

Sure Start Children's Centres and the Foundation Years

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Why the Foundation Years?

- Growing recognition of the importance of the first few years of life, brought to the fore through a series of reviews:
 - **Child Poverty** – Frank Field MP
 - **Review of Early Intervention** – Graham Allen MP
 - **Early Years Foundation Stage** – Dame Clare Tickell
 - **Child Protection** – Professor Eileen Munro
- Growing evidence base about the impact of foundation years services on the social, emotional and cognitive development, and hence school readiness.
- Ministerial interest and commitment
- Importance of co-production

Key factors promoting health and development

Children's health. Giving every child the best start in life is crucial to reducing health inequalities across the life course. The foundations for virtually every aspect of human development – physical, intellectual and emotional – are laid in early childhood. What happens during these early years (starting in the womb) has lifelong effects on many aspects of health and well-being. Marmot, M. (2010)

Good maternal mental health. Overall children of mothers with mental ill health are five times more likely to have mental health problems themselves, resulting in both emotional and behavioural difficulties. Meltzer, H. et al. (2003)

Parenting style. Effective warm authoritative parenting gives children confidence, a sense of well-being and self worth. It also stimulates brain development and the capacity to learn. Utting, D. (2009)

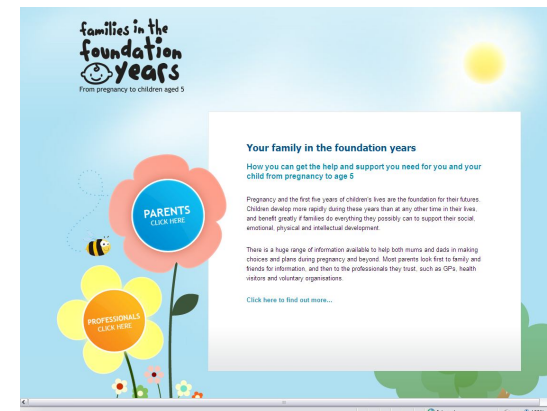
Learning activities. The home learning environment has a greater influence on a child's intellectual and social development than parental occupation, education or income. What parents do is more important than who they are, and a home learning environment that is supportive of learning can counteract the effects of disadvantage in the early years. Melhuish, E., Sylva, K., Sammons, P. et al. (2008)

High quality early education. Attending a high or medium quality pre-school has a lasting effect in promoting or sustaining better social/behavioural outcomes, in terms of increased 'self-regulation', higher 'pro-social' behaviour and lower 'anti-social' behaviour levels at age 11. Siraj-Blatchford et al (2011)

In July DfE and DH published:

- **Families in the Foundation Years – the Government's vision**
- **Supporting Families in the Foundation Years – for commissioners and the workforce how they can deliver on our vision**
- **Evidence Pack**
- **A parent friendly website with resources and links on 4Children's companion website**

www.foundationyears.org.uk

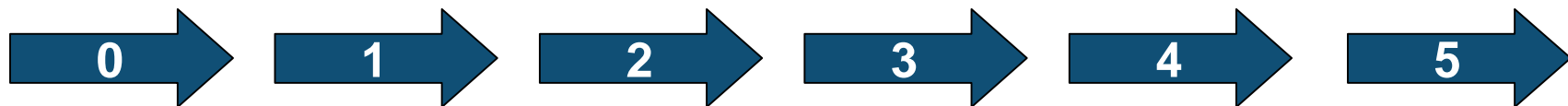


Principles and priorities

- The foundation years are vitally important in their own right and for promoting future life chances.
- The moral argument is clear and the economic argument increasingly well understood.
- There is a consensus we need to do more, by:
 1. Ensuring a focus on **child development**;
 2. Recognising **parents and families** need to be at the heart of foundation years services;
 3. Promoting effective and evidence-based **early intervention**;
 4. Working to improve the **quality of the workforce**; and
 5. Establishing a **new relationship** between central government, commissioners and providers.

The Government's Vision

- While significant progress has been made, there needs to be a new joint approach across foundation years services if the full benefits are to be realised and all children will benefit from the programmes and support in place.
- A child's journey through the foundation years:



Preparing for parenthood	Transition to parenthood	2 year olds	Free early education	Primary school
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Midwives, GPs and health visitors Shared parenting Preparing for Birth and Beyond 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4200 extra health visitors High-quality delivery of Healthy Child Programme Family Nurse Partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New 2 yr old entitlement to early education (2013) New requirement on providers to provide a summary of progress between 2 and 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universal entitlement to 15 hours over 38 weeks New flexibilities from 2012 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choice of school Reception classes will consolidate and extend children's learning before KS1.

Children's centres: challenges and opportunities

- **Local authorities have had to make difficult decisions**, and circumstances vary locally
- **A range of models for children's centres are emerging** - including clusters and federations
- **Changes to the wider commissioning environment** - including NHS and public health reform
- **Lack of data for benchmarking** – which would strengthen local, sector led improvement

A call to action: working together to...

- 1. Retain a vibrant network of high quality children's centres, accessible to all families but focused on those in greatest need.**
- 2. Maintain and strengthen collaborative working**
- 3. Enable organisations with a track record of supporting families to get more involved**
- 4. Increase the professional autonomy and responsibility of children's centre leaders and staff**
- 5. Involve families and communities themselves**
- 6. Strengthen accountability**

Children's Centres Core Purpose

The Government believes that children's centres should have a clear core purpose focused on: Improving outcomes for young children and their families, with a particular focus on the most disadvantaged families, in order to reduce inequalities in:

- **child development and school readiness;**

Supported by improved:

- **parenting aspirations, self esteem and parenting skills;**
- **child and family health and life chances.**

This can be achieved by:

- Assessing need across the local community
 - Providing access to universal early years services in the local area including high quality and affordable early years education and childcare
 - Providing targeted evidence based early interventions for families in greatest need, in the context of integrated services
 - Acting as a hub for the local community, building social capital and cohesion.
 - Sharing expertise with other early years settings to improve quality.
- Underpinned by:
 - Respecting and engaging parents
 - Working in partnership across professional/agency boundaries

Accountability framework

- Crucial **commissioning role for local authorities**, within statutory duties to provide sufficient children's centres
- **Focus on outcomes** linked to the core purpose, eg through **payment by results**, trials now beginning
- **Greater local transparency**
- Reflected in revised **statutory guidance**, to be consulted on this autumn, supported by ongoing Ofsted inspection

Next Steps

- **EYFS consultation** closes September 30th; revised EYFS in March 2012, for implementation from September 2012
- **Payment by results** trial areas to work summer 2011 – March 2013
- Consultations on revised **children's centres statutory guidance**, and new statutory guidance on the **free early education entitlement**, autumn 2011
- **Leadership by the sector**, e.g.:
 - National College ongoing work to support Children's Centre Leaders
 - Early Years Teaching Centres
 - Children's Centre Leaders' Network and Reference Group
- **Co-produced approach continues**, particularly to look at:
 - Best practice in outreach and family support
 - Common understanding of “families in greatest need”
 - Greater use of evidence based programmes and approaches