcome.

13. Indeed, for this reason, many lone workers surveyed were reluctant to accept funded or disadvantaged children, even when they lived in the most deprived areas of a local authority. Out of the 30 good and outstanding childminders living in deprived areas who we contacted to take part in this survey, only five took children in receipt of funding. Many of those who chose not to were concerned about the negative impact taking a funded child would have on their livelihood.

What is the impact of being disadvantaged?

14. The differences between disadvantaged children and their better-off counterparts are stark. While the attainment gap at the age of five has started to close recently, a gap in children's speech and language equivalent to 19 months[12] has already emerged for some children in the lowest income families before they have even started statutory school. As the 'Effective pre-school, primary and secondary education project'[13] indicates, the first five years of a child's life are crucial in establishing the way that they think, learn and behave, particularly between birth and the age of three. To be behind after only 1,000 days of life predisposes some children to a long and difficult struggle throughout the rest of their formal education.

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[12] 'Social mobility and education gaps in the four major Anglophone countries: research findings for the social mobility summit', London 2012, The Sutton Trust, May 2012; www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/social-mobility-summit2012.pdf
[13] 'Effective pre-school, primary and secondary education project, December 2015', Department for Education; www.gov.uk/government/collections/eppse-3-to-14-years.

Figure 1: Proportion of children achieving a good level of development, by year and by eligibility for free school meals (FSM)
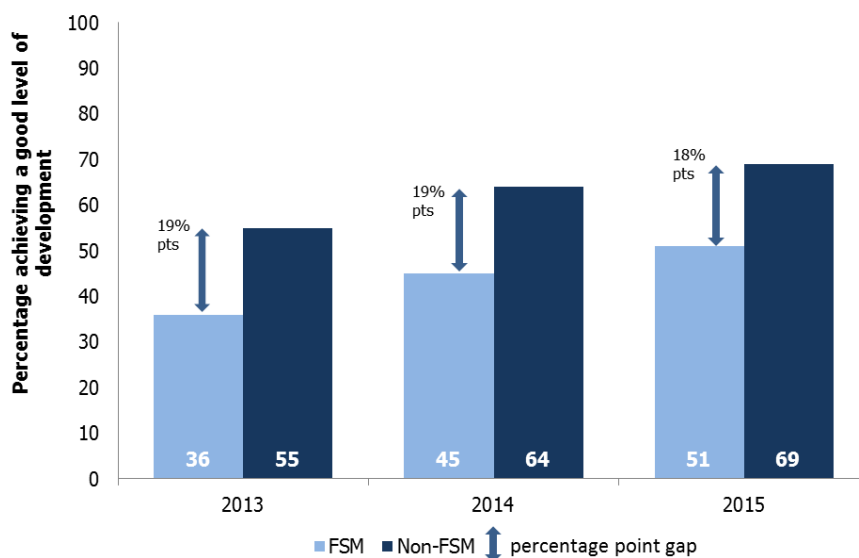
Source: Department for Education

15. In 2015, around half of all disadvantaged children had achieved a good level of development and secured the essential skills needed to make a successful start at school in Year 1[14] compared with two thirds of all five-year-olds. The attainment gap between disadvantaged children and others within their class was wider still when individual areas of learning[15] were taken into account. The gaps were widest in literacy, particularly reading, and mathematics. Achieving well in these areas is built on a child's:

   ■ understanding that everyone has something to say – ideas, views and opinions are what make us unique (personal, social and emotional development)

   ■ ability to articulate these thoughts, views and opinions so that others can understand what they are communicating (communication and language)

   ■ breadth and depth of receptive vocabulary to understand what others are saying to them (communication and language)

   ■ gross and fine motor control so that they can hold a pencil correctly and make the small, controlled movements to form marks and recognisable letters (physical development)

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[14] 'Statistical first release: early years foundation stage profile results: 2014 to 2015', Department of Education, November 2015; www.gov.uk/government/statistics/early-years-foundation-stage-profile-results-2014-to-2015.

[15] The seven areas of learning within the early years foundation stage are: personal, social and emotional development; physical development; communication and language; literacy; mathematics; understanding the world; and, expressive arts and design.

- ability to remember the sounds that different combinations of letters represent when reading, and the reverse when writing (characteristics of effective learning and literacy)

- ability to concentrate and maintain focus on one particular activity, persevering with something as complex as reading or writing through until the end of the task (characteristics of effective learning)

- comprehend the world around them so that they increasingly understand what they read and can write (understanding the world).

Figure 2: Proportion of children achieving at least expected level in literacy; mathematics; understanding the world; expressive arts and design early learning goals in 2015, by eligibility for FSM
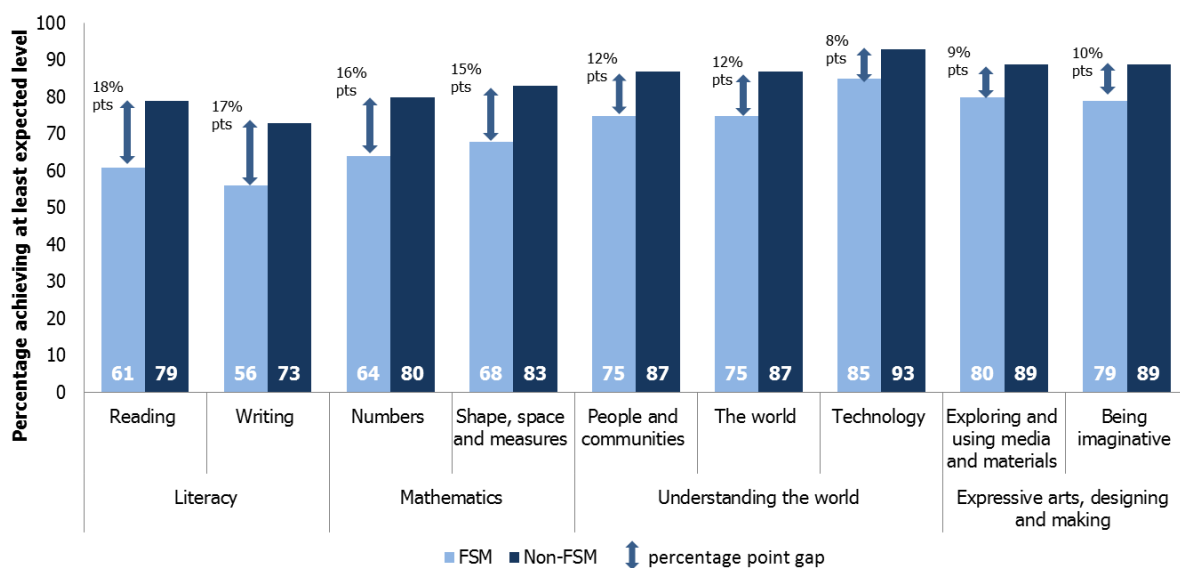
Source: Department for Education

The outcomes for the most recent cohorts of children leaving the Reception Year show, over time, that more disadvantaged children are acquiring these essential, skills to enable them to succeed in all other aspects of learning. However, the proportions who still lack this strong start at the age of five remain unacceptably high.

- Around one fifth of disadvantaged children[16] lacked the confidence and independence needed to tackle new challenges, make new friends or understand how they were feeling so that they could control their basic impulses (personal, social and emotional development).

- Around one quarter of disadvantaged children were unable to communicate effectively because they lacked the concentration, vocabulary and listening

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[16] In the context of national outcomes at the age of five, as reported through the early years foundation stage profile (EYFSP), 'disadvantaged children' refers to those who are known to be eligible for free school meals.

skills to focus their attention and understand what others were saying (communication and language).

■ Around a quarter lacked the experience and understanding of the people, places and environment around them to make sense of the world and their ability to interact successfully within it (understanding the world).

Figure 3: Proportion of children achieving at least expected level in communication and language; personal, social and emotional development; physical development early learning goals in 2015, by eligibility for FSM
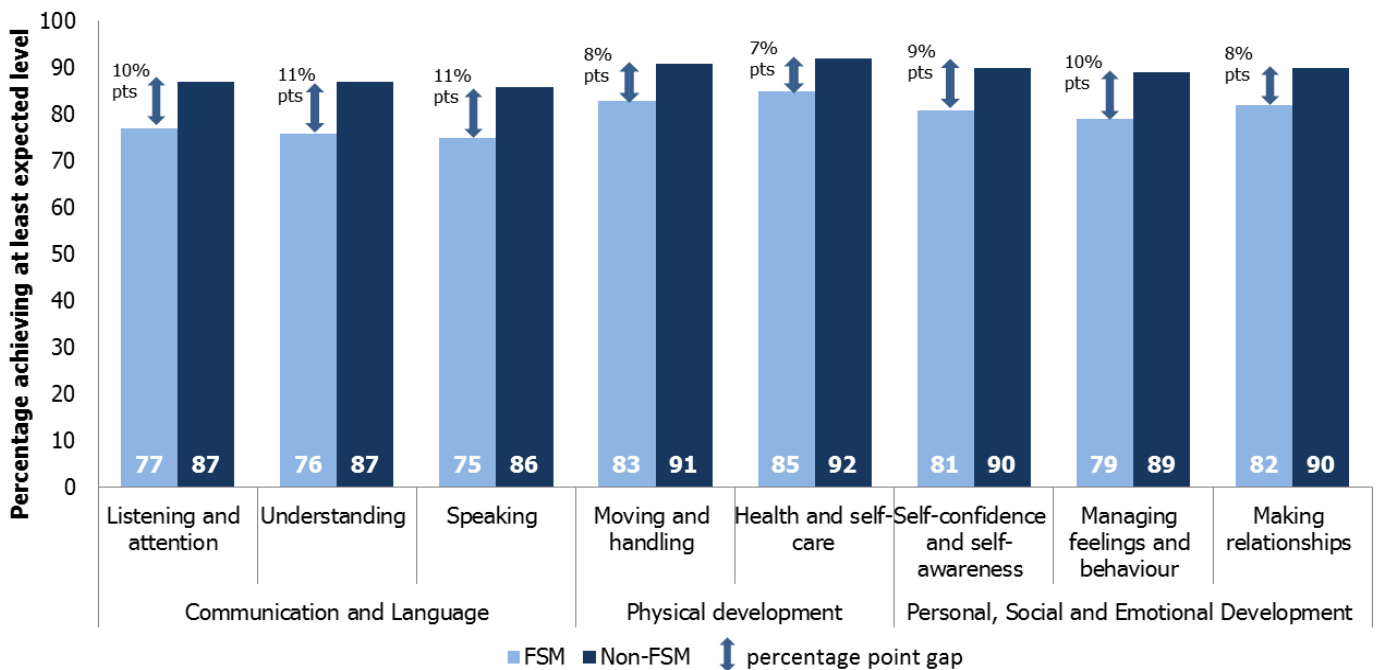
Source: Department for Education

16. Where a child lives in the country can also make a difference to how pronounced these gaps in learning are and how much lost ground has to be made up quickly. Regional variations are already evident by the age of five, with disadvantaged children in the north doing less well than their southern counterparts. However, even where attainment is higher, the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers remains similarly wide.

Figure 4: Proportion of children achieving a good level of development in 2015, by region and by eligibility for FSM
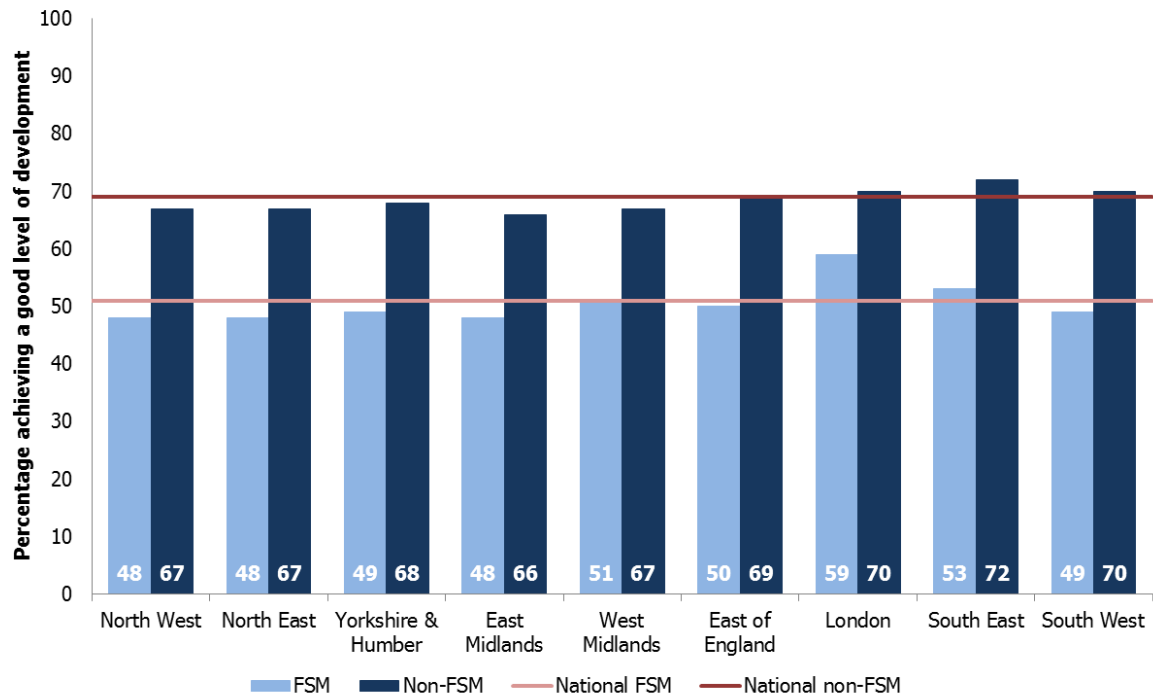
Source: Department for Education

Figure 5: Differences between affluent and deprived areas in educational outcomes for young children

Affluent areas	Deprived areas

88% of early years registered providers are judged good or outstanding at most recent inspection

81% of early years registered providers are judged good or outstanding at most recent inspection

69% of children achieve good level of development

63% of children achieve good level of development

Take-up of two-year-old funded places is higher in affluent LAs (73%)

Take-up of two-year-old funded places is lower in deprived LAs (63%)

Sources: Ofsted and Department for Education

17. Educational outcomes by the age of five is only one of the measures of disadvantage. A child's health and the opportunity to access free, funded early education from the age of two play their part in determining their life chances. Comparing the most and least deprived local authorities across a range of child-centred measures reveals that:

- rates of tooth decay, indicative of a poor diet, are twice as high in the most deprived localities

- children are twice as likely to be obese in the most disadvantaged communities, with the gap widening over time due to the obesity rate falling faster in the least deprived areas

- the chance of attending a good or better early years setting in disadvantaged communities is less likely than in more affluent areas.

Figure 6: Differences between affluent and deprived areas in health outcomes for young children

Affluent areas	Deprived areas
An average of **66** decayed, missing or filled teeth are observed per 100 five-year-olds	An average of **134** decayed, missing or filled teeth are observed per 100 five-year-olds
6% of children are obese	**12%** of children are obese
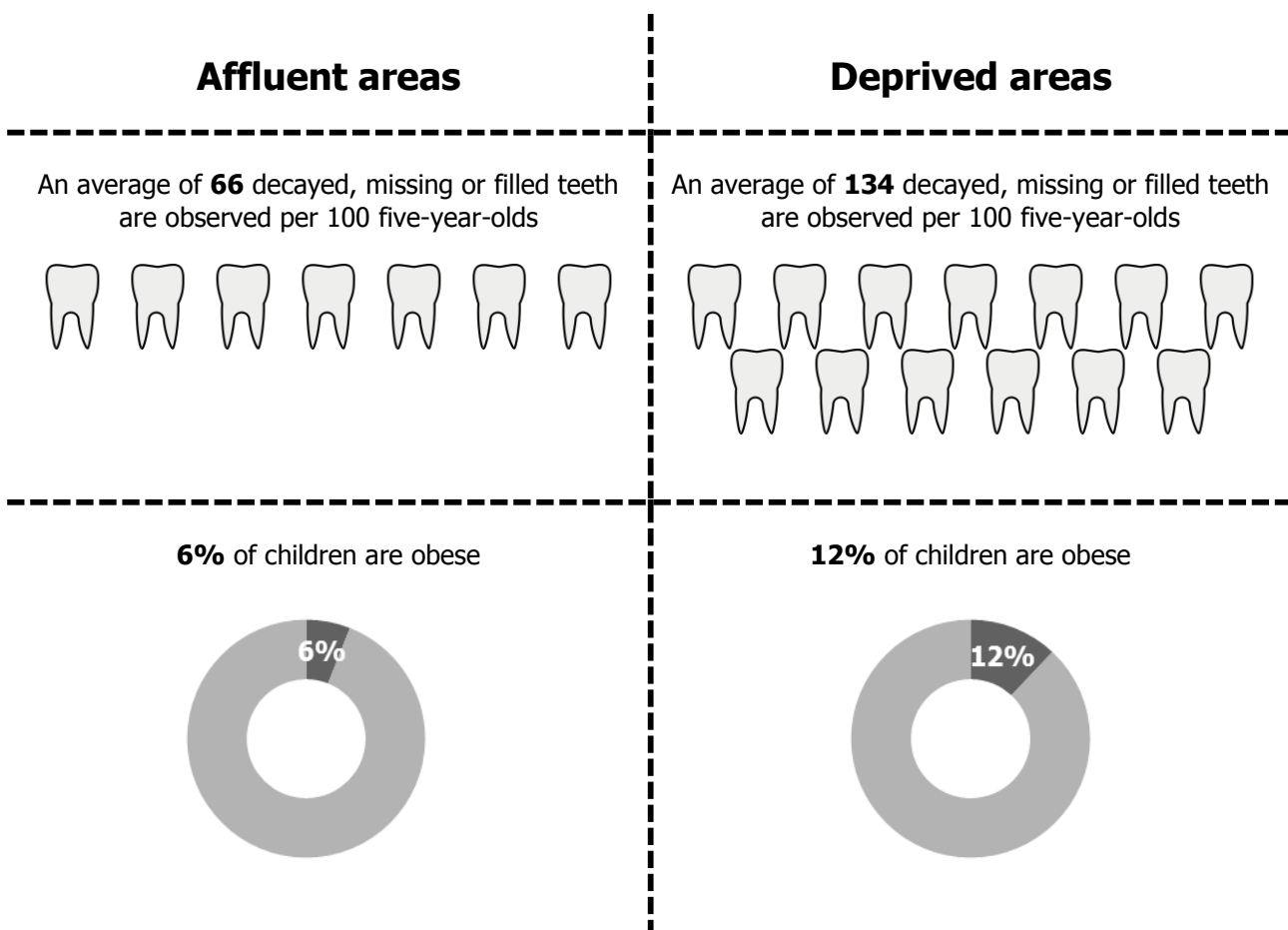
Sources:
Tooth decay source: Public Health England; http://nwph.net/dentalhealth/survey-results5.aspx?id=1
Obesity source: Health & social care information centre;
www.hscic.gov.uk/searchcatalogue?productid=19405&q=title:%22national+child+measurement+programme%22&size=10&page=1#

18. The long-term impact of deprivation into adulthood can also be seen in a range of health and social care measures. Recent statistics show that:

   ■ the unemployment rate in the most deprived local authorities remains more than double that in the least deprived local authorities[17]

   ■ the life expectancy of both men and women in the most deprived local areas is, on average, two to three years lower than those from more affluent communities.[18]

19. These distinct gaps, across both child- and adult-centred measures, between the most deprived and the least deprived areas of England have existed for many years, showing little sign of reducing. In some instances, such as childhood obesity, these measures have even increased. Nationally, there is much stated political will to make a difference. A raft of initiatives and entitlements are being developed to address the root cause of these very issues. However, the impact is far from obvious. This begs the question: who is responsible for making the difference? The connection between government policy and local action must be put under greater scrutiny.

What do local leaders need to do to ensure effective early childhood services[19] for the disadvantaged?

Provide a joined-up service

20. Local authorities are charged with meeting the needs of young children through the primary legislation of the Childcare Act 2006.[20] This act places a duty on local authorities to improve the outcomes for all young children, reduce inequalities, and ensure that there is enough high-quality, integrated early years provision and childcare for parents locally.

21. This statutory obligation necessitates a joined-up service. When learning, physiological development and children's health are so inextricably linked for the under-fives, tackling all forms of inequality, across education, health and social care should go hand in hand. Children, parents and families need a complete package of information, support and guidance to address all of their most pressing needs. This relies on early assessment, early identification and

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[17] Office for National Statistics; webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160204094311/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/subnational-labour/regional-labour-market-statistics/november-2015/rft-lm-table-li01-november-2015.xls.
[18] Office for National Statistics; www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/lifeexpectancies/datasets/lifeexpectancyatbirthandatage65bylocalareasinenglandandwalesreferencetable1.
[19] Early childhood services are defined in the Childcare Act 2006 as early years provision; social services, such as parenting classes and family support; relevant health services, e.g. midwifery, health visitors and speech and language therapists; Jobcentre Plus employment services - to help parents and carers into work; and children's information services to provide information, advice and assistance for parents, prospective parents and carers.
[20] Childcare Act 2006; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/contents.

early intervention that are shared across a children's services department. Such an integrated and aligned approach requires strong leadership at every level of the council, so that different departments, different priorities and different ways of working are aligned for the benefit of children, parents and the locality.

22. In around a quarter of the local authorities that returned our questionnaire, there was no elected member with specific responsibility or oversight of disadvantaged children. While all the authorities surveyed ensured that there was a member of the local cabinet with responsibility for education, these roles rarely included heightened accountability, at the top tier, for disadvantaged children and families.

> In one local authority visited, the accountability for tackling inequalities and addressing the needs of disadvantaged children and families touched on every layer of leadership, from the council cabinet to the early years classroom. Here, importantly, there was an elected member of the council with a designated responsibility for tackling disadvantage. This role was considered so important and wide-ranging that this individual held no other responsibilities. A standing agenda item on each executive committee meeting ensured that issues of disadvantage were never forgotten and that initiatives could quickly be followed up. The elected member also held bi-monthly review meetings with key leaders across education, health and social care to challenge them about their approaches and ensure an open forum of shared accountability. In turn, these leaders had created their own 'community champions' who they had identified from each neighbourhood. These community champions acted as the leaders' eyes and ears on the ground and as advocates for their work, communicating with those who were hard to reach from within the community itself.

23. Of the 67 local authorities that did have an elected member with specific responsibility for disadvantaged children, only 31 areas included a remit for the birth-to-five age range. Even where these leaders did have a remit for the early years age range, they indicated that this was more focused on school-age provision rather than the full range of providers within the sector.

24. It was generally acknowledged that this skewed focus on school-age provision was led by the national accountability system – measures of attainment by the age of five being the first to show the relative successes or weaknesses of a local authority. Leaders spoken to during 10 of the local authority visits had begun to devise their own system of measuring and recording children's level of development and progress before the age of five and, importantly, across the range of providers accessed by the family.

> One local authority in the north of England had devised its own 'disadvantage dashboard'. This broke down the factors that staff believed important in fulfilling their statutory duty to reduce inequalities. The dashboards operated at both overall local authority level and by individual

ward or neighbourhood. These dashboards included a range of indicators, including the proportions of:

- children who had been immunised
- children deemed eligible for free early education at the age of two, against the proportion actually taking up this offer
- children deemed to be obese at the age of five
- families known to the police, including those being supported through the 'troubled families'[21] agenda
- children reaching a good level of development and those reaching the expected level at the age of five in the prime areas of learning as well as literacy and mathematics.

The collation and analysis of this data allowed the local authority to have an effective overview of its locality and a detailed awareness of the specific 'hot spots' within communities. It allowed different teams of professionals to see how their contribution to the 'disadvantage agenda' could support others and how, together, everyone could make a difference. Analysis of these 'hot spots' acted as both a driver for improvement and an accountability measure for local authority leaders at set points throughout the year. Key to the success of this approach was the open and transparent sharing of data among professionals. While these indicators were total measures of a particular community, underneath this, for those who needed to know, was the specific details of the children and families to target for more intensive support and intervention.

Understand what success looks like

25. All of the leaders spoken to were concerned that a lack of clarity around what success looked like nationally, and the limited data available about the early years, hindered their ability to be more focused in their improvements. They were particularly concerned that they had focused on 'school readiness' as a key indicator of whether their early childhood services were working well, without a clear working definition of what this meant. Equally, leaders were worried that when the early years foundation stage profile becomes non-statutory in September 2016, there would be no mechanism at all for evaluating the effectiveness of their strategy in comparison with their statistical neighbours and nationally.

26. All of the local authorities visited confirmed that the good level of development indicator was used as a key measure when holding services to account, but

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[21] The Troubled Families programme is a UK government scheme under the Department for Communities and Local Government with the stated aim of helping troubled families turn their lives around. These families are characterised by there being no adult in the family working, children not being in school and family members being involved in crime and anti-social behaviour.

there was little appreciation of the wider health and social care elements that potentially contributed to educational attainment. Indeed, many of the leaders spoken to with an educational background lacked insight into other areas of their council's work. This prevented them from knowing what else was available, particularly from health colleagues, to design a more comprehensive approach to how disadvantage could be tackled.

27. Just over a quarter of the local authorities that responded to the questionnaire lacked the systems and processes to drive a quicker pace of improvement. The weakest localities visited had no coordinated, strategic plan to tackle the issues of disadvantage that their children and families faced. In these cases, staff were working 'blind', unaware of the ambition, direction and approaches to be taken, across the local area, to make a real difference.

28. Even where a service-wide, strategic plan was in place, around a third of authorities did not have any specific targets or actions for improving the outcomes of disadvantaged children. While these local areas often set measurable targets for narrowing the attainment gap at the age of seven (end of key stage 1) or 11 (end of key stage 2), few had the same approach to checking their ambitions for children in the early years. In too many authorities, inspectors noted an attitude of complacency among leaders, characterised by the phrase: 'there's plenty of time to catch-up once they are in school'.

29. In the six strongest local authorities visited, there was a real sense of urgency, collaboration, shared understanding and everyone working towards a common goal. Nearly all the providers visited in four of these authorities could articulate the authority's ambitions for addressing the issues of disadvantage, ensuring that more children were ready for school and narrowing the attainment gap by the age of five. In contrast, in nine of the local authorities visited and four followed up with visits to settings and schools, leaders and staff had not seen the local authority's strategic plan for tackling disadvantage in their area.

30. Typically, in these instances, the providers had a disjointed or incoherent approach to tackling the issues faced by the disadvantaged in their communities. In just over two fifths of the pre-school providers and schools visited, inspectors found a reference to improving the outcomes of disadvantaged children within leaders' improvement plans. The majority of these plans were found in schools.

Make sure there are places available for disadvantaged children

31. Local authority leaders spoken to by inspectors universally acknowledged that finding enough early years providers to ensure that there were sufficient places for funded two-year-olds was a constant challenge. Although, nationally, the take-up of funded places for eligible two-year-olds has increased by 10 percentage points in the last year, the take-up in two local areas was still as low as 34%. Leaders in the local authorities visited suggested two main reasons why this might be the case. First, pre-school providers and childminders

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frequently indicated not wanting to decrease the number of fee-paying children to accommodate a greater proportion of funded children. Second, headteachers often mentioned not wanting to take a risk and take a step outside of their comfort zone.

32. Forty-two local authorities that responded to the questionnaire had devised ways to encourage early years providers to provide more funded places. In some local authorities, leaders were thinking of increasingly creative and flexible ways to encourage more headteachers to take funded two-year-olds. In these local areas, leaders knew that, to operate a flexible, free 30-hour model in the immediate future, more early years providers would have to come forward.

> One local authority that submitted a response to the questionnaire cited several measures it had taken to encourage providers to take more disadvantaged two-, three- and four-year-olds. These included:
>
> - a top-up to hourly funding, despite the huge funding pressures this placed on the council
> - renting additional accommodation and space to the private and voluntary sector at below the market rate
> - an offer of free training for staff and the ongoing support of an early years adviser to smooth the transition, especially for schools, to taking children at a younger age
> - a one-off payment (£1,000) to new providers to help with the costs of buying new equipment or reorganising the learning environment
> - a free early education deprivation supplement being paid for each three- and four-year-old who was previously accessing funded two-year-old provision, as an encouragement for settings to continue their admission.

33. In three of the local areas visited, inspectors found schools, pre-schools, childminders and a range of community services, such as Jobcentre Plus, to be working closely together as 'hubs' of support and guidance within their locality. Where these networks were found, there was often a school at the heart of its community, willing to share the additional space they could provide for others to use. In these instances, parents had a choice about the type and duration of early education and care their children received. They also had easy access to a range of adult services and support for themselves. These networks were often replicating the offer previously provided by the local authority through a children's centre.

> One local hub inspectors visited was working to provide a fully flexible offer of early education and care before the roll-out of the 30-hour entitlement in September 2017.
>
> While a school sat at the centre of this hub, as a recognisable building within the community, all of the childminders and pre-school settings

surrounding it agreed to work together for the benefit of children and parents. This included wrap-around care before and after school, as well as support for parents to manage their finances, find a job or cook a healthy and nutritious meal from scratch.

One parent had also started work for the first time as the office administrator's apprentice, having accessed a range of training through the local college to gain additional qualifications.

34. Headteachers of the schools visited often demonstrated a strong moral purpose as leaders of their local community. They frequently showed great ambition and resolve to make a difference, as early and as quickly as possible, for the people living around their school. In contrast, nine of the pre-school settings and 10 of the childminders visited worked on a purely business model of operation – giving places to those who requested the most hours.

35. While nearly all of the pre-school providers and childminders visited had clear and transparent admissions policies, only six of the policies reviewed by inspectors prioritised funded or disadvantaged children, despite their premises being situated in the most deprived areas of each local area. Only one pre-school provider out of the 15 visited stipulated a proportion of their places that they would set aside for the education and care of disadvantaged children. In general, the leaders from most of these pre-school providers told us that they were likely to reduce the number of funded children they accepted into their setting over the coming years as supporting disadvantaged children was no longer financially viable for them.

36. A greater proportion of early years leaders across schools, pre-schools and childminders must stand up and decide to serve the range of families in their community. Without this, the opportunity for disadvantaged children to receive the high quality of education they so vitally need will remain stubbornly inaccessible.

Carry out early assessments and provide advice

37. Early assessment and identification of disadvantaged children and families is crucial if local authorities are to have maximum impact on improving the life chances of those in their community. The first assessments experienced by a child and their family are conducted by health visitors as part of the 'healthy child' programme.[22] This is a national public health programme that sets out the universal offer to children and parents through pregnancy and the first five years of life. In September 2015, local authorities became responsible for public health in their area for children under five.

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[22] 'Healthy child programme: pregnancy and the first 5 years of life', October 2009, Department of Health; www.gov.uk/government/publications/healthy-child-programme-pregnancy-and-the-first-5-years-of-life.

38. The statutory framework for the early years foundation stage[23] also requires that children receive a learning and development check against the areas of learning and characteristics of effective teaching and learning. These checks are completed when the child is around two-and-a-half years old but only where a child is accessing early education.

39. Around a quarter of the local authorities responding to the questionnaire indicated that not all children had received a health check at the age of two. Only two of the 15 local authorities visited specifically recorded whether these children were deemed to be disadvantaged. Seven indicated that all two-year-olds accessing early education were known to have received a learning and development check. Only 12 of the local authorities involved in this survey had three quarters or more of their two-year-olds receiving both a health and a learning and development check.

> One local authority was trialling a fully integrated approach to the health and learning and development checks for two-year-olds. In the past, these two checks had been completed separately by a health visitor and an early years practitioner, with the information being discussed at a separate meeting between the professionals involved. Leaders felt that these meetings were not being scheduled effectively and took place too long after both assessments had been made. They also reflected that it was not an efficient use of time on the part of all those involved and, crucially, did not include the parent in the final joined-up conversation.
>
> To address these concerns, leaders adapted their approach so that both the health visitor and the early years practitioner completed their assessments at the same time, during the same meeting. They found that this supported closer working relationships between health and education and was more useful to parents to see how all aspects of their child's development were interrelated and important. Leaders also recognised that it provided a tool for moderating judgements across remit teams, especially those related to the 'Ages and stages questionnaires, third edition (ASQ3).[24]

40. Even where local authorities had a systematic approach to ensuring that all two-year-olds received a timely health and development check, over two thirds of the providers visited had not seen the outcomes of these checks to enable a better transition to a new setting. In these instances, they completed their own assessments from scratch, wasting valuable time and preventing them from hitting the ground running from the very first day.

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[23] 'The statutory framework for the early years foundation stage', September 2014, Department for Education; www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2.

[24] 'Ages and stages questionnaires, third edition' (ASQ3) is a set of questionnaires used as part of the healthy child programme by health visiting teams. These are completed about a child by parents and discussed as part of the health check conducted at age two to two-and-a-half; www.gov.uk/government/publications/measuring-child-development-at-age-2-to-25-years.

41. This lack of vital information sharing stemmed from a culture of professional distrust across services. Widespread scepticism that different services would carry out the right type of assessment in the right way prevented efficient and effective sharing of vital information. This was the case in 12 of the local authorities visited. Inspectors found that where children and families might be known, assessed and supported by one service, it did not guarantee the timely involvement of others. At its worst, services within the same local authority were found targeting different children and families, or, when a coordinated approach was evident, duplicating assessments unnecessarily, wasting everyone's time and preventing as swift a response as was needed.

> One pre-school provider visited described one child receiving two separate speech and language assessments in the space of a three-week window because different teams within the local authority – education and health – did not know that each were completing the same work. When the child in question was being referred for additional support due to their language difficulties, different departments wanted their own speech and language therapists to complete the assessment. Even when the manager and staff at the setting pointed out the duplication, the assessments were still carried out again as information was not being readily shared for the use of all those working to support the child and their family.

42. Around four fifths of the local authorities responding to the questionnaire did not have a mechanism for assuring the quality of the health and the learning and development checks. In most instances, leaders indicated that this would be crucial in future. However, they had yet to put the systems in place to ensure consistent judgements between one health visitor and another or between health colleagues and those working in education.

> Leaders in one local authority visited made the decision to bring all of their health visitors and early years staff together to share successful approaches to working with parents. This area-wide training day also allowed professionals from different disciplines within children's services to standardise their view of 'typical' development for a two- to three-year-old.
>
> As a starting point, local authority officers used the ASQ3, together with the 'early years outcomes'[25] and a range of health screening tools, such as their own speech and language screener, to agree the developmental milestones they would typically see when conducting their two-year-old checks. This provided a forum for health and education to learn from each other. It was also a first step in securing more professional trust and cooperation when conducting such important first assessments.

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[25] 'Early years outcomes: a non-statutory guide for practitioners and inspectors to help inform understanding of child development through the early years', September 2013, Department for Education; www.foundationyears.org.uk/eyfs-statutory-framework.

43. Only two schools visited had an established policy for requesting and receiving the outcomes of the learning and development check. Even in these schools, the outcomes of the health check, despite the requests of the headteachers, would not be shared due to perceived conflicts about the confidentiality of a child's health data.

> One local authority had a clear focus on transition between pre-school and school settings to ensure that the strong, integrated work they had carried out before a child started school was not wasted when moving into a Nursery (at age three) or a Reception class (at age four).
>
> This local authority had divided the locality into clusters and held regular meetings for leaders and staff to come together and share their expertise and knowledge of children and families. The settings hosted the meetings in rotation, allowing everyone to see in practice how others worked. These meetings always involved an element of moderation to ensure that everyone was judging the same level of competency when observing a child's skills, knowledge and understanding.
>
> When a child and their family were due to transfer to school, this meeting took the form of an official handover, sharing information about likes, dislikes, attitudes and aptitudes, as well as educational achievements to date. As part of this handover, leaders and staff discussed the accumulated evidence. This included the outcomes of the health and learning and development checks, where they had been completed.
>
> At the time of the visit, the local authority was trialling an extension to this approach to include parents. Leaders felt this would further cement positive relationships from the very beginning. It would also provide an opportunity for school leaders to directly request any relevant health information from the family themselves.

44. One local authority visited had set up its own information-sharing protocol, verified by its legal team, to ensure that important information was securely accessible by all those professionals that needed it. Leaders in this council had ensured that the electronic systems for storing information about a child and their family were compatible across different services and accessible only by those professionals who were offering information, support and advice to the family.

Ensure that additional funding for disadvantaged children has the desired impact

45. Research[26] identifies that outcomes can be improved where settings and providers ensure that disadvantaged children:

   ■ have a grasp of the basics (early literacy, language and a sense of number)

   ■ develop the character traits and life skills to become confident contributors to society (resilience, perseverance, dispositions to learn)[27]

   ■ have their material, physical and well-being needs identified and addressed (poverty and early health outcomes, including mental health).

46. Tackling these areas and other issues faced by disadvantaged children and their parents has attracted large investment over recent years. Free, funded early education for two-year-olds was introduced in September 2014. The early years pupil premium, additional funding provided for disadvantaged three- and four-year-olds, was introduced in April 2015. Alongside this, children known to be eligible for free school meals in their Reception Year have also been entitled to the school pupil premium since April 2011. In September 2017, the government plans to offer an additional 15 hours of free early education and care for children of working families. This would bring the free early entitlement to education to 30 hours per week for eligible three- and four-year-olds.

47. These funding streams aim to improve the educational attainment of disadvantaged children – or, in the case of the 30-hour offer, get more parents back into work. They have different eligibility criteria based primarily on the finances of parents. While the Department for Work and Pensions estimates the number of children deemed eligible each year for the two-year-old offer and the early years pupil premium, it is up to each local authority to check eligibility and then direct the associated funding to the early years providers working with each child. These national systems rely on the engagement of eligible parents. First, they need to be aware of what they and their children are entitled to access. Second, they need to have the confidence to apply for and undergo the financial eligibility checks. For disadvantaged parents, this can often be a step too far, especially if they are already fearful of 'the system' or are worried that any eligibility check will take away some of the benefits already afforded to them.

48. Effective local authority leaders adapted national systems to make entitlements easier for parents to access. Leaders in these local areas recognised that bureaucracy got in the way of additional funding getting to those who needed it

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[26] 'Opening doors, breaking barriers: a strategy for social mobility', Department for Education, April 2011; www.gov.uk/government/publications/opening-doors-breaking-barriers-a-strategy-for-social-mobility.

[27] 'High achieving white working class (HAWWC) boys project', Centre for Research in Early Childhood, March 2016; www.crec.co.uk.

most. Even where local authority officers were working well to encourage reluctant parents to apply for a funded place for their two-year-old, they had to begin this process again when the child turned three in order to access funding through the early years pupil premium. This constant form filling and checking, when the financial circumstances of the family had changed little over the year, was deemed to place unnecessary barriers in the way of a child receiving continuous funding and support throughout their early education. Leaders commented to inspectors that the funding mechanisms for early years were not organised in the same way as the school pupil premium. The school pupil premium works on the principle of 'Ever 6'[28] and ensures continuity of support for at least six years of a child's schooling.

> One local authority decided to tackle the issue of low take-up of the various early years funding streams by employing an early years support officer. Leaders were clear that their ambition was for all eligible parents within the borough to access their entitlements, ensuring that every disadvantaged child received the additional support they needed to catch up with their peers.
>
> The early years support officer was tasked with developing effective relationships with parents and providers to raise the profile of what was available and ease the process of application. In this authority, the early years support officer was the conduit for all of the providers in the area, conducting the eligibility checks on their behalf and liaising with managers, staff and parents to simplify the process. The early years support officer also implemented a policy of 'opt-out' rather than 'opt-in' so that once parents were known and eligible for a funded two-year-old place, they would automatically be checked for their entitlement for early years pupil premium up to one year later.
>
> In this way, free, funded education at the age of two was built up at three and four through the early years pupil premium and, at age five, in the Reception Year, the school pupil premium. This ensured three strong and well-supported years in preparation for school.

49. In five of the schools visited, leaders were taking two-year-olds into their early years classes. The leaders of these schools were all highly positive about the advantages of taking such a 'leap of faith' and adjusting their practice for this younger age group. They recognised that it was also another opportunity to influence parents and forge earlier and stronger relationships with the families in their immediate community. When inspectors observed children learning and at play, they found that those currently in Nursery or Reception who had previously accessed a funded place as a two-year-old in their school were operating at least at a level typical for their age. Inspectors particularly noticed

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[28]'Ever 6' refers to the principle of allocating school pupil premium funding to each child who has been registered as eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

that, compared with skill levels at the beginning of their time in funded two-year-old provision, these children were:

- more willing to interact with friends and adults because they had a greater sense of confidence and had formed effective relationships with a wider range of people beyond their immediate family

- demonstrating a better quality of speech and language to enable them to communicate more meaningfully and purposefully with those around them

- developing an inquisitive approach to the world around them, asking a greater range of questions and seeking out new experiences, whether this be new equipment or different environments within the setting

- more settled and comfortable in their surroundings because they had developed a consistent routine and knew what was expected of them in simple 'right and wrong' terms.

50. Twenty-five of the providers visited were unclear about how to use the early years pupil premium when they reported that so many parents refused to allow local authorities to check their eligibility. While take-up of the funded two-year-old offer is increasing, access to this entitlement does not automatically guarantee continuity of additional funding at the age of three, four or five so that children's positive experiences can build on each other and have a cumulative impact.

> One daycare setting we visited was using the early years pupil premium it received to send three members of staff on a specialised training programme to enhance their curriculum and provision for physical development.
>
> Leaders had conducted an audit of children's skills and found that many of the children were not reaching the goals typically expected for their age in this area. This led to a fuller review of what the setting provided and they realised it was a combination of their own weaknesses and understanding in this area, as well as deficits in children's experiences at home – many families living in high-rise flats or small, one-room accommodation, preventing children from having the time and space to develop physically.
>
> This clear rationale, based on sound analysis of children's needs, also led to rigorous accountability. Leaders were keen to measure the impact and were using regular assessment information to see if they were positively influencing a more rapid development of children's skills.

51. Five of the schools visited could not account for the use of school pupil premium money in their Reception classes. While they had accumulated the funds across the school and had plans for its use, these were nearly always targeted at improving statutory assessment outcomes in Years 2 and 6. A common view from headteachers who could not articulate the benefits being provided to early years children was that 'any deficits or weaknesses can be

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fixed further up the school'. Despite an accepted body of research that shows the benefits of supporting disadvantaged children and families during the early years, too many leaders do not see the long-term gains to be had by focusing their monies and attention on the under-fives.

52. Where inspectors found the pupil premium for Reception children to be having maximum impact on narrowing the gap between disadvantaged children and their better off-peers, the additional funding was frequently being used as an accumulated 'lump sum' to invest in staff expertise and training. Money was typically used to enable attendance at professional development events, access the support of an external specialist or hire extra adults to work one-to-one with eligible children. To a lesser extent, schools also used the funding to buy resources and equipment. These purchases ranged from published materials to support the teaching of specific areas of learning, such as reading books where the words can all be sounded out, to the creation of home–school activity packs as a means of boosting a setting's engagement with parents.

> One school visited was using the early years pupil premium and the school pupil premium to employ its own speech and language therapist (SALT) for one day each week.
>
> The mornings were spent assessing and screening children's language difficulties and the afternoons were spent delivering focused and time-limited interventions to address specific children's needs. This also provided valuable professional development opportunities for the wider staff team as they could see the SALT at work, pick up on the strategies being used with children and use some of the techniques themselves at other points in the day, boosting the child's access to therapy and accelerating their progress.
>
> Another school was using its accumulated pupil premium funds to employ its own parent support worker, with a clear remit for supporting, first and foremost, the parents in the early years. This often took the form of drop-in sessions to provide a friendly 'listening ear' but this person was also able to signpost parents to other services within the community. In this way, the school was adapting some of the elements previously provided by the local children's centre for the continued benefit of disadvantaged families.

53. The most successful schools and settings visited were clear about the need to ensure that disadvantaged children received the experiences of the immediate and wider world that other children took for granted. While leaders in these providers valued the additional funding they received for eligible children and families, they also acknowledged that they could make a difference without a cost implication. Importantly, they prioritised a broad and rich curriculum that allowed children to explore art, music, dance, drama and aspects of local heritage. They also ensured sustained periods of time for children to be both physically and intellectually active.

One pre-school provider visited believed strongly that disadvantaged children did not receive the range of experiences at home and in the wider world to support their learning.

As such, it had devised a simple checklist of activities that parents could easily do with their child at home. Leaders called these their '30 things to do' and presented them to parents on colourful posters. Activities included:

- going for a ride on the top deck of a bus
- eating an ice cream cone at the beach
- growing a plant/vegetables from seed
- feeding the ducks/petting a small animal
- blowing bubbles and bursting them before they hit the floor.

On completion of each activity, a special sticker was inserted in a child's achievement record. Leaders also encouraged parents to take photos on their phones so that they could be sent to the setting, printed out and displayed on their 'eye spy' board. This display captured children enjoying their time, both in the setting and beyond. It also acted as a considerable motivator for parents when they were confronted with the adventures of other families and realised their child was not yet represented on the display.

Conclusion

In this survey, inspectors came across strong, insightful leaders bringing services together to support vulnerable children and their families in a way that could potentially change a child's destiny. The best leaders recognised the difference that prioritising early education makes. However, this understanding was by no means widespread. Unfortunately, for too many children, early education was low on the local government's list of priorities – 'they will catch up later' was a phrase inspectors heard far too often. While almost a third of two-year-old children eligible for free early education are not taking up their places, and no one is held to account, the opportunity to directly influence a disadvantaged child's future path is likely to be lost.

Research publications feedback

We are interested in finding out how useful you have found this publication.

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or are you just interested? We would welcome your views and ideas. Complete our survey: www.surveymonkey.com/r/researchpublications.

Methodology

This thematic survey was carried out to investigate further the concerns raised around improving the life chances for disadvantaged children under the age of five, as reported in Ofsted's 2015 early years annual report. The intention of this study was to:

- evaluate how well local authority strategies challenged and supported individual providers within their locality
- identify what works well in narrowing the attainment gap for vulnerable groups.

For the initial phase of this work, inspectors reviewed publically available education and health data. This established that weaknesses existed in the early outcomes of disadvantaged children under the age of five compared to their more affluent peers and that such weaknesses were consistently prevalent across some local authorities. The analysis of the data helped to generate a series of additional research questions:

1. Are systems for identifying, tracking and tracing the progress of disadvantaged children in the early years effective enough to ensure that no child slips through the net?
2. How well does the local authority assess the needs of disadvantaged children and meet their needs in a holistic way?
3. What is the impact of the early years pupil premium and the two-year old additional funding in addressing issues of disadvantage? In general, how well are these and other interventions monitored and evaluated?
4. How do the most effective partnership arrangements between health, education and social care work in reality to address the universal issue of early deprivation and disadvantage?

To answer these questions more fully, Ofsted invited all local authorities in England to complete an online questionnaire. The questionnaire collected information about the strategic direction local authorities were taking to fulfil their statutory obligation to provide early childhood services. Local authority leaders were also asked to share their views of the effectiveness of recent policy initiatives, as they apply in practice on the ground. Responses were received from representatives of 90 local authorities.

The questionnaire responses and initial data work were then used to select the sample for additional fieldwork. Fifteen of the local authorities that responded to the questionnaire were visited for further discussions, including at least one local authority per Ofsted region. Typically, where two local authorities were visited per region, one was selected because it was likely to be facing challenges in improving education and health outcomes for young children. The other authority in each region had indicators that suggested more positive performance. During the visits, inspectors spoke with senior local authority leaders and members of early years services, health and education teams. Inspectors reviewed each local authority's strategic plans for tackling disadvantage in the early years and discussed the impact of chosen approaches with all those concerned.

Additionally, in nine of these local authorities (at least one per region) inspectors also carried out provider visits. Evidence was collected from childminders, pre-school leaders and school leaders to evaluate whether national and local policies, as presented by local authority leaders, were having the desired impact on practice and making a discernible enough difference to disadvantaged children's outcomes. Five of the authorities selected for this part of the investigation had evidence to suggest their disadvantaged children had generally positive outcomes. The other four had indications of more challenging circumstances. In total, 12 childminders, 15 pre-schools and 16 maintained schools with early years provision were visited by inspectors. All 43 of these providers were purposely selected to be located in areas of high deprivation across the nine local authorities. Most were also judged good or outstanding at their last full inspection. This allowed inspectors to focus on what was happening in the best provision in the most deprived areas.

During the provider visits, inspectors spoke with the headteacher, leader or manager and with staff and children. They observed disadvantaged children during their play and evaluated a range of documentation, including the most recent records of children's learning and progress, improvement planning and admissions policies.

Inspectors also gathered further evidence from discussions with representatives of the Youth Sport Trust and York local authority (an early implementer of the 30-hour offer), including a visit to one of their schools.

Annex A: Local authorities visited

Local authority	Ofsted region
Bath and North East Somerset	South West
Central Bedfordshire	East of England
Dorset	South West
Halton	North West
Hartlepool	North East, Yorkshire and Humber
Herefordshire	West Midlands
Lincolnshire	East Midlands
Newham	London
Oxfordshire	South East
Richmond upon Thames	London
Staffordshire	West Midlands
Stockton-On-Tees	North East, Yorkshire and Humber
Thurrock	East of England
West Sussex	South East
Wirral	North West

Annex B: Pre-school settings visited

Provider	Local authority
Chestnut Nursery *	Newham
Childminder	Richmond upon Thames
Childminder	Central Bedfordshire
Childminder *	Oxfordshire
Childminder	Richmond upon Thames
Childminder	Halton
Childminder	Lincolnshire
Childminder	Staffordshire
Childminder	Dorset
Childminder	Halton
Childminder *	Dorset
Childminder	Central Bedfordshire
Childminder	Stockton-On-Tees

Cleverkidz *	Central Bedfordshire
Ditton Early Years Centre *	Halton
Greenacres Den *	Richmond upon Thames
Highflyers Children's Centre *	Stockton-On-Tees
Ingelby Barwick Children's Day Nursery *	Stockton-On-Tees
Jelly Babies Day Nursery *	Dorset
Orchard House Nursery *	Staffordshire
The Ark Nursery *	Staffordshire
Yarnton Pre-School	Oxfordshire
Kids Planet *	Halton
Magical Moments Day Care *	Lincolnshire
Old Station Nursery *	Oxfordshire
Oscar Club *	Central Bedfordshire
Ruskington Rascals Preschool *	Lincolnshire

Annex C: Schools visited

Provider	Local authority
Astmoor Primary School	Halton
Bader Primary School *	Stockton-On-Tees
Bridgtown Primary School	Staffordshire
Carlton Road Academy	Lincolnshire
Churchfields Primary School	Staffordshire
East Oxford Primary School	Oxfordshire
Haxby Road Primary Academy *	York
Isle of Portland Aldridge Community Academy *	Dorset
Meadlands Primary School	Richmond upon Thames
St Gregory's Catholic Primary School	Stockton-On-Tees
St Leonard's Church of England Primary School	Oxfordshire
St Mary's Church of England Primary School	Halton
St Richard's Church of England Primary School *	Richmond upon Thames
St Vincent's Catholic Primary School	Central Bedfordshire
The Priory Witham Academy	Lincolnshire
Tithe Farm Primary School *	Central Bedfordshire

*denotes those registered early years setting and schools that were taking funded two-year-olds at the time of the survey visit.

Annex D: Reducing the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers by the age of five

Local authorities' success, over time, at reducing the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers by the age of five.

Local authority	Region	Proportion of children eligible for FSM achieving a GLD, 2015	Proportion of children not eligible for FSM achieving a GLD, 2015	Percentage point difference between FSM/non-FSM children achieving GLD, 2015	Percentage point change in the FSM/non-FSM difference, 2013-2015
Hammersmith and Fulham	London	68	69	1	-17
Rutland	East Midlands	52	76	24	-10
Hartlepool	North East	57	73	16	-10
Southend-on-Sea	East of England	56	71	15	-9
Sunderland	North East	51	69	18	-8
York	Yorkshire and The Humber	50	71	21	-8
Brighton and Hove	South East	53	67	14	-8
Newcastle upon Tyne	North East	50	64	14	-8
Solihull	West Midlands	51	72	21	-8
Lincolnshire	East Midlands	57	71	14	-8
Bath and North East Somerset	South West	54	71	17	-8
Swindon	South West	56	69	13	-8
Bury	North West	51	68	17	-7
Bexley	London	65	78	13	-7
Warrington	North West	47	71	24	-7
Lancashire	North West	53	70	17	-6

Kirklees	Yorkshire and The Humber	51	68	17	-6
Nottingham	East Midlands	49	61	12	-6
Camden	London	53	66	13	-6
Bedford Borough	East of England	49	62	13	-6
Slough	South East	58	66	8	-6
Trafford	North West	55	75	20	-5
Haringey	London	61	69	8	-5
Wirral	North West	54	73	19	-5
Bracknell Forest	South East	54	75	21	-5
North Somerset	South West	51	74	23	-5
South Tyneside	North East	46	65	19	-5
Salford	North West	53	64	11	-5
Peterborough	East of England	52	63	11	-5
North Lincolnshire	Yorkshire and The Humber	56	73	17	-5
Sandwell	West Midlands	51	60	9	-5
Cheshire West and Chester	North West	50	71	21	-4
Liverpool	North West	46	61	15	-4
Havering	London	53	71	18	-4
Bristol, City of	South West	50	67	17	-4
Coventry	West Midlands	53	66	13	-4
Oldham	North West	45	60	15	-4
Harrow	London	58	71	13	-3
Medway	South East	57	73	16	-3
Sefton	North West	48	69	21	-3
Lewisham	London	71	79	8	-3
Wandsworth	London	57	72	15	-3
Barnet	London	57	70	13	-3
Barnsley	Yorkshire	47	67	20	-3

	and The Humber				
Northamptonshire	East Midlands	50	66	16	-3
Staffordshire	West Midlands	54	72	18	-3
Stoke-on-Trent	West Midlands	54	66	12	-3
Worcestershire	West Midlands	46	69	23	-3
Hackney	London	68	68	0	-3
Surrey	South East	51	74	23	-3
Windsor and Maidenhead	South East	56	75	19	-3
Poole	South West	52	69	17	-3
East Riding of Yorkshire	Yorkshire and The Humber	49	71	22	-3
Birmingham	West Midlands	53	65	12	-3
Barking and Dagenham	London	59	69	10	-3
Southwark	London	64	72	8	-2
Cheshire East	North West	49	70	21	-2
Kingston upon Thames	London	54	74	20	-2
Kent	South East	59	75	16	-2
Milton Keynes	South East	51	69	18	-2
Southampton	South East	54	69	15	-2
Knowsley	North West	50	65	15	-2
Doncaster	Yorkshire and The Humber	51	68	17	-2
Rotherham	Yorkshire and The Humber	52	70	18	-2
Sheffield	Yorkshire and The Humber	52	68	16	-2
Wokingham	South East	50	71	21	-2

Somerset	South West	46	70	24	-2
Gateshead	North East	50	67	17	-2
Middlesbrough	North East	48	62	14	-2
Warwickshire	West Midlands	49	69	20	-2
Islington	London	56	68	12	-2
Bromley	London	53	76	23	-2
Croydon	London	54	67	13	-2
Hounslow	London	54	66	12	-2
Buckinghamshire	South East	47	70	23	-2
Plymouth	South West	48	66	18	-2
Wolverhampton	West Midlands	51	63	12	-1
St. Helens	North West	50	68	18	-1
Newham	London	68	69	1	-1
Greenwich	London	68	79	11	-1
Dudley	West Midlands	43	64	21	-1
Walsall	West Midlands	47	64	17	-1
Essex	East of England	51	70	19	-1
Hertfordshire	East of England	49	71	22	-1
Norfolk	East of England	51	67	16	-1
Enfield	London	56	66	10	-1
Gloucestershire	South West	47	67	20	-1
Redcar and Cleveland	North East	48	72	24	-1
Derbyshire	East Midlands	51	71	20	-1
Merton	London	55	69	14	-1
East Sussex	South East	58	77	19	-1
Durham	North East	48	68	20	-1
Leeds	Yorkshire and The Humber	44	66	22	0

Darlington	North East	53	70	17	0
Northumberland	North East	44	68	24	0
Rochdale	North West	43	60	17	0
Bradford	Yorkshire and The Humber	49	65	16	0
Wakefield	Yorkshire and The Humber	46	68	22	0
Thurrock	East of England	61	74	13	0
Oxfordshire	South East	45	68	23	0
Cornwall	South West	46	65	19	0
Tameside	North West	43	61	18	0
Telford and Wrekin	West Midlands	52	70	18	0
West Sussex	South East	44	65	21	0
Brent	London	59	64	5	0
Ealing	London	61	71	10	1
Stockport	North West	47	71	24	1
North East Lincolnshire	Yorkshire and The Humber	56	69	13	1
Waltham Forest	London	62	68	6	1
South Gloucestershire	South West	55	78	23	1
Westminster	London	55	69	14	1
Dorset	South West	46	70	24	1
Stockton-on-Tees	North East	38	64	26	1
Halton	North West	41	60	19	1
Luton	East of England	52	62	10	1
Blackpool	North West	47	65	18	1
Hampshire	South East	49	75	26	1
Kingston Upon Hull, City of	Yorkshire and The Humber	51	63	12	2
Cumbria	North West	41	66	25	2

Derby	East Midlands	44	63	19	2
Lambeth	London	50	67	17	2
Wiltshire	South West	41	69	28	2
North Tyneside	North East	44	68	24	2
Manchester	North West	52	65	13	2
Leicestershire	East Midlands	39	65	26	2
Hillingdon	London	49	67	18	2
North Yorkshire	Yorkshire and The Humber	45	69	24	2
Leicester	East Midlands	42	53	11	2
Kensington and Chelsea	London	54	68	14	3
Bolton	North West	42	65	23	3
Central Bedfordshire	East of England	40	65	25	3
Cambridgeshire	East of England	43	68	25	3
Devon	South West	53	74	21	3
Suffolk	East of England	49	71	22	3
Tower Hamlets	London	56	64	8	3
Sutton	London	46	66	20	3
Nottinghamshire	East Midlands	41	68	27	4
Herefordshire	West Midlands	40	68	28	4
Redbridge	London	51	69	18	4
Bournemouth	South West	52	74	22	4
Wigan	North West	41	68	27	4
Reading	South East	53	70	17	4
Isle of Wight	South East	56	74	18	4
Richmond upon Thames	London	45	73	28	5
Portsmouth	South East	56	72	16	5

Shropshire	West Midlands	45	70	25	6
Calderdale	Yorkshire and The Humber	43	69	26	6
West Berkshire	South East	45	73	28	7
Blackburn with Darwen	North West	40	60	20	10
Torbay	South West	50	68	18	-

[1] Figures for Isles of Scilly and City of London suppressed due to small numbers. Figures for Torbay not published in 2013.

Annex E: Two-year-old take-up in 2015 by local authority

Local authority	Region	Percentage of eligible two-year-olds taking up a funded place		Percentage point change 2015-2016
		2015	2016	
Isles of Scilly	South West	0	75	75
East Riding of Yorkshire	Yorkshire and the Humber	66	94	28
Swindon	South West	54	81	27
Newham	London	31	55	24
Solihull	West Midlands	49	71	22
Bath and North East Somerset	South West	67	88	21
Bury	North West	58	79	21
Bedford Borough	East of England	52	72	20
Stockton-on-Tees	North East	58	78	20
Havering	London	48	67	19
Darlington	North East	57	76	19
Dorset	South West	66	85	19
Halton	North West	59	78	19
Cambridgeshire	East of England	60	79	19
Rutland	East Midlands	49	67	18
Poole	South West	61	79	18
Gateshead	North East	58	76	18
Sefton	North West	68	86	18
Worcestershire	West Midlands	60	76	16
Camden	London	41	57	16
Lancashire	North West	53	69	16
Lambeth	London	43	59	16
Bolton	North West	50	66	16
North Tyneside	North East	66	81	15
Hounslow	London	46	61	15
Windsor and Maidenhead	South East	50	65	15
Dudley	West Midlands	45	60	15

Cheshire West and Chester	North West	66	81	15
Milton Keynes	South East	59	74	15
Suffolk	East of England	68	82	14
Sutton	London	50	64	14
Blackburn with Darwen	North West	57	71	14
Newcastle upon Tyne	North East	76	90	14
Buckinghamshire	South East	68	82	14
Lewisham	London	48	62	14
Devon	South West	65	79	14
Southampton	South East	52	66	14
Southwark	London	54	68	14
Northamptonshire	East Midlands	46	60	14
Croydon	London	38	52	14
South Gloucestershire	South West	67	80	13
Telford and Wrekin	West Midlands	64	77	13
Wigan	North West	68	81	13
Middlesbrough	North East	69	82	13
Tameside	North West	59	72	13
Kent	South East	52	65	13
Doncaster	Yorkshire and the Humber	60	73	13
Leicester	East Midlands	45	58	13
Sandwell	West Midlands	42	55	13
Central Bedfordshire	East of England	70	82	12
Cheshire East	North West	65	77	12
Nottinghamshire	East Midlands	57	69	12
Thurrock	East of England	58	70	12
Islington	London	53	65	12
Durham	North East	62	74	12
Salford	North West	61	73	12
Southend-on-Sea	East of England	51	63	12
Barking and Dagenham	London	63	74	11
Rochdale	North West	68	79	11
St. Helens	North West	61	72	11

Hertfordshire	East of England	57	68	11
Westminster	London	43	54	11
Ealing	London	49	60	11
Hampshire	South East	60	71	11
Northumberland	North East	65	76	11
Bristol, City of	South West	50	61	11
Leeds	Yorkshire and the Humber	56	67	11
Slough	South East	44	55	11
Warrington	North West	83	93	10
Stockport	North West	79	89	10
Waltham Forest	London	47	57	10
Isle of Wight	South East	58	68	10
Sunderland	North East	59	69	10
Redcar and Cleveland	North East	67	77	10
Calderdale	Yorkshire and the Humber	72	82	10
North Lincolnshire	Yorkshire and the Humber	68	78	10
North Yorkshire	Yorkshire and the Humber	63	73	10
Walsall	West Midlands	53	63	10
Somerset	South West	60	70	10
Haringey	London	40	50	10
Trafford	North West	83	92	9
South Tyneside	North East	73	82	9
Warwickshire	West Midlands	68	77	9
Plymouth	South West	80	89	9
Brighton and Hove	South East	79	88	9
North Somerset	South West	68	77	9
Wolverhampton	West Midlands	57	66	9
Essex	East of England	59	68	9
Harrow	London	47	56	9
Barnet	London	37	46	9
Birmingham	West Midlands	49	58	9
Liverpool	North West	54	63	9

Brent	London	45	54	9
Leicestershire	East Midlands	59	67	8
East Sussex	South East	68	76	8
Blackpool	North West	59	67	8
North East Lincolnshire	Yorkshire and the Humber	68	76	8
Enfield	London	54	62	8
Hammersmith and Fulham	London	43	51	8
Oldham	North West	54	62	8
Tower Hamlets	London	26	34	8
Herefordshire	West Midlands	55	63	8
Cornwall	South West	71	78	7
Hillingdon	London	42	49	7
Manchester	North West	64	71	7
Surrey	South East	55	62	7
West Berkshire	South East	51	58	7
Luton	East of England	55	62	7
Kingston upon Thames	London	71	77	6
Wiltshire	South West	71	77	6
Cumbria	North West	78	84	6
Hartlepool	North East	71	77	6
Kirklees	Yorkshire and the Humber	66	72	6
Kingston Upon Hull, City of	Yorkshire and the Humber	66	72	6
Lincolnshire	East Midlands	68	74	6
Bromley	London	63	69	6
Wakefield	Yorkshire and the Humber	67	73	6
Portsmouth	South East	64	70	6
Bournemouth	South West	72	78	6
Nottingham	East Midlands	52	58	6
Shropshire	West Midlands	74	79	5
Wirral	North West	66	71	5
West Sussex	South East	62	67	5

Derby	East Midlands	63	68	5
Greenwich	London	49	54	5
Torbay	South West	61	66	5
Stoke-on-Trent	West Midlands	59	64	5
Hackney	London	42	47	5
Redbridge	London	66	70	4
Barnsley	Yorkshire and the Humber	68	72	4
City of London	London	40	44	4
Derbyshire	East Midlands	57	61	4
Rotherham	Yorkshire and the Humber	72	76	4
Gloucestershire	South West	62	66	4
York	Yorkshire and the Humber	65	68	3
Peterborough	East of England	64	67	3
Kensington and Chelsea	London	52	55	3
Oxfordshire	South East	68	71	3
Staffordshire	West Midlands	74	76	2
Merton	London	53	55	2
Sheffield	Yorkshire and the Humber	59	61	2
Wokingham	South East	54	56	2
Wandsworth	London	33	34	1
Bexley	London	55	55	0
Norfolk	East of England	72	72	0
Coventry	West Midlands	64	63	-1
Bracknell Forest	South East	69	67	-2
Knowsley	North West	68	66	-2
Reading	South East	65	63	-2
Richmond upon Thames	London	85	80	-5
Medway	South East	71	66	-5
Bradford	Yorkshire and the Humber	71	65	-6

Annex F: Survey monkey questions from local authority questionnaire

1) Local authority:

2) Please tell us your role at the local authority:

   a. DCS

   b. Senior Leader

   c. Team Leader

   d. Improvement Officer/Adviser/Consultant

   e. Research Officer

   f. Data Analyst

   g. Other (please specify)

3) Do you have a working definition that guides you in identifying 'disadvantaged' children aged 0-5 in your local authority area?

4) Please provide details of your definition.

5) How well developed would you say this system is for identifying all disadvantaged children aged 0–5 in the local authority?

6) What data do you regularly collect on these children? (Tick all that apply)

   a. Pupil characteristics

   b. Parental background

   c. Parental employment

   d. Take up of two-year old funding

   e. Attendance at early years setting

   f. Type of early years setting attended

   g. Other   If 'Other' selected please specify:

7) Approximately, how frequently is this data collected? (select one option)

    a. Daily

    b. Weekly

    c. Monthly

    d. Every three months

    e. Every six months

    f. Yearly

8) Does your local authority have an early years improvement team?

9) How many people are there in your early years improvement team?

10) Briefly outline the role and responsibilities of this team/person.

11) Is there an elected member of your cabinet with responsibility for disadvantaged children?

12) Does the elected member have a specific remit for disadvantaged children in the early years (0–5)?

13) Do you have a strategic plan to tackle issues of disadvantage in the early years in your local authority area?

14) Who has contributed to this plan? (please tick all that apply)

    a. Elected members of the council

    b. DCS/Senior Leadership

    c. Early years improvement team

    d. Primary improvement team

    e. Health team, including health visitors

    f. Social care team, including early help/prevention

    g. Troubled families team

    h. Headteachers

    i. Owners/managers/leaders of early years settings

    j. Childminders

    k. Children's Centre Leaders

    l. Parents

    m.   Community groups

    n. Charity groups

15) Does your plan include reference to disadvantaged children in the following provision or circumstances? (please tick all that apply)

    a. Infant/first/primary schools

    b. Nursery schools

    c. Pre-schools (PVI)

    d. Childminders

    e. Children's centres

    f. Early help, prevention and intervention

    g. The troubled families agenda

    h. Children looked after

    i. Children in need

    j. Disability and special educational needs

16) Briefly describe how your local authority ensures there are sufficient places for funded two-year-olds?

17) Does your local authority offer any incentive for providers, including schools, to take funded two-year-olds?

18) Briefly describe how you have incentivised providers to increase the number and take-up of funded places for two-year-olds.

19) How much additional funding has the local authority received in relation to the early years pupil premium since April 2015?

20) Has this funding been allocated directly to (tick all that apply):

    a. Schools

    b. Pre-schools (private, voluntary and independent settings)

    c. Childminders

21) Have you taken an integrated approach to the two-year-old health and development check?

22) Briefly describe how you have integrated the health and learning and development aspects of the check.

23) Do you collect data on the percentage of two-year-olds who have received a health and/or learning and development check?

24) Approximately what percentage of all two-year-olds in your local authority had received one of the following by December 2015?

    a. Health check

    b. Learning and development check

    c. Integrated check

25) Does the LA have any innovative approaches to tackling the issue of disadvantage in the early years that Ofsted could share with others as good practice?

26) Briefly describe one innovative approach you are taking to address issues of disadvantage for children up to the age of five in your locality.

27) Can Ofsted contact you to discuss your responses further?

28) Please provide your contact number and e-mail address below:

Further reading

Ofsted publications

Are you ready? Good practice in school readiness, Ofsted, April 2014;
www.gov.uk/government/publications/are-you-ready-good-practice-in-school-readiness

Common inspection framework: education, skills and early years, Ofsted, August 2015; www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-inspection-framework-education-skills-and-early-years-from-september-2015

Early years inspection handbook, Ofsted, August 2015;
www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015

Ofsted's early years report 2015, Ofsted, July 2015;
www.gov.uk/government/collections/ofsteds-early-years-report-2015

Teaching and play in the early years – a balancing act?, Ofsted, July 2015;
www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-and-play-in-the-early-years-a-balancing-act

The quality of assessment for children in need of help, Ofsted, August 2015;
www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-in-need-and-child-protection-quality-of-early-help-and-social-work-assessments

Unseen children: access and achievement 20 years on, June 2013;
www.gov.uk/government/publications/unseen-children-access-and-achievement-20-years-on

Ofsted videos and good practice

A number of videos focusing on the early years can be found at
www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLLq-zBnUkspOy47yEqr9-i8NLelW0qvCN

Examples of good practice can be found at
www.gov.uk/government/collections/ofsted-examples-of-good-practice-in-early-years

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Pupil Premium Select Committee

Biography

Richard Hawkins, Headteacher, Green Park Community Primary School

Richard Hawkins is the Headteacher of Green Park Community Primary School. Green Park CP School is a 2 form entry Primary school located in the heart of a large social-housing estate. The estate constitutes a super-output area for deprivation, with 2/3 of the children entitled to Free School Meals. The school is known across the county and nationally for its success with disadvantaged children and was recently awarded the grade of "Outstanding" in all areas from Ofsted. Richard and senior leaders work with schools across Kent providing support and guidance, and the school also hosts visits from schools from far and wide, keen to see the secrets of our success. Green Park is also part of an Erasmus project, together with schools in Spain and Italy, researching ways to raise attainment for migrant pupils.

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Pupil Premium Select Committee

Hearing 4

Friday 17th November 2017

Witness Guide for Members

Below are suggested themes and questions. They have been provided in advance to the witnesses to allow them to prepare for the types of issues that Members may be interested to explore. All Members are welcome to ask these questions or pose additional ones to the witnesses via the Committee Chairman.

Themes and Questions

Richard Hawkins, Headteacher, Green Park Community Primary School

- Please introduce yourself and provide an overview of the roles and responsibilities that your post involves.

- Please provide an outline of Pupil Premium allocation in your school. How do you track what Pupil Premium funding is spent on? How do you evaluate the impact of Pupil Premium funding in your school?

- What is the role of senior leaders and governors in your school in promoting the Pupil Premium and its benefits?

- To what extent has Pupil Premium funding contributed to closing the attainment gap between vulnerable children and their peers in your outstanding school?

- In what ways – if any - do you encourage parents and carers to apply for Free School Meals if they are eligible?

- In your opinion, what strategies and interventions should Kent schools implement to maximise the impact of the Pupil Premium and to narrow the attainment gap?

- What can KCC do, if anything, to improve the effectiveness of the Pupil Premium in closing the attainment gap between vulnerable children and their peers?

- Are there any other issues, in relation to the review, that you wish to raise with the Committee?

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Pupil Premium Select Committee

Biography

Sue Nicholson, Executive Headteacher, The Brent Primary School

Sue Nicholson is the Executive Headteacher of The Brent Primary School. The Brent is an over-subscribed Primary school near Dartford, with a current role of 480 pupils aged 4-11.

The school's bespoke 'Ignite' curriculum - along with their strong ethos promoting spiritual, moral, social and cultural development – ensures that pupils thrive holistically within the inclusive, warm and caring 'Brent family'.

In July 2017, 81% Year 6 pupils transferred to secondary school with Expected Standard in combined reading, writing and maths (National 61%, The Brent disadvantaged pupils 73.3%). In March 2017, Ofsted judged The Brent Primary School to be "Outstanding" in all areas.

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Pupil Premium Select Committee

Hearing 4

Friday 17th November 2017

Witness Guide for Members

Below are suggested themes and questions. They have been provided in advance to the witnesses to allow them to prepare for the types of issues that Members may be interested to explore. All Members are welcome to ask these questions or pose additional ones to the witnesses via the Committee Chairman.

Themes and Questions

Sue Nicholson, Executive Headteacher, The Brent Primary School

- Please introduce yourself and provide an outline of the roles and responsibilities that your post involves.

- What is the main focus of Pupil Premium funding allocation in your school? How do you track what Pupil Premium funding is spent on? How do you monitor the impact of Pupil Premium funding in your school?

- What is the role of senior leaders and governors in your school in promoting the Pupil Premium and its benefits?

- Please discuss the impact of Pupil Premium funding on the school's outstanding outcomes. To what extent has this funding contributed to closing the attainment gap between vulnerable children and their peers in your school?

- In what ways – if any - do you encourage parents and carers to apply for Free School Meals if they are eligible?

- In your opinion, what strategies and interventions should Kent schools implement to maximise the impact of the Pupil Premium and to narrow the attainment gap?

- What can KCC do, if anything, to improve the effectiveness of the Pupil Premium in closing the attainment gap between vulnerable children and their peers?

- Are there any other issues, in relation to the review, that you wish to raise with the Committee?

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Learning Together About Learning

Putting sound early years principles into practice

A DfE funded project to support the introduction of Early Years Pupil Premium

Project report

April 2016

Contents

Executive Summary

Early Education applied for a VCS grant from Department for Education (DfE) in order to trial ways of accelerating the sector's learning about how to make effective use of Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP). The Learning Together About Learning (LTAL) Project was funded for the financial year 2015-16. As this was the first year of the funding, there was a steep learning curve for both settings and local authorities and processes were evolving throughout the year.

The project aimed to support the effective introduction of EYPP funding in its first year of operation through local networks where practitioners could share their learning about what worked, and a national resource bank of case studies and materials.

Over the course of the year, the networks each developed their own plans for activity to support participating settings with developing their EYPP plans. Settings collected data both to support their own planning and to provide evidence for the project about how EYPP was impacting children's progress. Nationally, resources and case studies were developed for the benefit of all settings.

Settings inevitably found that there were teething problems with the administrative processes during these early stages, and there were therefore delays in accessing and using the funding and identifying the eligible children. Nevertheless, practitioners made progress in using monitoring data to guide their decision making about EYPP spending, trialled different approaches to using the funding, and developed their knowledge and confidence about making and evidencing effective practice. Data from the project was formative, but indications were that EYPP funding can make a difference to children's outcomes, and that practitioners who engaged in the networks benefited from shared learning to develop their professional practice.

The project was also able to share information among local authorities to showcase what was working well in supporting the implementation of the funding.

The project report makes a number of recommendations for practitioners, local authorities and government (see Recommendations section below).

Background to the project

Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) funding was introduced in April 2015, following a small pilot in January 2015, in order to help close the achievement gap between the most disadvantaged children and their peers. This complements the Pupil Premium funding which has been in place in schools since 2011. Funding for the first year was paid to providers at a rate of 53p per hour for each eligible 3- and 4-year old (approximately £300 per year). As the project was taking place during the first year of the programme, there was an inevitable process of bedding in new systems for both settings and local authorities, and the project was able to contribute to learning related to those processes, as well as to helping develop good practice in using EYPP funding in itself.

Early Education is a national charity with a focus on ensuring all children, but especially the most disadvantaged, have access to high quality early education. We therefore fully supported the introduction of EYPP as a means of supporting a focus on the learning of the most disadvantaged children, and closing the gap in achievement between them and their more advantaged peers through high quality early childhood education. We wished to use our expertise to help share learning within the sector about making effective use of EYPP. We also wanted to help other parts of the sector access the well-established expertise of maintained nursery schools in supporting disadvantaged children and families.

We applied for a VCS grant from Department for Education (DfE) in order to trial ways of accelerating the sector's learning about how to make effective use of EYPP. The Learning Together About Learning (LTAL) Project was funded for the financial year 2015-16.

Aims and objectives

The aims of the project were to improve outcomes for children by:

- supporting less experienced practitioners and settings to develop and articulate coherent and sustainable plans for effective use of EYPP funding
- facilitating settings/schools in working together when appropriate to make best use of EYPP funding eg joint commissioning of staff training or arrangements for shared access to a qualified teacher
- creating self-sustaining networks of practitioners which would provide peer-to-peer support and share knowledge about effective approaches to closing the achievement gap between disadvantaged children and their peers, both during the period of project funding, and afterwards
- enabling settings to develop joint bids to EEF for more in-depth trialling and evaluation of a range of approaches to closing the achievement gap

Our objectives were to:
- build on existing infrastructure where possible to develop an initial phase of c.15 local peer-to-peer networks facilitated by nursery schools to encourage providers to share ideas, expertise and resources and identify areas for collaborative working
- map further need/demand for local networks

- hold 6 regional workshops for 600+ practitioners
- create a database of contacts interested in EYPP with email updates reaching at least 5000 settings
- make resources available online to exemplify successful approaches
- gather data via networks on impact of EYPP and improved outcomes for children

Project activities

Local networks

The project started with 15 networks across England. Initially each network was led by a maintained nursery school with an Ofsted rating of Outstanding. As the project progressed, three networks dropped out due to conflicting pressures on the lead institution. Two replacements were found, including one network made up solely of PVIs, which enabled us to trial a PVI-led model. The third network was not replaced as it dropped out too late for another network to become established, and the lead institution remained for the dissemination stage.

Maintained nursery schools were initially chosen in order to capitalise on their expertise in closing the gap for the most disadvantaged children, and due to the role they play in their locality as beacons of good practice and dissemination hubs. In particular, head teachers are experienced at collecting and analysing data, which allowed for sharing of expertise with PVI managers who were sometimes less experienced in this area.

Some of the networks used links that were already in place, others developed new collaborations and some developed new activities building on work done in previous projects. Each network initially had a minimum of 10 participants and some had as many as 30. Participating settings came from both the maintained and the PVI sectors. This meant that the project involved around 150 settings (numbers varied over the course of the project as settings came in and out of networks). Some networks were well supported by the local authority and the participants went on to be EYPP champions locally.

The local networks were intended to act as communities of practice to allow practitioners to share and enhance their learning about using EYPP, based around the principles of sound Early Years pedagogy. This was followed through by each network having autonomy to explore the aspect of pedagogy that was most relevant to its own members. Each network had a budget to support this. Networks met regularly for training and networking. The training took a range of formats including visits to other settings, input from a consultant, input from the lead or network participant and opportunities to share challenges and successes. Areas the networks focused on were meeting the needs of individual children as well as cohorts of children, supporting families, developing quality interactions and reflective practice, data collection and analysis, developing EYPP plans and developing collaborations with other settings in their locality. There was a focus on sustainability from the outset in order for these collaborations to continue after the project had finished.

National resources

The time of the project lead was split between supporting local network activity, collecting feedback, case studies and good practice from around the sector and producing support materials for use by practitioners. These included a series of webpages with useful information and links and regular newsletters to disseminate learning from the project and other useful resources and case studies. At the end of the project a short booklet was produced giving practical tips based on the learning from the project. All these materials can be found at www.early-education.org.uk/eypp

We had originally envisaged trying to develop a database of expertise to allow practitioners to find settings or consultants able to assist them with areas of work they wished to develop with EYPP. However, it became clear that settings felt they were still at a very early stage of the journey, and not yet ready to offer themselves as experts. Although the project identified useful case studies where groups of settings were working with consultants, most settings were clearly not yet at the stage of grouping together to commission in outside expertise. We therefore did not pursue this idea further at this stage.

Dissemination

The project culminated with six dissemination events in Newcastle, Stockport, Plymouth, Cambridge, Birmingham and London. The areas were chosen to ensure there was a geographical spread across the country, close to or in areas where high rates of EYPP funding were expected. Each event had a similar format – a keynote, followed by networking opportunities and sharing of knowledge from the local network participants, and a drawing together of trends from across the project. The keynote focused on an element of practice that made a difference to sound pedagogy and improving outcomes for young children and their families. The keynotes were on quality interactions, attachment and resilience and further refining parental engagement. Practitioners who had been part of other projects were also invited to share their learning at these events, such as groups from Rotherham and Gateshead. The audience was made up of practitioners from both the maintained and PVI sectors and local authority personnel.

Methodology for evaluating the project

We used the following methods to evaluate the success of the project.

Practitioner knowledge and confidence

Practitioners were surveyed using a questionnaire at the start of the project (summer term), and measured again using a follow-up questionnaire at the end of the project. Both project participants and others from the sector were able to respond to questionnaires.

There were 512 responses to the initial online survey, from practitioners in 152 different local authority areas. The end of survey data was collected via an online survey was project (148 responses) and a paper survey which was included in the evaluation form at the dissemination events (59 responses from network participants,

245 from attendees not part of a network). The end of project surveys asked practitioners to comment retrospectively for when EYPP was introduced compared to at the time of the survey for a number of questions as neither the individual respondents nor the balance between project and non-project participants was constant between the two data points.

Qualitative data was also gathered from reports from the local network leads, and discussions with practitioners, local network leads, local authority contacts and others.

Outcomes for children

As a means of tracking children's progress, and identifying differences between those eligible for EYPP and those who were not, settings were asked to collect data at intervals and to measure the progress made between these points in relation to closing the gap. Network leads worked with settings to raise awareness of the need for eligible children to make accelerated progress, in order for the gap to close. As most settings use Development Matters as a benchmark for assessments, this was used as the basis for the data sheet which was developed in conjunction with the leads to create a shared format for data collection for the project.

There was a need for consistency across all the networks in order to be able to aggregate data. In addition to having the data sheet and guidance, moderation activities took place on both a local and national level. These activities involved professional dialogue, sharing of records/observations and discussing expectations in addition to other activities. These activities took place online as well as face to face. Because of the limited timescale and the size of the dataset, additional qualitative data were gathered to add to the evidence base.

The difference in outcomes for children was measured via collection of assessment data from participating settings at the mid-point of the autumn term, and the mid-point of the spring term. The quantitative data on the number of steps of progress made by children over the term was supplemented by qualitative feedback from settings.
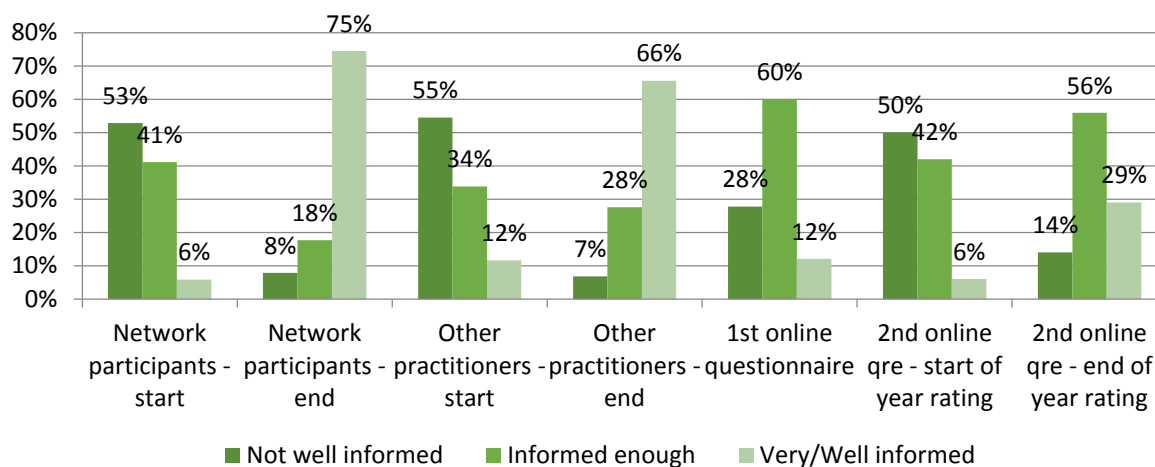
Findings

Practitioner confidence

The start and end of project surveys included questions to ascertain the confidence levels of practitioners. The follow-up surveys asked practitioners to rate their confidence levels retrospectively for when EYPP was introduced compared to at the time of the survey.

Practitioners sense of being well informed increased more for those involved in the project (ie in a local network) than among practitioners who were not part of a local network, with 75% feeling well or very well informed at the end of the project compared to 66% of other practitioners (29% compared to 19% feeling very well informed). Confidence among those who attended the dissemination events was also higher than those who responded to the online questionnaire.

7

Figure 1: How well informed did practitioners feel about EYPP, at start of year (April 2015) and end (March 2016)

During the course of the year most practitioners have developed their knowledge about EYPP, but the findings suggest that those who were involved with the local networks were able to develop their knowledge more than those who were not, and possibly also that those who were involved in dissemination events also benefited compared to those who did not.

Qualitative feedback has shown that levels of confidence among practitioners have grown due to being more familiar with expectations as settings have had three cycles of deciding how to use their EYPP funding. The fact that some of the network settings have been inspected by Ofsted has also helped build knowledge and confidence about Ofsted's expectations as the experiences were shared locally and at the dissemination events. The networking opportunities allowed the participants to rehearse the reasoning behind their decision-making. They got to hear how others were deciding to spend their funding and this helped them to refine their ideas.

Uses of funding

We found that EYPP funding was being spent in a wide range of ways, examples of which were regularly reported in the LTAL newsletters. Examples were collected from the local networks, from other contacts within the sector, from the participants Working alongside a consultant to develop practice in relation to engaging parents

Examples of how settings have used funding
- Release time for a member of staff to be an EYPP champion
- Working alongside a consultant to develop practice in relation to engaging parents
- Professional library to enable staff to refine their pedagogical thinking.
- Development of a loan library of home learning packs
- Speech and language sessions for parents
- Additional language based experiences in small groups, supported by a SENCO
- Enrichment activities such as a visit to a wildlife park

- Additional forest school provision
- Artist in residence
- Support materials covering topics such as toilet training, developing early language
- Video cameras so quality of practice can be monitored and developed, children can record their own stories etc.
- Transition focus to include extra visits, resources such as school uniforms, photographs of the new environment, postcards to the children in the holidays so they feel held in mind etc.

Case studies: using EYPP funding

One setting looked at the needs and interests of their EYPP children and decided that having more opportunities to take part in forest school experiences would benefit this group in relation to making relationships, language development and developing self-confidence and self-awareness. The children were given an extra forest school session. The funding paid for cover for the staff members needed to make this happen. The children benefitted as well as a less experienced staff member who was able to develop a deeper understanding of forest school pedagogy.

Another setting used funding to support having an EYPP champion. The champion was responsible for ensuring all the staff were tracking the progress of the EYPP children. They analysed the trends and shared these with other staff who were then encouraged to develop plans together so that they all had ownership. The champion also reviewed policies etc with this group of children as a focus. In addition they supported the key person to support the families of these children as necessary. Their role was to champion this group of children in meetings etc to ensure their progress was focussed upon. This was an opportunity for career progression as well as giving staff a further information point.

Settings within one network filmed and used this to highlight successful child adult interactions. They reported that children were having more beneficial interactions as staff gained a better understanding of how to scaffold learning rather than direct it.

The online survey conducted at the start of the project (between May and October 2015) found that 38% of respondents did not have plans in place for how to spend their funding. This had decreased to 18% by the online survey at the end of the project (February-March 2016). Evaluation forms completed by those attending the dissemination events showed even greater progress, with virtually all attendees having developed ideas about how they were going to spend the funding (Figure 2).

The initial survey had found that practitioners' plans when first aware of EYPP were to spend it directly on provision for children (the main choice for 40% of respondents). This may partly be explained by comments from practitioners that they felt comfortable discussing the benefits of spending funds on provision, but less confident in justifying the funding in relation to staff development.

Figure 2 shows that while settings have indeed primarily spent their funding on enhancing provision to meet the needs of their EYPP children by purchasing equipment or resources, respondents at the dissemination events were making choices that were spread across all three areas, with almost as many settings using funding for staff training and professional development as on provision for children. Those who chose to focus on training and development reported that it provided a legacy and enabled practitioners to look at their practice and develop it as a result. Comments at the dissemination events also suggested that settings were beginning to feel that opportunities to develop staff knowledge would be more beneficial than spending the funding on developing provision, unless there was a gap in provision that the setting felt needed closing.

Figure 2: planned and actual focus of EYPP spending

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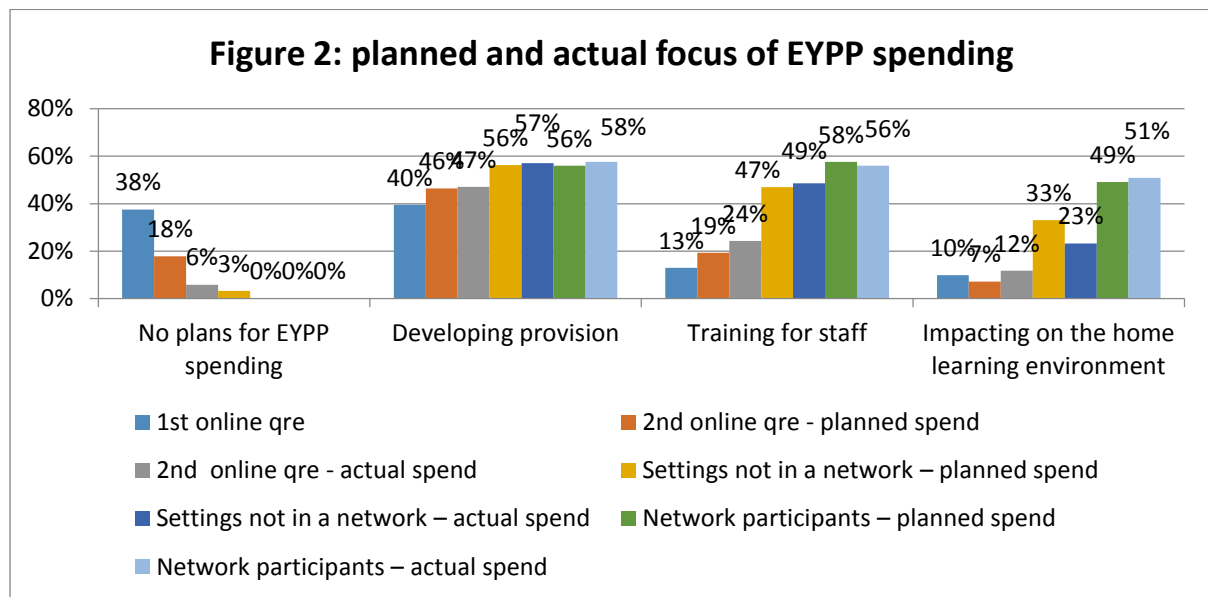
Case study: training

A setting organised for a speech and language therapist to train the staff team. Following this training practitioners reported that they felt more confident in supporting their children's language development and were giving children more time to process information and to engage in child led conversations.

Sessions with a consultant that focussed on refining parental engagement, led to staff reporting that they looked at procedures etc from the perspective of the families as well as the child.

Case study: provision

A setting identified that they needed a wider range of dual language texts and so a selection were purchased using some of the EYPP funding. The main focus was on the languages spoken by the children who were eligible for EYPP funding.

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All the surveys asked about including families in the decision making processes in relation to EYPP, and in the survey responses many settings identified this as an area for development in future rather than a current focus. This could explain why

the figures for spending the funding on impacting on the home learning environment have been lower than the other possibilities at the start. Some networks focussed specifically on impacting on the home learning environment, for example, in the development of lending libraries and the work on making themselves less hard to reach for families, which may explain why this figure was higher among network participants than among practitioners not involved in a project. Maintained nursery schools are very experienced in working with families and were able to share this expertise with network participants.

Case study: working with parents

One network worked with a consultant. The focus for them was on finding ways of engaging with families who were finding it hard to engage with the staff at each setting across the network.

Staff recorded an example where the impact had been particularly notable. At the beginning of the project the mother avoided the staff at the nursery. The staff and especially the key person made lots of effort to be available to the mother. The mother subsequently started to send photographs of her child engaged in learning at home to the setting, she volunteered to go on trips and support in the sessions. The setting plan to ask her to apply if an opening occurs for an unqualified member of staff. This difference came about after a three week period of focused effort on the part of the setting and the key person. The mother was made to feel valued and accepted as part of the learning community as a result of this the child benefitted from an improved home learning environment and felt that they and their mother was more accepted. This in turn led to the child developing a closer bond with their key person as well as children in the setting.

The focus of the networks has been on training both on a network level and on a setting level. Network participants have been sharing opportunities for CPD with each other which has helped to consolidate professional relationships. Some settings have started to open up some of these training opportunities to families as well as staff.

Use of data within settings

The networks used the data tracking formats developed within the project (see www.early-education.org.uk/measuring-impact-eypp-funding) as a starting point to ensure the spending was targeted at the needs of eligible children. The formats supported practitioners to be able to identify the needs of the EYPP children. This enabled staff to target the funding to address either an area of need for a child or the setting as a whole.

Four settings had an Ofsted inspection during the life of the project and they reported that having the plans in place had been useful as evidence for Ofsted. It showed that careful thought had taken place before decisions were made and the fact that the plan was updated each term showed this was becoming embedded practice. Some local authorities who have not been part of the project have encouraged the settings in their locality to use the formats and have put their logo alongside the Early Education one.

Effectiveness of the local networks in supporting EYPP

Fourteen networks met regularly across the duration of the project. All the leads reported that the project resulted in much closer working relationships with a wider range of settings than they had before. Network members reported how much they valued the networking opportunities that were offered to them during the course of the project. They appreciated knowing that others were facing similar challenges. One participant talked about how isolated they felt before the project and how this is no longer the case.

Participants reported that being part of a network had enabled them to accelerate their understanding of their role in supporting children and families eligible for EYPP funding. They were frustrated that much of this year was spent waiting for local authorities to establish their processes which they had little influence over. The teething problems which led to delays in receiving funding and confirmation of which children were eligible restricted practitioners' opportunities to use the funding effectively and in turn, restricted the learning which could take place within the networks. Some Local Authority processes evolved over the course of the project. (See section on Administrative Processes below regarding the development of LA processes.)

Network participants typically reported that involvement with the project made them look at the attainment of children in their settings differently. Practitioners have been developing strategies to be able to highlight benefits of EYPP for individual children as well as groups of children. A common focus of debate within networks was about the balance between benefitting the individual child who attracts the funding and benefitting a larger group, an issue where greater clarity or guidance centrally might be helpful in relation to the impact being sought, for instance in the FAQs on the DfE's website, which currently focus more on eligibility. As practitioners are becoming more confident with EYPP and more sophisticated in their thinking, these broader questions arise.

In many networks, practitioners reflected on the issues that not all children who attract the EYPP funding were inexperienced[1], and there were also children who were inexperienced but not eligible for EYPP. Practitioners asked themselves what they should be focusing on in relation to closing the achievement gap and what could be put in place to address it, including to have high expectations and ensure that EYPP children became more experienced, not simply ensure they meet age related expectations. Respondents to the end of project survey also commented on the fact that they sometimes had children like this and wonder how to spend the funding to have an impact; this is an area for future work.

At least nine of the networks will be continuing to meet beyond the life of this project. Some have pledged to continue for the remaining academic year, whilst others can

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[1] We use the term "inexperienced" to avoid using a deficit model to describe children whose progress reflects that they may not have had the same life experiences as their more advantaged peers, and that this may impact on their learning and development. For the purposes of gathering data for the project, we refer to children being "less experienced than expected", "as experienced as expected" or "more experienced than expected" in relation to age-related expectations.

see further opportunities for continuing on into the following academic year. Three leads will either be retiring or moving onto another job for the next academic year, which has made continuation for those networks more problematic. Where one lead is retiring at the end of the year, the network have pledged to sustain themselves so that the work she and the practitioners have put in will leave a legacy. In another network two managers are going to support each other by being their "professional buddy". This will entail doing joint observations and discussing strategies for implementing developments as well as joint training if appropriate.

Networks require time to be spent on planning sessions, follow up, organisation of venues and subsequent liaison and communication between participants. Leads reported this had all taken up more time than anticipated. They also commented on how rewarding the project had been. A longer duration of the networks might have led to other participants being willing to take the lead and for practice to become more embedded.

Settings and local authorities are still feeling the need for further support in relation to EYPP as demonstrated from the evaluation forms from the dissemination events and email or phone contacts asking for support. There were many requests at the dissemination events to be able to join networks or to be enabled to set up new ones.

Practitioners reported that they are now starting to look at how impact can be measured and would value further support with this, now that EYPP is settling in and they can focus in more depth on outcomes rather than administrative processes.

Characteristics of effective local networks

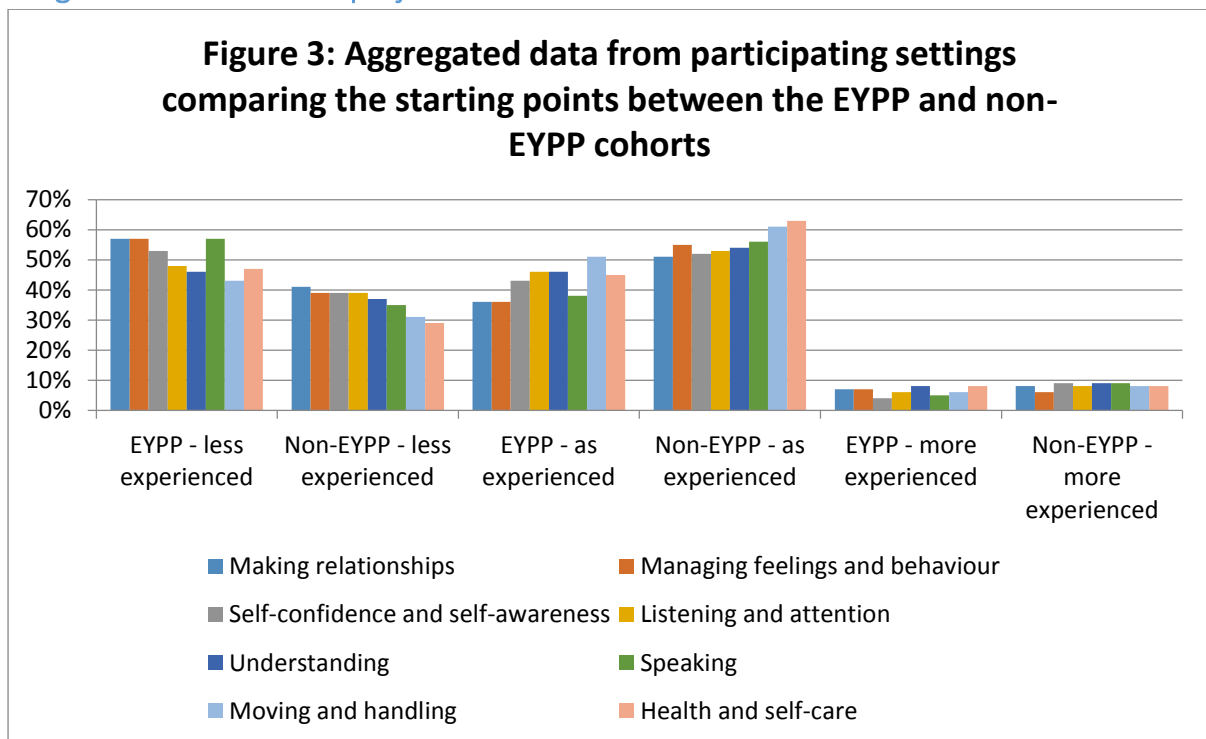Factors which helped them to be effective included:

- **Building on existing links** Some leads used existing links with settings in their locality that they already had. These networks were able to begin their activities more quickly as the trust and expectations of collaborating were already well established.
- **Local authority support** The networks which were supported by the local authorities tended to have a larger cohort as there was more support available.

Challenges which were highlighted were as follows:

- **Time needed to establish networks** The networks took longer to set up than first thought, possibly due to workload pressures and reluctance on the part of some settings to collaborate together due to the "competitive" relationship some settings have with each other. Once they were up and running, however, the participants were keen to continue to network.
- **Workload involved in supporting the networks** Those responsible for running the networks had to recruit settings to join, organise meetings and support activities, and often were directly involved in delivering training and development activities to participants. Additionally for the project they had to manage the process of data collection and deliver reports to the project lead

on progress on a quarterly basis, attend two planning meetings and at least one dissemination event. The payment from project fund effectively only covered the time for project administration, not the network co-ordination, so this was effectively done on a voluntary basis rather than being funded by pooling of EYPP funds by participants. The three networks that pulled out did so due to workload pressures and personal circumstances of the lead individual. Networks withdrew at various points in the life of the project. Two networks considered withdrawing but managed to continue their involvement by delegating the lead's role to the deputy of the nursery school. Many of the nursery schools were already facing significant workload challenges eg as teaching schools, through involvement with other funded projects, and due to structural changes such as federation. Even though maintained nursery schools are generally larger than average PVI settings, there are limits to the numbers of additional pieces of work they can take on, particularly if unforeseen factors such as illness or staff vacancies occur. Leads all commented on the extra workload a project brings. Although they also felt there were benefits from their involvement, additional resource was really needed to ensure a robust and sustainable model, and it is likely this could only be achieved by some pooling of EYPP funding to buy in cover.

Progress data across the project

Figure 3: Aggregated data from participating settings comparing the starting points between the EYPP and non-EYPP cohorts

Participants were asked to collect data at two points in the project. In order to have a consistent approach it was decided the two points would be October and late February/early March. These points were decided upon because they were the points at which most practitioners already collected data, if they did so, and also because not all local networks were up and running in time to start data collection

from the summer term. It also allowed those settings with large numbers of children leaving in July to have beginning and end data for a consistent cohort.

It was difficult to show accelerated progress in such a short time frame. At the first data point a return was received for 242 EYPP children and 1295 non-EYPP children. The figures below show the percentages for each group for the sub-areas of the three prime areas of learning in the EYFS. As would be expected from national datasets, there is a gap between the EYPP and non-EYPP children.

By the time of the second data collection point (see Figure 4), we can see that fewer children are less experienced than expected and a greater number are more experienced, and the gap between EYPP and non-EYPP children appears to be closing: on average there were 17% fewer EYPP children who were less experienced compared to 12% fewer non-EYPP children, 6% more who were as experienced as expected (compared to 4% of non-EYPP children) and 12% more EYPP children were more experienced compared to 7% more non-EYPP children. This second return was for 230 EYPP children and 1212 non-EYPP children.

Figure 4: Aggregated data at the final datapoint, EYPP compared to non-EYPP cohort
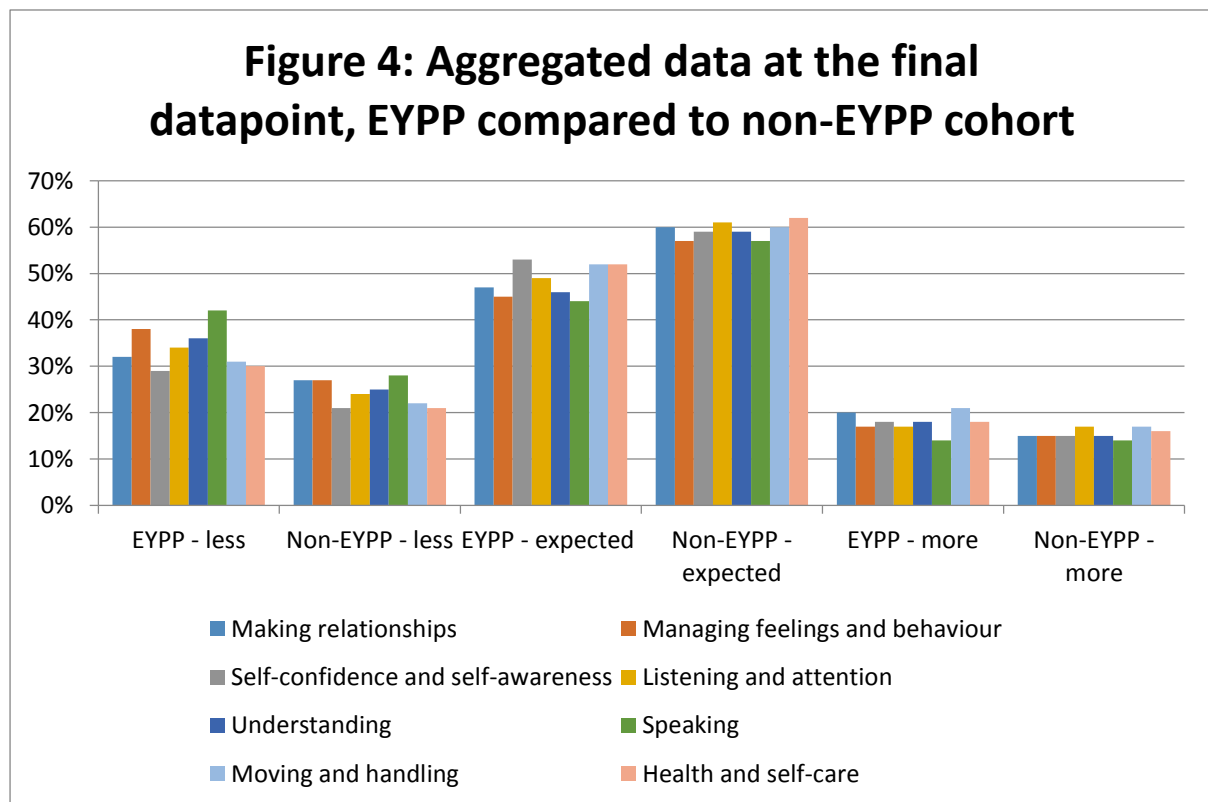
Due to the nature and intakes in Early Years settings and the compact nature of the project, it is difficult to know how many of the children have been included in both data sets, so these findings must be treated with caution.

It might be interesting to compare data returns between the maintained sector and the PVI to compare the rates of progress as a significant proportion of the data came from the maintained nursery schools, which are generally very experienced in closing the gap, and more experienced in using data tracking to support this than the

PVI sector. There wasn't enough time in this project to undertake this analysis, but it could be explored in a future project.

We collected data on the amount of progress children made in this period, however due to the short time frame and lack of contextual information about the settings and their children it was difficult to draw conclusions from it. Although settings had been asked to provide qualitative feedback as well as data, few did so. This may have been due to their inexperience, the format in which the lead sent them or other factors.

Progress was far from uniform across settings which did return data. There were indications that children receiving EYPP funding had made accelerated progress in 22 of the 45 settings which did. (For the purposes of this project we took expected progress to be one step per time period, understanding that children develop at different rates. Accelerated progress in this instance was two steps or more per time period). The data showed that there was a range in the number of steps of progress for different children for both EYPP funded and non-EYPP funded children.

An area for future research would be to explore what factors allowed some settings to make progress for some or all of their children, and why others had struggled to do so.

Challenges to data collection

Although data was received for a good number of children, there were issues with the amount and consistency of data which could perhaps have been improved had the project continued over a longer period of time. We would have liked to have seen more qualitative data and reflective analysis providing context to the individual setting data returns in order to be able to drill down and interrogate the data more effectively.

Despite the fact that data was returned in line with our target level of 1500 children (242 EYPP children and 1295 non-EYPP children at the first point and 230 EYPP children and 1212 non-EYPP children for the second), network leads reported that it was difficult to get settings to share their data. It was felt that reasons may have included instances where the children had made little or no progress, where settings were not confident at collecting data, the practitioners were unsure of the use of the data or there were no EYPP funded children at the setting. Two networks reported that the settings had no experience of collecting quantitative data before.

Even though a data collection document had been produced in collaboration with the leads, the returns were inconsistent. Some leads had chosen to only give sections out at a time or had altered the format. This made comparing difficult. The short time frame for this project meant discussions regarding the data document were rushed and it would seem buy-in from all the leads was not as good as it could have been. The variation was more apparent at the final collection point.

The qualitative data section was rarely used by the practitioners. This may have been because they didn't see it or they felt they had little to report as the time frame was so short. When it was used, it contained reflections such as the following "*Staff*

are more aware of their roles to help ensure that all children make progress. Staff are now not afraid to try out new ideas to aid learning. We are learning different approaches to suit different children. Staff are also learning when to step back when not needed, for example some of the children were struggling with relationships because adults were too involved."

The process of learning to gather and report on data was useful to participants, as well as contributing to the evaluation of the project. One network reported that the requirement to return some data had enabled conversations to be had between various types of setting and a clearer understanding of the need and usefulness of sharing data resulted. They envisage this being helpful at transition points and it will make up part of a transition project they are embarking upon. Participating settings have requested further support with gathering and analysing data.

Effective practice in using EYPP funding

Settings have developed a range of effective processes in relation to EYPP. The following list identifies examples of good practice identified via the project.

Settings are more effective at using their EYPP when they:

- closely match their strategies with the needs that have been identified for their EYPP funded children.
- hold discussions between colleagues that centre on this group of children and the progress they have been making. These discussions take place in a range of circumstances: supervision conversations, staff meetings, with outside agencies, parents or families, and in order to complete paperwork.
- have EYPP champions. These champions keep an overview of the needs of this cohort and ensure that developments to practice reflect this cohort's needs. They are also the person staff go to if they have queries relating to EYPP and they monitor the progress of children who are eligible for the funding.
- have developed an EYPP policy or updated policies to ensure children who are eligible for EYPP are included where necessary.
- hold regular discussions between the key person and the child's family each term with a focus on the progress the child has made from one point to the next and how the current term's funding could be spent with most effect. This has led to families feeling valued and more involved in their child's learning.
- have updated parents' literature so that parents are made aware of this funding stream when their child first arrives in a setting. Information about the EYPP funding and how it has been spent have been included in the settings website in some cases.
- compare the progress of EYPP children with non-EYPP children to ensure that accelerated progress is made by any child who has been identified as being inexperienced or not meeting age related expectations.
- have moderation activities. Participants have reported how useful these have been to ensure data is as accurate as possible. They understand more that this is an ongoing process and can see the benefit of moderating with

practitioners from a range of settings. They especially appreciate moderating with feeder settings so that data sent on will be valued more highly.

Barriers to successful use of EYPP

Settings often commented that the numbers of eligible children were low – often lower than expected. Due to the low numbers for which EYPP funding was successfully claimed, some settings felt the effort to claim was too great.

Initially there was some confusion as to whether EYPP funding would continue after 2015-16. This led to some practitioners wanting to wait and see before committing themselves to putting new systems and practices in place. Practitioners were also preoccupied with the potential impact of the 30 hours extended entitlement, which took some focus away from EYPP. There was concern as to whether there would be a reasonable period of notice if the EYPP funding were to be withdrawn as a result of the early years funding review.

The timing of EYPP payments has been a barrier for many settings as the majority of settings say they receive their funding too far into the term.   The following quotes are typical of those we received:

> *"As a negative we have been given the eligible children names the last week of term so it has been hard to plan."*

> *"We get our funding at the end of term which makes life a bit difficult when planning budgets."*

> *"It takes more than half of a term to get paid the EYPP, we are therefore only spending it in the second halves of a term."*

In addition to the timing of payment, some settings reported that it could be difficult to identify who the eligible children were as some local authorities had clearly identified the children; however, some had not, and where they had not the practitioners were left trying to work out which children had received funding and how much. As the EYPP funding was paid with the Nursery Education Grant funding as a lump sum rather than disaggregated, some settings were not clear about whether they had received their EYPP funding, how much or in relation to whom.

There was some confusion at the beginning as some settings were expecting all funded 2-year-olds to meet the criteria for EYPP when they reached 3, whereas not all of them were. Some local authorities were thinking about finding ways of flagging the 2-year-olds likely to be eligible for EYPP. However, families' circumstances can change and funded 2-year-olds who meet the EYPP criteria at age 2 may not do so by the time they are 3, and vice versa. It is important that settings are clear about the differences in criteria for the 2-year-old entitlement and EYPP.

Administrative processes

We noted above the frustrations from participants about delays in payment of funding and identification of eligible children. One of the unforeseen benefits of the project was the opportunity for us to gather examples of different LA processes, and to share these with LAs via their professional networks and the project resources.

Much feedback about this was verbal, so we were not able to track systematically how much this had improved by the end of the project, but the end of project questionnaire seemed to indicate that most settings had received payment by the end of the most recent term at the latest, although we had no start of project benchmark on this. At the end of the first year 20% had received funding at the beginning of term, 21% by half-term, 48% by the end of term and 11% who hadn't been paid, not including a small number who weren't sure or had not claimed for that term.

Local authorities have been developing their processes in relation to EYPP and how settings can claim it. We have seen three main ways:

1. a discrete EYPP form. Settings who have to use the separate form have reported that many parents are unwilling to fill in another form. Some have tried offering incentives to try to boost uptake. Others offered to fill in the forms alongside the parents. Settings also report that although they give the forms out universally, there is not enough time to chase for universal returning and so they are having to make a value judgement about who is "worth" chasing.

2. incorporating EYPP information in the Nursery Education Grant funding form which local authorities use to gather termly data on headcounts for calculating funding payments to providers (often referred to as the "headcount form"). Benefits to linking with headcount means that only one form needs to be completed and parents are already used to this process. A drawback for the headcount solution is that eligibility is then checked termly by LAs which makes it difficult for settings to forward plan as they feel they do not know which children are eligible from one funding period to the next. Some LAs may need to be reminded that eligibility should be for a whole year, and children should not lose their eligibility part-way through the year.

3. processes for liaising with departments responsible for benefits claims to identify eligible families. This final route means that no additional forms need to be filled in and the money is automatically paid to the settings. It seems to have been particularly effective to ensure maximum take up is achieved, but only appears to have been achieved in unitary authorities. (See case study below).

Practitioners have reported that they would like to have a more universal method for claiming the funding and their preference would be the option where no additional forms are necessary.

Local authorities pay the EYPP funding alongside the Nursery Education Grant (NEG), but this can be at different times in the term in different LAs, and processes also varied within LAs as processes for the maintained sector and PVIs were often separate. The timing of payment for EYPP raises similar issues to those for NEG in that for some settings cash flow is a real issue. However, this is further exacerbated for EYPP in that there is less certainty about whether children are eligible and which ones and at this stage settings were also uncertain of the implications if a child

moved part way through a term. They were therefore often cautious about the idea of spending money when they did not know for certain how much they would receive.

Practitioners reported three points at which the funding was paid: the beginning of term, just after half-term and the end of term once the funding period has finished. The most common payment point according to respondents to our surveys was the end of term. They felt that for this time they were having to wait to be able to put strategies in place to support the children which the EYPP was intended to enable. Later payment also caused some practitioners to be concerned that when they were inspected they might not know who their current cohort of EYPP children were. We suggest that if practitioners see the funding period as being from when they receive the funding to the next funding point expectations may be clearer.

Much feedback about this was verbal, so we were not able to track systematically how much this had improved by the end of the project, but the end of project questionnaire seemed to indicate that most settings had received payment by the end of the most recent term at the latest, although we had no start of project benchmark on this. At the end of the first year 20% had received funding at the beginning of term, 21% by half-term, 48% by the end of term and 11% who hadn't been paid, not including a small number who weren't sure or had not claimed for that term. Feedback from practitioners has clearly indicated that practitioners would like a more standardised time to be paid, early in the term, along with a quicker method to identify eligible children.

Some settings reported receiving no funding. It was unclear why this was the case and could be due to a system error or having no eligible children currently.

Case study: eligibility checking integrated with benefits – Bolton Council

In Bolton we operate an automated and manual eligibility checking process. As part of the registration process for benefits in Bolton, parents are asked whether they would like to sign up for educational benefits, which includes EYPP.

At the start of each term, the Revenue & Benefits Team provide us with a list of parents who have signed up for educational benefits and meet the criteria. This list is imported into our children's services database and the children are marked as eligible for EYPP. Looked after children in the right age band at that time are also marked as being eligible.

Our Finance Team then use a report matching the headcount form and the EYPP eligibility field to allocate payments to providers. Providers are informed of eligible children by secure email. The list of names can only be issued to providers once headcount forms have been submitted and verified to ensure we accurately match children to their childcare provider. This process can take up to six weeks to complete but it removes:
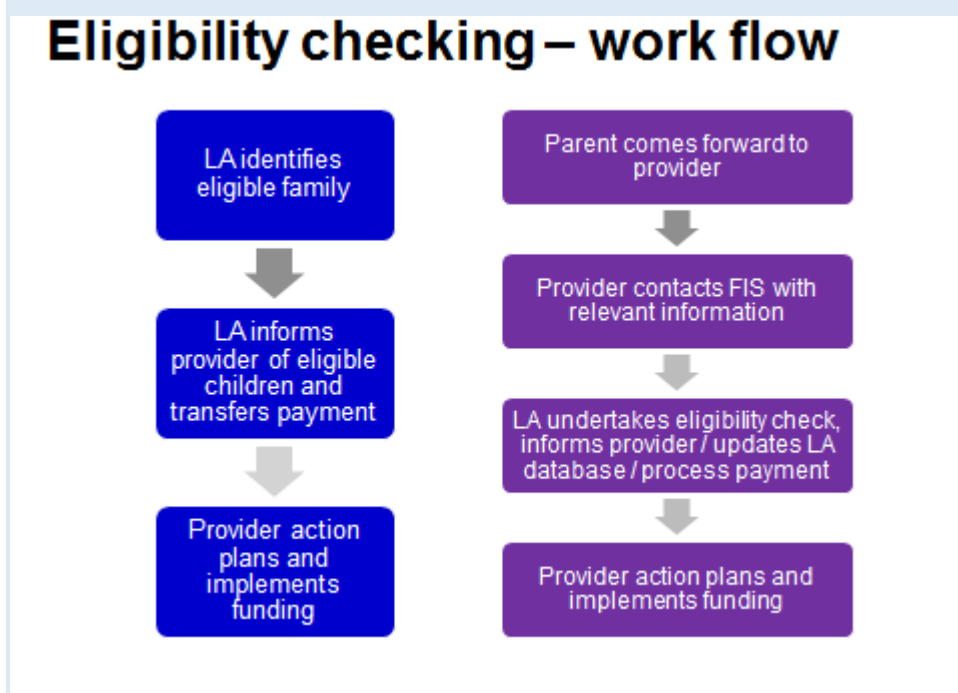- the need for childcare providers to have potentially awkward conversations with parents
- the barrier for some parents to let their childcare provider know about their personal circumstances

- the need for providers to gather information on parent's circumstances and have contact with the local authority for an eligibility check – no paperwork and no data protection issues!

Providers are aware that if a child is eligible at any point from September through to the end of August, they remain eligible for the rest of that academic year so whilst there is up to a 6 week wait at the start of term, after the autumn term they already know a large number of the children that will be receiving funding. It is the provider's responsibility to confirm with parents that EYPP funding is in place for their child.

When we established this process, we were aware that there may also be families that would be eligible for EYPP who wouldn't be picked up through the automated route (eg if they lived out of borough, or didn't access any benefits for example), so we have been clear with providers that we will undertake checks using the national eligibility checker as needed. Providers are asked to gather the information from parents and ring through for an eligibility check. The provider is advised of the outcome over the phone. Where a child is eligible, Finance are informed to trigger the additional payment, and the child's record in the children's services database is updated to indicate eligibility in future terms.

Our processes are summarised in the diagram below:

Eligibility checking – work flow

LA identifies eligible family

Parent comes forward to provider

LA informs provider of eligible children and transfers payment

Provider contacts FIS with relevant information

LA undertakes eligibility check, informs provider / updates LA database / process payment

Provider action plans and implements funding

Provider action plans and implements funding

In August each year we will add an additional field to the children's services database for the next academic year of EYPP and the process starts again. We recognise that childcare providers are really keen to get 'their list of children', particularly at the start of the autumn term. Whilst we endeavour to get this out quickly, it is usually six weeks in before this information can be shared – simply because of the headcount return date. In our experience of parental eligibility checks for other initiatives, we are reasonably confident that the six weeks is still a lot more efficient than gathering individual information from potentially large groups of

parents. On the whole we receive very few EYPP manual claims, we've had less than 50 since the introduction of the funding stream, and this term have over 1800 children being funded through the EYPP stream.

Case study: early notification – London Borough of Bromley
London Borough of Bromley has developed a system of early identification and payment of the funding. Settings there receive a list in the last week of term identifying those children who are eligible and the LA aim to get funding to settings by the second or third week of term. Their new automated system means that providers will be able to confirm if a child is eligible for EYPP straightaway (if they have the necessary details – NI number etc.) without having to wait for the LA to do the checks

Reach and value of the project resources

Over the course of the project we gradually built up the resource bank on the project website (www.early-education.org.uk/eypp), including ten sections covering a range of aspects of practice, the newsletters and information from the dissemination events. A practical guide was developed using the expertise that was developed over the course of the project. This can be downloaded at www.early-education.org.uk/eypp under the section titled project resources.

The website materials had 8,000 unique page views over the course of the project. Six newsletters were sent out to those who subscribed. Circulation for these reached approximately 4,500 direct contacts, and information was also passed on by local authority contacts.

The results from the end of project survey suggest the materials that were produced have either been useful or very useful to those who accessed them. A typical comment was: "I found the newsletters and links to additional information very helpful - thank you."

Figure 5: Feedback on project and other resources from end of project online survey (n=114)
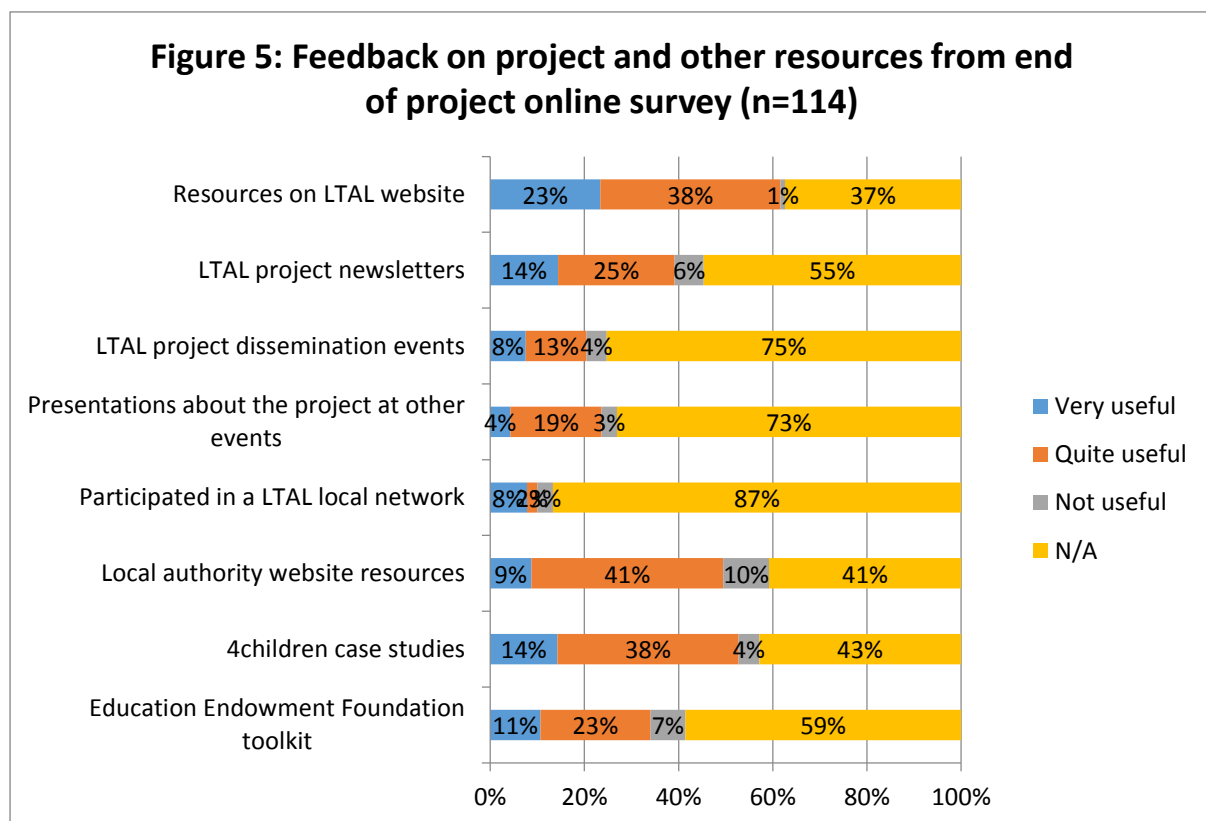
Conclusions

The project has demonstrated that networks were successful in building practitioner knowledge and confidence and there are indications that this helped improved outcomes for children at the settings. Settings reported seeing a difference in outcomes for children as a result of being able to access EYPP funding, even after this short period. This was supported by some of the data returns, although the data was not conclusive.

Focussed training opportunities provided by the networks led to deeper levels of understanding for staff, and resulted in practitioners wanting to further develop their understanding. There were cases where outcomes for families and children were very much improved. These collaborative opportunities enabled practitioners to support and develop their practice by learning from what others were doing. This has been experienced across all of the networks, from sharing how practice is monitored and modified through filming, to sharing the development of home learning packs in another. Lasting relationships have built up over the course of this project within networks, many of which will continue after the end of the project.

For the settings who took part in this project, they only had three opportunities to refine their processes in a supportive network. A longer period of time to embed this way of collaborating might have allowed settings to make further progress, and would have allowed us to collect more extensive and robust data.

It is early days for the Early Years Pupil Premium, but the signs are promising that given a good infrastructure to support practitioners in developing their pedagogical knowledge and skills, this funding has the potential to make a difference to some of our most disadvantaged children, and we would encourage government to continue to support and embed the learning of practitioners so that it can be used consistently to best effect.

Recommendations

During the course of the project, feedback was gathered on barriers and on factors which supported effective use of EYPP. The following recommendations are a synthesis of the feedback received.

Recommendations for practitioners

Recommendations for how settings and practitioners can make most effective use of EYPP can be found on page 17.

Recommendations for local authorities:

It would assist settings in making better use of EYPP if local authorities were to:

- inform settings more quickly and transparently about which children are eligible for EYPP
- pay the money earlier in the term so that practitioners can make full use of the funding whilst the child attends that setting
- support settings to work collaboratively together
- co-ordinate and share information about effective ways settings are spending the funding and how they are measuring the impact of their EYPP spending
- check children's eligibility annually, not termly, so that practitioners can forward plan. This is particularly relevant for authorities who combine the head count and EYPP claiming systems.
- Ensure settings are aware that only around half of funded 2-year-olds will be eligible for EYPP at age 3.

Recommendations for Government

Issues for DfE to consider in order to improve the administration of EYPP funding include the following:

- Develop a simpler, universal method for parents to have eligibility for EYPP funding checked and that eligibility confirmed to settings, eg as a single process combined with checks for other early years entitlements such as the 30 hours and tax free childcare. This would ensure maximum take up by reducing the stigma involved, and eliminating the need for parents to complete additional forms and disclose personal data multiple times. It would also reduce administrative workload for staff in settings.
- Create greater certainty as to children's eligibility by allowing children to remain eligible once they have met the EYPP criteria at any point, as with the "Ever 6" criteria for schools' pupil premium. Allow for new children's eligibility to be checked at least termly.
- Ensure that the future of EYPP funding and any disadvantage supplement in future funding formulae takes account of the benefits of EYPP (focusing attention on eligible children, freedom for practitioners to target according to children's individual needs), while taking note of the disadvantages (cumbersome claiming and payment processes, lengthy period for processes to bed in effectively) . It is especially important to note that practice and

processes take time to become embedded and refined, so the effectiveness with which EYPP is used is likely to increase over the coming years.

- Continue to give settings discretion over how to use the EYPP funding, trusting them to know what will make the difference to their children, families and settings in relation to closing the gap
- Continue to provide mechanisms to disseminate strategies that make a difference and that help refine practice so that outcomes continue to improve. One such mechanism might be the introduction of EYPP reviews, the outcomes of which should be synthesised to provide national guidance on best practice, and/or the appointment of an EYPP Champion at national level, perhaps linked in with early years Teaching Schools. Levels of practitioner knowledge and confidence are extremely variable across the sector, and it will be helpful for the early years' workforce strategy to take into account the need for practitioners to continue to develop their pedagogical knowledge to support effective use of EYPP.

Recommendations for future work

There remains much scope to develop further ways to develop and embed support for practitioners in how to use the EYPP, and also to evaluate its impact on children's outcomes. Possible areas for future work include:

- Further analysis of the data from the project to identify further aspects which supported successful use of EYPP
- Gathering data over a longer period of time to allow for more rigorous development of data collection and moderation, and comparison of outcomes over time
- Further exploration of ways to create and support the development of communities of practice to enable practitioners to learn from one another about effective use of EYPP

Acknowledgements

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