

The tiney Early Years Handbook

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Executive Summary

What are the Early Years and why are they important?

The 'Early Years' are from birth to age 5 and are a hugely important time in a child's development. The learning that takes place during a child's Early Years will impact on a range of important cognitive, social and behavioural outcomes throughout childhood and into adult life.

Early education, especially high-quality early education, has a considerable positive impact on children's development and children from disadvantaged backgrounds in particular, benefit from this. Early Years education not only benefits individual children but society as a whole as investment in early education saves money later on.

While there is some disagreement on exactly what high-quality Early Years education looks like we do know that highly qualified practitioners; low child-adult ratios; a holistic approach which focuses on developing the whole child, and, close links between parents and practitioners, are crucial.

The UK context and early years policy

Recent governments have recognised the importance of the Early Years and the past decade has seen considerable change to early years policy. The most significant policy changes have related to making the EYFS framework which guides practice more rigorous and increasing access to free childcare for 2-4 year olds.

However, a recent government review concluded that "*There seems to be little strategic direction to Government policy on the early years*". It appears that while governments and policy makers acknowledge the importance of this stage, Early Years provision is often underfunded, despite considerable evidence that investing in the Early Years will result in savings to the public purse later on.

Childcare in the UK

There are a variety of different childcare options available to families. Most parents compare nurseries and childminders and consider a range of factors including cost, location, convenience and their values, when making this decision. The main comparisons between nurseries and childminders are:

- Nurseries have higher adult to child ratios and usually have more staff and therefore more children than a childminder setting.
- Nurseries are, on average, more expensive.
- Childminders are based in the home and are therefore often thought of as more closely replicating a parent-like care.

A childminder is someone who is paid to look after one or more children under the age of 8. There are twice as many childminder settings as nurseries in the UK but due to their smaller size, they provide only a fifth of childcare places.

There has been significant decrease in the number of childminders in the past 20 years and this decline is ongoing. The increase in regulation and admin burdens, which in turn reduces the flexibility of the role is cited as a key reason why childminders leave the profession. Difficult interaction with Ofsted and reduced support due to reduced funding are also prominent issues.

1. The importance of the Early Years

What are 'The Early Years'?

The Early Years are from birth to age 5 (and including the 5th year).

Sometimes when people refer to the 'Early Years' in an education context they are just talking about the reception year in school (age 4-5), and possibly also the pre-school or nursery year (age 3-4). However, we should include the years before this – from birth, maybe even pre-birth – when we are thinking about how important the early years are and what children need to develop at this stage.

When we think about 'the early years' at tiney, we mean ages 0-5 as many tiney providers will have young babies in their settings.

Why do the Early Years matter?

The early years matter because:

- It's a crucial time in children's development
- Early education, especially in high quality settings, has a considerable beneficial impact on children's development
- Disadvantaged children in particular benefit from early education, especially if it is high quality
- These benefits gained in early years continue to have a positive impact throughout school and beyond
- Investment in the early years gives the best 'return on investment' as negative outcomes which can be expensive are reduced.

A crucial time in children's development

The Early Years (age 0-5) are a crucially important time in a child's development. The social, behavioural and cognitive learning that takes place at this stage of life will influence all aspects of a child's future and adulthood.

"Learning starts in infancy, long before formal education begins, and continues throughout life. Early learning begets later learning and early success breeds later success, just as early failure breeds later failure."

– James J. Heckman

Children's brain development, language development and social development is particularly important, especially between the ages of 0-3.

- Brain development: at age 2 a child's brain is 83% of the volume of an adult brain, at age 3 a child's brain is twice as active as an adult's brain. At age 3 there are 1000 trillion connections in children's brains. This is the fastest rate of brain development in the human life span. This tells us that the foundations of the adult brain are built in the early years.
- Vocabulary and language development: on average a child's vocabulary goes from 55 words at 16 months, to 573 words at 30 months. Babies who are spoken to frequently by their carers know 300 more words aged 2 than those whose parents speak to them much less frequently.
- Attachment and social development: during the early years, children develop their ability to make secure 'attachments' or relationships with caregivers, including and beyond their parents. Their ability to do this has an impact on their social relationships later in life. They also begin to develop their social skills by interacting with other children.

A research report by Save the Children, ‘Lighting up young brains’ summarises:

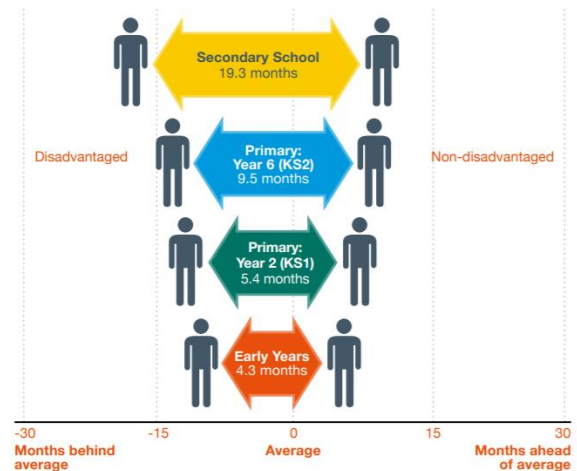
“The science is clear. In the first few years of life, a child’s brain develops rapidly, driven by a mix of experience, environment and genes. Children will continue to develop throughout childhood and into adulthood, but in the early years their brains are particularly sensitive.”

The Early Years disadvantage gap

We know that children from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve less well in education than their more advantaged peers. This ‘gap’ is present from a very early age.

When children are 5, there is a 4.3 month gap in development between disadvantaged pupils and their advantaged peers.^{1 2} Less than half of the poorest 4 year olds are ready for school, compared to two thirds of other children.³

40% of the gap between disadvantaged and advantaged pupils at age 16, emerged before children started school at age 5.⁴



At the end of their reception year, 57% of poorer pupils¹ achieved a ‘good level of development’ compared to 74% of pupils on average. A good level of development means achieving the expected level for their age in personal, social and emotional development, physical development, language development, literacy and numeracy. This means that 43% of poorer pupils are behind for their age in at least one of these areas.

The impact of Early Years Education

Early Years education and care, especially if it is high quality, has a hugely beneficial impact on young children’s cognitive skills, their social development, their behaviour and their wellbeing.

While there is much debate about exactly what constitutes ‘high quality’ in the early years, we know a few things are definitely important:

- A highly qualified practitioner with training/qualifications in child development
- Low child to adult ratios
- A safe and secure environment
- Frequent and open communication between parents and practitioners about the child’s development
- A curriculum which focuses on all aspects of a child’s development including their physical, social and emotional, language and cognitive development.

If children experience this high-quality education and care in the early years they benefit in the following ways (in comparison to those that experience low quality or no early years education and care).

- They have better pre-reading and number skills when they start school.⁵
- They are better able to regulate their emotions and their behaviour when they start school.⁵
- They continue to show these cognitive and socio-emotional benefits through to year one and through primary school.⁵
- They have a reduced risk of low wellbeing at age 11.⁶

¹ Here, ‘poorer’ and ‘disadvantaged’ is defined as pupils eligible for free school meals, a measure based on parental income.

- They are more likely to achieve well at GCSE: more likely to pass English and Maths and more likely to get 5 A*-Cs at GCSE.⁷
- They are more likely to take academic qualifications at post-16 level.⁸

“We think that high-quality early education makes the child a more effective learner – not just better at letters and numbers. High-quality education turns the child on to learning.”⁹

Kathy Sylva, Professor of educational psychology at Oxford and one of the lead researchers of the EPPE study: a major research project on the impact of Pre-School education.

Return on investment

Early Years education not only benefits individual children, it also has a positive impact on society in the long term.

James Heckman is an American economist who, along with other economists, statisticians, psychologists and neuroscientists, has produced a substantial body of work which shows that investment in Early Childhood education is the most beneficial investment a society can make.

“The highest rate of return in early childhood development comes from investing as early as possible, from birth through age five, in disadvantaged families. Starting at age three or four is too little too late, as it fails to recognize that skills beget skills...The best investment is in quality early childhood development from birth to five for disadvantaged children and their families.”

—James J. Heckman

Heckman claimed that for every \$1 investment in early years education, \$13 are saved. This means that Early Childhood interventions (especially high-quality, early education for disadvantaged children) gives a positive ‘return on investment’, meaning more money is saved than is spent. Money is saved because the positive impacts have economic benefits **and** because costly negative outcomes are avoided.

Early childhood education...

Improves...

Educational outcomes, including reduced rates of drop out and increased rates of qualifications

Employment rates and lifetime earnings

Health outcomes

Crime rates

And therefore, reduces the cost of/reduces spending on...

Educational interventions throughout school, as well as the cost of problems caused by drop out and low qualification levels (e.g. unemployment)

Unemployment and welfare (and poverty in the following generations)

Poor health and resulting issues such as unemployment

Incarceration, rehabilitation programmes and victim support

The following points highlight the key parts of Heckman’s argument explaining why Early Education produces such a good ‘return on investment’ and why we should therefore invest in this area.

- Investing in early education is **‘efficient and equitable’** meaning that it is financially or economically sensible and it is fair. It is rare that a policy is both fair and economically beneficial. For example, welfare policies might be ‘fair’ but often cost a lot, and tax policies are often unfair but may make money. Whereas Early Education investment is fair, especially if focused on levelling the playing field for disadvantaged children, and economically efficient as it saves money in the long term.

- **‘Skill begets skill’:** this is the perhaps obvious but important point that building a foundation of knowledge and skill allows further knowledge and skills to be built more easily.
- **Early Education tends to focus on personal, social and emotional skills too:** skills and abilities such as motivation and perseverance have an impact on later success and early education tends to, and is best placed to, focus on developing these skills alongside cognitive skills and knowledge.
- **Later investment is more expensive and less effective:** if children miss out on early education they are more likely to struggle in later childhood and adolescence and may therefore need support and intervention. However, interventions with older children and teenagers are more expensive and less effective.

The Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY) sums it up like this:

“High quality early education supports a child’s full development, including creativity, curiosity and self-confidence, which is essential not just for school but later life. It has been found to improve children’s cognitive and social development outcomes and narrow the gaps between the most and least disadvantaged children.”

What do children need to develop in their Early Years?

Children need to develop crucial ‘executive function’ skills in their Early Years. Executive function skills include:

- Being able to pay attention and switch focus;
- Following instructions;
- Planning ahead and following a plan through;
- Solving problems;
- Holding information in mind;
- Making decisions, and,
- Inhibiting impulses or delaying gratification,

These are the building blocks of learning and the ability to learn. Though we often talk about the importance of children learning maths, reading, writing and social and emotional skills in the Early Years, especially in the reception year of school, all of these capabilities rely on executive function skills. Indeed, they are so important that research concludes that:

“Coming to school with a solid base of these foundational executive function skills is more important than whether children know their letters and numbers.”

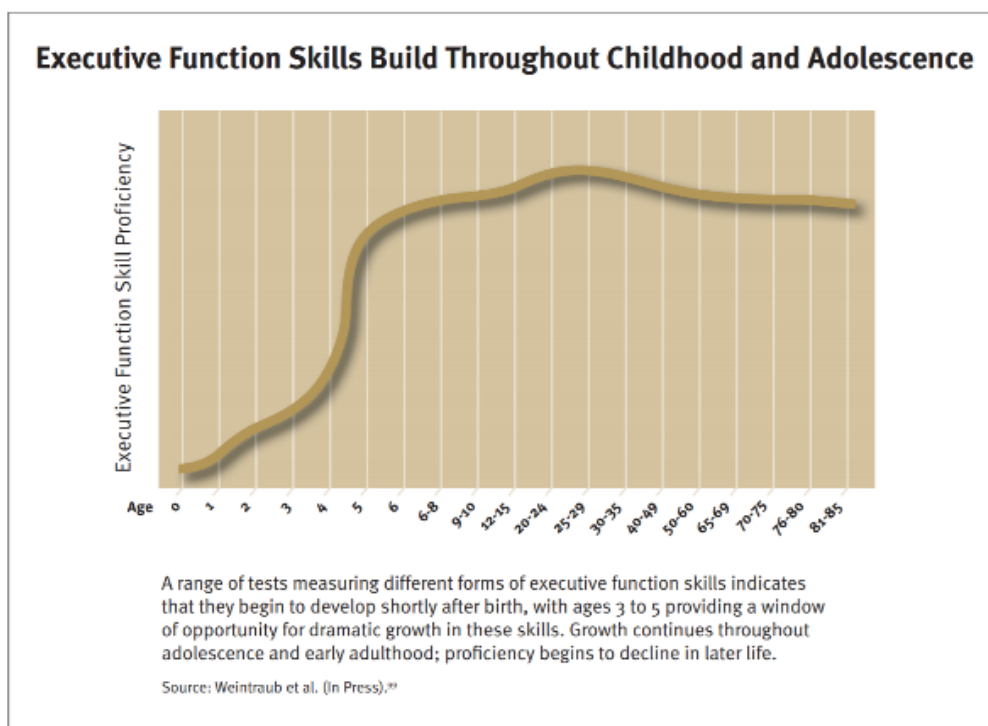
-The Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University¹⁰

This makes sense if we consider that children can only learn to write if they make a decision about the word they want to write, hold that in their mind while they recall the letter shapes which correspond to each sound and all the while resist the urge to get distracted and go and play in the sand pit!

Social interaction, which itself is an important way in which children learn and practise their learning, also depends on executive function. Children can only play co-operatively if they can make a plan, communicate their plan and remember it as they carry it out.

If young children can’t stay focused and can’t resist their impulses they will have trouble following directions from an adult, will be unable to maintain attention for long enough to learn complex things such as reading, writing and maths, and will be more likely to display aggressive or challenging behaviour with adults and other children.

Executive functioning is also crucial for adults and these skills continue to develop throughout childhood through to early adulthood, however, the early years and adolescence are the most crucial periods of executive function development. You might hear people talking about ‘the prefrontal cortex’ in the brain as the area crucial for executive functioning, and it is in the early years that neural circuits in this area of the brain emerge, mature and form crucial connections. These neural circuits are then refined in adolescence and early adulthood but these phases of development depend on the formative development that occurs between age 0 and 5.



Ellen Galinsky’s work is also helpful for conceptualising the skills that are crucial for children’s development. Galinsky is an expert on children’s early development and the author of a number of books on the topic, including ‘Mind in the Making’. Mind in the Making highlights 7 essential life skills¹¹ that children must develop:

1. **Focus and self-control:** including paying attention, resisting distraction and exercising self-control.
2. **Perspective-taking:** empathy and beyond, understanding what other people think, feel and intend. This helps avoid conflict.
3. **Communicating:** being able to understand and be understood by others, language and speaking is important but the overall concept of communication goes beyond this.
4. **Making connections:** this is ‘at the heart of learning’, children have to notice similarities, differences and links between things so they can categorise and make connections.
5. **Critical thinking:** considering knowledge and information to guide decisions and actions.
6. **Taking on challenges:** children have to be willing and able to engage with challenges.
7. **Self-directed and engaged learning:** enthusiasm for learning so that children are motivated to explore and take on challenges.

Many of these essential 7 skills are executive function skills (1,2,4 and 5 in particular) whilst others go slightly beyond this, highlighting those skills which complement executive function to make a well-rounded child who is ready and able to learn.

How can adults help them develop these skills?

Adults including parents and early years practitioners play a vital role in supporting the development of executive function and other crucial skills.

Executive function development will not happen automatically as children mature. Adults set rules and routines and break big tasks into step by step instructions; doing so provides a 'scaffold' for children to inhibit their impulses, follow instructions and carry out plans. This 'scaffold' supports the emergence of children's skills.

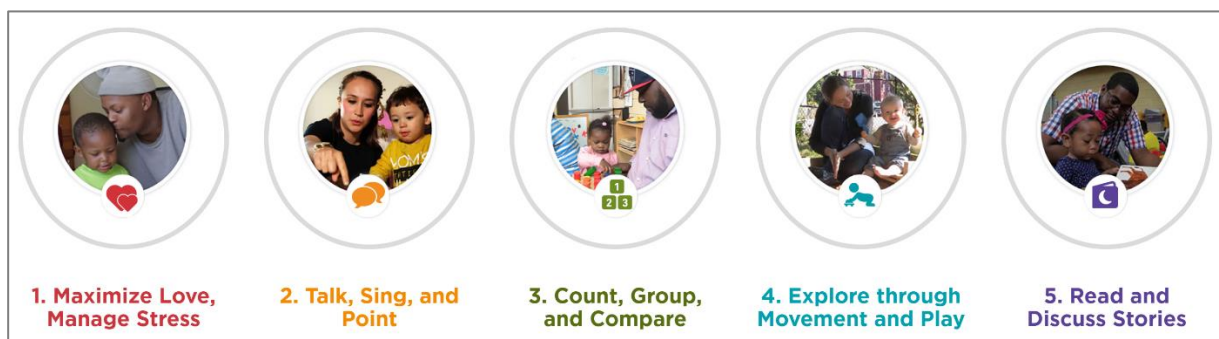
The ways in which adults must support the development of young children's executive function can be broken down under three headings:

1. **Relationships:** children need a network of relationships to support their development. Relationships support their development if adults: model skills; engage in activities which allow children to practice; are consistent and reliable so children can trust them; guide them to become more independent and protect them from trauma and stress.
2. **Activities:** children need to engage in activities which foster social connections, provide engaging play opportunities, incorporate physical activity and are appropriately complex
3. **Places:** a child's home and the environments they spend time in are also important, these environments need to be safe (and feel safe) and need to have space for creativity, exploration and exercise.

There are various recommendations and ethos's that attempt to guide parents and practitioners to make sure children have everything they need in terms of their relationships, activities and/or environment to develop the crucial range of skills that emerge in the Early Years. We explore these below and conclude with a summary of the 'non-negotiables' that children need from adults or their environment in order to develop as they should.

The Boston Basics

The Boston Basics is a campaign in the US based on closing the gaps that open between 'different socio-economic, racial and ethnic groups' during the first three years of life. It gives 5 guiding principles, based on evidence, that parents and other caregivers can follow to support children's develop from birth to age 3. These principles touch on the things that children need in order to develop their executive functions, such as loving relationships, protection from stress, and play and exploration, and also include the things they need to support specific skills such as reading.



Children's Rights

The UN Rights of the child highlights that every child deserves basic rights including an education that enables them to fulfil their potential. Again, it highlights those things we know children need to develop executive function skills, such as protection from trauma and a relationship with their parents.

UN Rights of the Child

Life, survival and development

Protection from violence, abuse or neglect

An education that enables children to fulfil their potential

Be raised by, or have a relationship with, their parents

Express their opinions and be listened to.

The right to play has also been recognised by the United Nations as something that all children should be given; we discuss this more in the section on play below.

Love and affection from caregivers ‘Why love matters’
Another vital thing that adults must provide to support a child’s development is of course love and affection! Sue Gerhardt, psychotherapist and author of ‘Why loves matters: how affection shapes a babies brain’ (2004) highlighted the impact of love and affection on development.

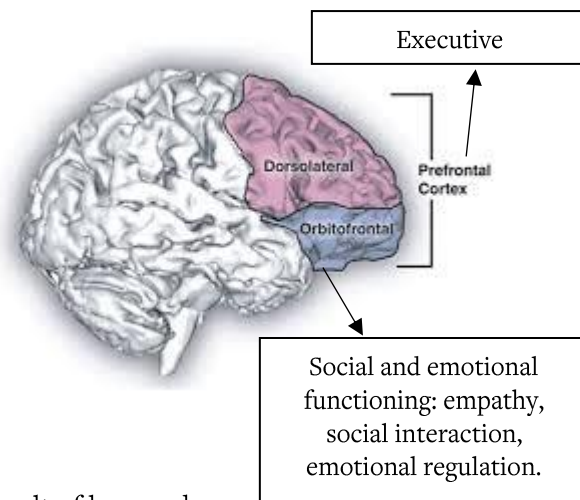
When babies receive love and affection, the orbitofrontal cortex area of the brain, which is within the prefrontal cortex, is stimulated and develops lots of connections. We mentioned the importance of the prefrontal cortex in executive function development earlier and the orbitofrontal area is very important for empathy, emotional regulation and social interaction.

When these brain regions are stimulated and properly developed, as a result of love and affection from caregivers, children develop to become confident and empathic. If children do not receive this love and affection, these areas don’t develop properly leading to anxiety, insensitivity and aggression.

Importantly, Gerhardt also highlights that children need love and affection to help them learn how to calm themselves down: to ‘regulate their stress response’. When babies cry they become stressed and release the stress hormone cortisol. When caregivers respond with affection this lowers cortisol and over time children’s bodies learn to regulate this on their own, so children can calm themselves down.

If babies don’t receive love and affection their cortisol levels rise and they produce even more cortisol the next time they get stressed. If babies, and later on children and adults, produce too much cortisol they become anxious and over-stressed, or if they don’t produce enough they become depressive.

This is really important in terms of the childcare children receive. We now also know that in order for children to regulate this cortisol level they need to receive this love and affection from an adult they have an attachment to. When children are separated from their parent or main caregiver (their primary attachment figure) they become stressed and their bodies release cortisol. If children have access to a secondary attachment figure such as a consistent childcare worker, e.g. a childminder, this doesn’t happen because they can receive love and affection from this person to help them regulate their emotions. Some researchers suggest that if children do not have a strong attachment to someone in their childcare setting this damages their stress response and their ability to regulate emotions. This is quite a controversial idea because some use it to suggest that parents, mostly mothers, should not leave young children in childcare. However, we can



be reassured by the fact that high quality childcare, with a practitioner with whom children feel safe and secure, can mitigate this risk.

The important take away from this is that if children are left in childcare they must form a secure attachment with an adult in their setting, who they have consistent access to, so they can avoid stress which could negatively affect their wellbeing and their ability to regulate their emotions later in life.

Summary on love, affection and regulating stress:

- Children need love and affection to develop the parts of their brain responsible for empathy, social interaction and emotional regulation
- If children don't get this love and affection this can damage their development because they cannot learn to regulate stress hormones
- Children can get this love and affection from parents but, if parents leave the child with another caregiver, the caregiver has to be consistently present and available to the child so that the child can learn to regulate their emotions and stress response.

Opportunities to play and explore

Children learn through play and therefore opportunities to play are crucial for children to develop in the early years. Play can be thought of as '*what children and young people do when they are not being told what to do by adults*' (Play England).¹² Play is so important and so vital for child development that it has been recognised as a Human Right for every child by the United Nations.

Play allows children to develop: their social skills; their physical skills and dexterity; their cognitive abilities and executive functions, from decision making to imagination, and, their ability to regulate and express their feelings and emotions.

"Play in all its rich variety is one of the highest achievements of the human species, alongside language, culture and technology. Indeed, without play, none of these other achievements would be possible."

-Dr David Whitebread in the 'Importance of Play'

Research has established that there are five types of human play:

1. Physical play
2. Play with objects
3. Symbolic play
4. Pretence or socio-dramatic play
5. Games with rules

Early education and childcare settings should provide opportunities for children to regularly engage in all these different types of play as each has its own benefits for development. For example, games with rules help children to develop executive function skills such as planning, inhibition and self-regulation, whereas pretence play or imaginative play helps children to develop their imagination and their social skills.

Vygotsky, an influential psychologist who developed theories on children's social and cognitive development, highlighted that play develops two crucial abilities:

1. Language and other forms of symbolic representation
2. Self-regulation and the control of cognitive and emotional processes

We now know that linguistic ability and self-regulation are inter-related and are key predictors of both how well children achieve academically and their emotional wellbeing, highlighting even further, the importance of play.

More recently, Alison Gopnik, a psychologist and expert in language and cognitive development, has shown that children's brains are wired in a way that makes play the optimal way of learning. Children's and babies' brains have lots more connections (neurons) than adults' brains, and their brains also form new connections much more easily.

Gopnik's work demonstrates that when children play, they learn like 'scientists'. They conduct experiments, form theories and analyse statistics to figure things out about the world. Play and exploration is really important for allowing children to learn in this way, which is the way they are naturally 'wired' to learn.

"Studies suggest that when children play spontaneously ("getting into everything") they are also exploring cause and effect and doing experiments—the most effective way to discover how the world works."

-Alison Gopnik, How Babies Think

Furthermore, if we want children to learn about mathematical or scientific concepts or about words, letters and stories, adults have to provide an environment in which they can explore these things through play.

Summary: 'the non-negotiables'

Babies, toddlers and children need the following things in their early years to support this crucial stage of development.

- An environment free from stress, neglect or abuse
- Love, affection, reassurance from caregivers
- A close relationship with and attachment to a caregiver
- A language rich environment with plenty of conversation and opportunities for children to talk and hear adults and other children talking
- Opportunities to engage in the 5 different types of play
- Opportunities to play in an environment which encourages them to explore:
- Books, stories, words and letters
- Mathematical concepts including number, categories, shape, measures and so on
- Scientific concepts including change, properties of materials, the natural world and much more

2. Big Ideas in the Early Years

There are a variety of well-known approaches practitioners can adopt for teaching and learning in the early years. Most practitioners and settings use a blend but some identify particularly strongly with a single approach.

There are also a number of leading thinkers who shaped these approaches and our thinking about Early Years today.

Leading thinkers who shaped the Early Years

Jean Piaget

Jean Piaget is often regarded as the father of early years education. Piaget challenged the idea that children learn by passively receiving information, arguing that children have to be active in the learning process.

Most teaching pedagogy today is based on the 'constructivist teaching methods' that Piaget popularised. Interactive activities and the view that teachers facilitate students' own exploration are examples of how Piaget's beliefs have been incorporated into what we see as normal teaching practice!

Piaget's theories and principles

- The child is active in the learning process
- Children's development age 0-2 is focused on the senses
- Children's development age 2-7 is focused on language and logic



Impact on modern Early Years practice

- Interactive learning and a 'child centric' view
- Sensory play
- Language rich environments
- Plenty of problem solving

Piaget also developed a model of children's development which includes four stages from birth to 16 years old. The first two stages cover the early years. The sensorimotor stage which children progress through from birth to 2 is the stage in which they develop their 5 senses; think about how babies love to look at new things, listen to exciting sounds and put everything in their mouth. The next stage is thought to be the most important stage which spans from age 2-7 (again demonstrating how important the early years is) and includes the development of abstract thought, language and curiosity. Children in this stage talk a lot and ask a lot of questions, the famous 'why?' stage!

Freidrich Froebel

Freidrich Froebel was a German Educator in the 1800s who created the concept of 'kindergarten' as a transition between home and school where children can play, sing, talk, do practical activities and build their social skills. In the UK we would think of this as 'nursery'. Froebel believed that children learn best through direct experience with the world and was therefore a big advocate of play-based learning. He said:

"Play is the highest expression of human development in childhood for it alone is the free expression of what is in the child's soul."

He also believed that the early years were the most important and children need to self-direct their activity. This was quite radical for his time!

There are around 10 key principles in his theory¹³ but the four that are most relevant to Early Years today are:

- The whole child is important: this includes their mental and physical health, and their feelings and thoughts, not just the things they have to learn in order to become an adult
- Learning is not compartmentalised as everything is linked
- Intrinsic motivation is very important and this can be achieved by allowing the child to direct their play
- The people the child interacts with (adults and other children) are of key importance.

Froebel's theories and principles

- Play and experience are important for learning
- Child directed play results in higher intrinsic motivation
- The people a child interacts with are important



Impact on modern Early Years practice

- Play based approaches
- Experiential learning
- Child-led play, learning and topics
- Recognition of the importance of practitioner's skill

Therefore, in light of Froebel's approach and theory, early years practitioners should (and often do):

- Nurture children's feelings and ideas and promote the importance of building relationships
- Link learning together
- Give the child plenty of opportunities to learn through play
- Recognise when children are interested and engaged, and respond to and encourage this in order to nurture their intrinsic motivation.

Margaret and Rachel McMillan

The McMillan sisters, inspired by Froebel's theories, promoted the importance of play and experience-based learning for disadvantaged children in England by opening an 'open air nursery' to tackle the health problems, poverty and lack of education during the Industrial Revolution.

They also believed strongly in the importance of play but they also introduced two key ideas that still resonate with Early Years practice today:

1. The importance of the parents' involvement in the child's education and development
2. The role of Early Education in relieving poverty and supporting deprived communities.

Approaches

Below are some of the Early Years approaches that you might hear practitioners referencing when explaining their approach or philosophy.

Montessori

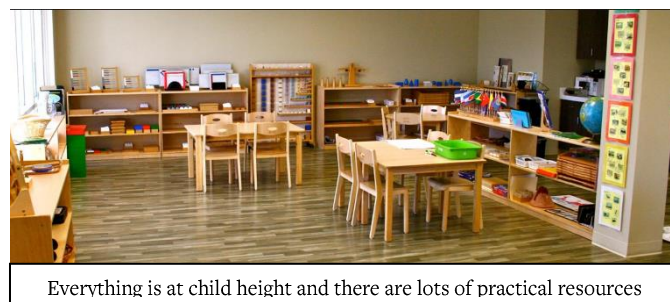
The Montessori method promotes child-directed activity and hands-on learning. Children have lots of freedom but the environment and the activities might be quite structured and will introduce 'academic' concepts quite early. Teachers are seen as 'guides' and should work with children individually to help them shape their learning and should provide activities that are age-appropriate and will further children's learning but without directing them too much. Teachers would not give lots of whole class/group direction but move between children or groups to tailor learning experiences.

Typical activities in Montessori classroom might include:

- 'Practical' activities or skills such as washing up and sweeping!
- Child directed play with materials for exploring maths and sciences concepts practically, such as water trays and floating and sinking objects or abacuses for counting with a physical representation

There are also some other important principles including mixed age classrooms, time for children to work uninterrupted, 'freedom within limits' and a child accessible environment (see picture).

We see some of these principles, in particular child accessible environments, a focus on practical experiential learning (especially in science and maths) in many Early Years settings today.



Everything is at child height and there are lots of practical resources

There has been quite a lot of critique of Montessori methods, often revolving around children being given too much freedom and there being a lack of rules and structure, which leads to them being unprepared for the 'real world', however many practitioners can still take useful tips from the approach.

Reggio Emilia

This philosophy also places the child 'at the centre' but takes a 'project-based approach'. A teacher sets a project or a problem based on children's interests. Then, the teacher takes the role of the observer and children lead the project in collaboration with one another. The philosophy suggests that if the teacher directs children this does not allow them the space to notice problems and discover solutions on their own. Instead, teachers should observe children and notice their interests in order to make sure projects are based on children's interests.

The environment is known as 'the third teacher' in the Reggio Emilia philosophy. The environment should be: open, free-flowing (children should be able to move around wherever they want) and full of stimulating resources. The outside environment is important and should be accessible at all times.

This philosophy also highlights that children have different ways of thinking expressing themselves. This is called 'the hundred languages of children' and adults should make sure that children have opportunities to explore these many 'languages' including playing, exploring, painting, making music and speaking.

Waldorf Steiner

In Steiner pre-schools there is a more play-based approach and academic concepts are not introduced until later on. It is based on the belief that children have to develop socially, emotionally and physically before starting on reading, writing and maths etc. Foundational skills are laid through hands-on activity and play, with a focus on communication and language.

This approach could be considered the most different to typical mainstream early years education because of the focus on spirituality and physical and social skills, far over and above academic skills. Advocates suggest it helps foster creativity and enthusiasm for learning.



Environments are set up to facilitate play, colour is also very important

The table below gives us a quick overview of the main similarities and differences between Montessori, Reggio Emilia and Steiner approaches/philosophies.

Main approach	Play based	Child centred	Early academic focus	Creativity focused	Whole class input/	Summary
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			teacher direction	
Montessori	Child-centred	★ ★ ★	✗	An early academic focus but children progress at their own pace and teachers provide child-tailored guidance. Projects are based on children's interests. Children's different forms of expression are important. Children learn social, physical and emotional skills through play before progressing to academic skills later.
Reggio Emilia	Project-based	★ ★ ★ ★ ★		
Steiner	Play-based	★ ★ ★ ★	✗	

Forest Schools

Forest schools are an outdoor education model where children learn in a natural space (often a wood or forest) and focus on personal, social and technical skills. For instance, they might learn about nature such as ecosystems, or 'survival in nature' such as how to make a fire. Forest school might also focus on how being outside can boost wellbeing by teaching children mindfulness outside. Forest school is thought to be beneficial for building self-esteem, independence, team work, problem solving and wellbeing, as well as physical health, fitness and safety. Often practitioners will say 'we do' or 'go to forest school' which often means they spend some time each day or week doing forest school activities rather than spending the whole day outside.



Intergenerational care

This is the practice of bringing young children and older people, often in care homes, together for care. The practice began in Japan in the 1970s when a nursery was run alongside a care home with great results for both the children and the adults, and has been adopted albeit fairly rarely across Japan and the US. The idea has gained popularity in the UK since the airing of the documentary 'Old People's Home for 4 Year Olds'. The results of the experiment shown in the show were positive: children became more confident and older people became happier and more active. A number of studies of the practice have similarly found good results:



- A Japanese study found that intergenerational care led to adults engaging with the children and with each other more. Given that social interaction has many health benefits for older people the impact of this could be far reaching.
- A US intergenerational care facility found that adults 'forget their physical limitations' and are more likely to be active and engaged when interacting with the children

Intergenerational care can be arranged for childcare settings or care homes that are not fully integrated by arranging occasional activities or events where children and old people can come together.

3. The contemporary UK context

The Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework

The EYFS statutory framework is a document which sets the standards for the learning, development and care that children should be given from birth to age 5. All Early Years providers, including childminders, must follow it. It gives all professionals a set of common principles and commitments to deliver quality early education and childcare experiences to all children.¹⁴

It lays out learning and development requirements for the early years and requirements for what assessments must be conducted in the Early Years, namely the two-year check and the EYFS profile at age 5. It also details the safeguarding and welfare requirements that providers must abide by.

The seven areas of learning and the early learning goals

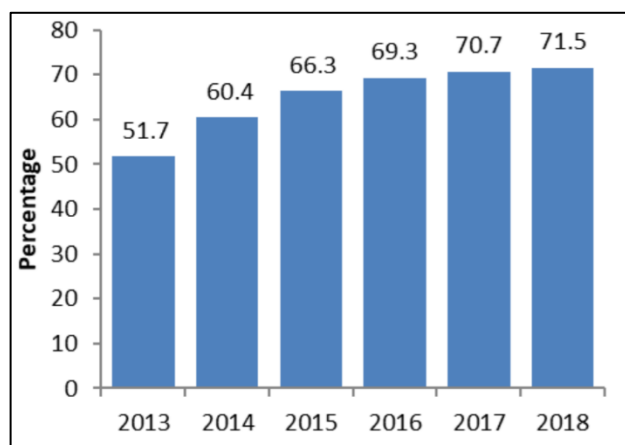
The Early Years Foundation Stage breaks down the things that children need to develop and learn into 7 key areas. The 7 areas of learning, 3 'prime areas' and 4 'specific areas', split into 17 sub areas.

Practitioners use this EYFS to guide the curriculum, plan children's learning and assess children against what they are expected to have learnt at each stage.

Prime Areas	
Communication and Language	Listening and attention Speaking Understanding
Personal, Social and Emotional development (PSED)	Managing feelings and behaviour Making relationships Self confidence and self awareness
Physical development	Moving and handling Health and self-care
Specific Areas	
Literacy	Reading Writing
Numeracy	Number Shape, space and measure
Understanding the world	People and communities The world Technology
Expressive art and design	Exploring using media and materials Being imaginative

At age 5, at the end of the reception year, children are assessed against Early Learning Goals (ELGs), one for each of the 17 sub areas of learning.

They are judged as either emerging (not having met), expected (having just met) or exceeding (having exceeded!) each Early Learning Goal. If they are at least 'expected' in all of the prime areas and in literacy and maths they are said to have achieved 'A Good Level of Development' (GLD). In 2017/18, 71% of children achieved GLD and this proportion has increased considerably over recent years. The large



increase is likely to be due to the considerable changes made to the EYFS framework in 2012. These changes made the requirements of the EYFS 'more rigorous'.

The main changes included:

- A reduction in the number of early learning goals from 69 to 17.
- A renewed focus on the 3 prime areas of learning.
- Strengthening the requirement for staff to have Early Years qualifications and training.

The Learning Areas are currently being reviewed once again and will be revised at the end of 2019 school year. 25 schools have been piloting the suggested new learning areas in 2018/19. The changes include things such as:

- Literacy becoming word reading, comprehension and writing, rather than just reading and writing.
- Communication and language which currently includes speaking, listening and understanding, will no longer include understanding.

Ages and Stages

The EYFS framework guidance documents set out the learning and development stages for children from birth to 5 years old in each of the learning areas outlined above. These stages are split into overlapping age bands and are often referred to as 'ages and stages', though the 'Development Matters' guidance material refers to 'age/stage bands'.

These age bands are:

- Birth to 11 months
- 8-20 months
- 16-26 months
- 30-50 months
- 40-60 months

Importantly, as 'Development Matters' explains:

'The age/stage bands overlap because these are not fixed age boundaries but suggest a typical range of development.'




The descriptors are not a checklist but provide an overview of the types of skills that a child whose development is on track should be building and consolidating as they 'move through' the age/stage band.

When early years practitioners assess and 'track' children they use these ages and stages descriptors to assess whether a child is 'working towards', 'working within' or 'secure' in a stage and whether this means they are on track for their age.

Early Years policy and funding

There has been considerable focus on the Early Years by recent governments. Previous and current governments have recognised the wealth of research (such as that discussed in the previous sections) which shows us that Early Years is one of, if not the most, important phase of development and education.

In 2010 MP Frank Field, was commissioned by the Prime Minister (David Cameron) to do an independent review of poverty and life chances. Among other things it looked at how a child's home environment and early experiences affect the likelihood that they are ready for school. When the review¹⁵ was published it focused heavily on the Early Years.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laughs and gurgles, e.g. shows pleasure at being tickled and other physical interactions. • Uses voice, gesture, eye contact and facial expression to make contact with people and keep their attention.
Birth - 11 months	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoys finding own nose, eyes or tummy as part of naming games. • Learns that own voice and actions have effects on others. • Uses pointing with eye gaze to make requests, and to share an interest. • Engages other person to help achieve a goal, e.g. to get an object out of reach.
8-20 months	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explores new toys and environments, but 'checks in' regularly with familiar adult as and when needed. • Gradually able to engage in pretend play with toys (supports child to understand their own thinking may be different from others). • Demonstrates sense of self as an individual, e.g. wants to do things independently, says "No" to adult.
16-26 months	
<p>Example excerpt from development matters showing 3 age/stage bands for the 'Personal, Social and Emotional learning area: Self confidence and self awareness sub area.</p>	

“We have found overwhelming evidence that children’s life changes are most heavily predicted on their development in the first five years of life. It is family background, parental education, good parenting and the opportunities for learning and development in those crucial years that together matter more to children than money, in determining whether their potential is realised in adult life.”

It recommended that:

- Greater prominence be given to the early years and that it be given equal status to primary and secondary phases of education and referred to as ‘The Foundation Years’ covering pregnancy and birth, through to age 5.
- Funding be gradually moved to the Early Years and that it be weighted towards supporting disadvantaged children.
- This funding should mean that parents have access to high quality support which enables them to provide a high-quality home learning environment and that children have access to high quality childcare and early education.

Before the review and in the years following there have been considerable changes to policies relating to Early Years, often focused around increasing access to Early Years education and care. The table below outlines some of the main policy introductions and changes in the past two decades. It gives, at a glance, an impression of the evolution of policy in the past two decades and the frequency of changes to the sector.

Date	Policy
September 1998	Introduced 12.5 hours free education for all 4-year olds for 33 weeks per year
April 2004	Entitlement extended to 3-year olds
April 2005	Entitlement increased to 38 weeks
September 2009	Introduced 10 hours per week for most disadvantaged 2-year olds for 33 weeks
September 2010	All offers extended to 15 hours per week for 38 weeks (spread over 3-5 days)
September 2012	Entitlement spread increased to 2-5 days
September 2013	Extended funded places to 20% of most disadvantaged 2-year olds
September 2014	Extended funded places to 40% of most disadvantaged 2-year olds
April 2015	Early Years Pupil Premium introduced
April 2016	Expanded childcare component of Universal Credit
April 2017	Tax-Free childcare introduced
September 2017	Introduced 30 hours entitlement for working parents
October 2018	Childcare Vouchers scheme ends

Some policies such as the extension of funded places for disadvantaged 2-year-olds seem to be in line with the recommendations of Frank Field’s Life Chances review. However, a recent review¹⁶ of disadvantage in the Early Years by the House of Commons Education Committee highlighted that not enough has been done and, in particular, the strategy, which was planned in response to the life chances review, has not been published.

“There seems to be little strategic direction to Government policy on early years—the life chances strategy was never published, the Government’s social mobility action plan did not fully address the role played by the early years, and the Government’s flagship 30 hours childcare policy appears to be entrenching disadvantage.”

It seems that while governments and politicians often ‘talk up’ the Early Years and its importance, it remains heavily underfunded and, even when new funding is introduced, it is often inadequate, as we will explore in the next section on funded hours. Despite the evidence that investing properly in the Early Years results in better outcomes for individuals and society, the fact that this benefit takes decades to materialise makes it politically difficult to fund due to the cyclical nature of the political system.

Funded hours

The funded hours policies are particularly important to parents and childminders. The government funds free childcare for children of certain ages and backgrounds:

- The funded hours for two-year olds are 15 hours of government funded childcare for 2 year olds from the 40% most disadvantaged backgrounds.
- The 30 funded hours policy, more recently introduced, is available for 3 and 4 years olds whose parent/s earn between £115.20 per week (each in a two parent family), the equivalent of 16 hours of work at the national living wage, and £100,000 annually. All 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to 15 funded hours, so this doubles the entitlement for some families. The main aim of this policy was to encourage parents (primarily women) into work.¹⁷

The 30 funded hours policy often referred to as ‘the 30 free hours’ has received heavy criticism for ‘entrenching disadvantage’ as it is not available to the most disadvantaged families who earn below that £115.20 per week threshold. As David Laws of the Education Policy Institute (EPI) explains:

“The system shouldn’t be designed in a way that means a two-parent family earning £19,000 could receive 20% less than a similar family with annual earnings of £100,000...Disadvantaged children should not be squeezed out of the best childcare settings.”

– David Laws, Education Policy Institute Executive Chairman

It’s also been criticised because the funding that settings receive often does not cover their costs. Research by EPI, released while the policy was being planned, concluded:

“The national average funding rates announced in November 2015 do not indicate that sums will be sufficient to allow for investment in raising quality...The effects of this apply both to children who are eligible for the 30-hour entitlement and those who are not.”

In 2016 in a follow up report, EPI stated:

“Offering additional childcare, which presumably holds some educational value, to all but the neediest, at significant cost to the tax-payer, isn’t the worst of this policy. The hourly costs paid by government may well be too low to support an expansion of places, resulting in pushing disadvantaged children to the back of the queue, and/or damaging the quality of the 15 hours they are entitled to.”

The Early Years Workforce

There are a number of issues in the Early Years workforce, namely, an aging workforce, high turnover, low qualifications and recruitment challenges.

- **Gender:** The majority of childcare workers are women, only 7.4% are men. Only 1.8% of nursery workers and assistants and 4% of childminders are men. This makes it one of the most heavily female dominated professions.
- **Age:** The sector is ageing and significant numbers will leave in the next 10 years.
- **Earnings:** The average wage in the childcare workforce is £8.20 per hour, this is around 40% less than the average for all women. 44% of childcare workers claim state benefits or tax credits. There has been a pay reduction of nearly 5% in real terms since 2013:

“This is despite increased government investment in early education, and recognition of the key role of childcare workers in improving the quality of provision. This also does nothing to dispel the culture, in some schools and colleges, that childcare should only be seen as a route for those with low prior-attainment.”

-PACEY

- **Recruitment in the sector is a challenge**, especially in terms of highly qualified staff and yet staff report being unable to undertake training due to a lack of opportunities provided by employers
- **Qualification levels are low:** the workforce is far less qualified than the teaching workforce. 25% have a degree, 36% have A levels or equivalent and 24% have GCSEs or below.

4. Common early childcare options

Childcare and early education options

There are a variety of different early education and childcare options for parents to choose from in the UK. The main options are:

Setting Type	What is it?	Ages of children	Run by	Opening hours
Day nurseries	A nursery	Birth to 5 years	Run by private individuals, communities, other organisations or businesses	Open all year often 8am to 6pm
PVIs	Private, voluntary or independent nurseries	2-5 years old	Private individuals or organisations	Varies
LA maintained nurseries	Nurseries often attached to a primary school	2-4 years old	Schools	Term time, school hours
Preschools and playgroups	Morning, afternoon or session care in the community	2-5 years old	Voluntary groups or private individuals	Varies, often open 9am to 3pm
Childminders	Individuals who care for children in their (the childminder's) own home	Birth to 5 years old (and after school for older children)	The childminder as an independent business owner	Some are term time only, while others are open all year, often 8am to 6pm.
Nannies	Individuals who care for a child or children in one family in the child's family home	Birth to 5 years old (and after school for older children)	Nannies as individuals alongside the family or Nanny Agencies.	Usually all year, flexible times.

Parents may consider a range of factors including cost, location, convenience and the extent to which a setting aligns with their values. Parents might choose a setting such as a nursery because they perceive them to be more 'professional', or settings such a childminder, deemed to be more 'intimate' and 'family-like'. Around 95% of children attending some sort of Early Years setting, attend nurseries and childminders. There are some notable differences between nurseries and childminders, outlined below.

Primary differences between nurseries and childminders considered by parents on online forums.

Day nurseries	Childminders
Larger group size: generally, nurseries have more staff and therefore more children. They also have higher child-adult ratios (see table 2 and table 3).	Smaller group size: often childminders work alone, though sometimes with an assistant. This, combined with lower child-adult ratios (see table in section 5), mean childminders tend to have a smaller group of between 3 and 8 children in their setting.
Non home-based setting: nurseries are not home-based settings. This may mean they have more toys/resources, more space, more specialist equipment.	Home based setting: childminders care for children in their homes. Whilst some may have a large amount of resources and/or specialist equipment, they are less likely to do so. However, the environment more closely replicates children's

Higher cost: nurseries tend to be more expensive.¹⁸

The average costs in England for 25 hours are:

- £124.73 a week for under twos
- £120.66 a week for over twos

In London the cost is far higher.

In inner London the difference in price between nurseries and childminders far greater than in outer London and the rest of England:

- Inner London: £183.56 for under twos
- Inner London: £174.47 for over twos
- Outer London: £145.44 for under twos
- Outer London: £134.03 for over twos

More professional systems: some parents viewed nurseries as more ‘professional’ in terms of their operations due to ease of payment systems.

More reliability in relation to sick cover: given that nurseries have multiple staff, children will still be able to attend the setting when a staff member is ill.

home environments and parents may perceive that this makes them feel more ‘secure’

Lower cost: childminders are slightly less expensive, costs vary widely by location and practitioner but on average are:

- £110.61 a week for under twos
- £109.95 a week for over twos

- Inner London: £155.14 for under twos
- Inner London: £154.11 for over twos
- Outer London: £135.71 for under twos
- Outer London: £135.36 for over twos

‘Less professional systems’: childminders are less likely to have professional systems such as a website and online payment process. However, many childminders do use quick and simple methods of payment.

No sick cover: in the case of most childminders, parents may be left without care for their children if the childminder, or the childminder’s children are ill.

Major EY Providers

There are some organisations which manage a number of nurseries across England, they often unify all their settings with a single, distinct approach. Two major providers are Bright Horizons and LEYF

Bright Horizons

Bright Horizons are the UK’s largest nursery provider. They have over 300 nurseries across the UK and they have a higher than average proportion of “Good” and “Outstanding” settings.



Their approach to early years education draws on Piaget and Montessori approaches as well as Gardner, Erikson and others. There are a few key tenets of their ethos:

- They see children as active learners and therefore provide ‘hands on’ learning experiences
- They have a focus on language and language development as the key foundation of other skills and recognise the neuro science behind the fact that the first five years of life are crucial for language acquisition
- They emphasise that ‘development is not a race’ and that pushing complex skills such as reading and writing too early is not helpful for the development of foundational language and motor skills.

LEYF- London Early Years Foundation

LEYF is a London based network of 37 nurseries. 60% of their nurseries are rated “Outstanding”, considerably higher than national average of 21%.

As a social enterprise, LEYF feeds profit back into their nurseries and the community. They summarise their ethos in the following way:



“We’re focused on developing children’s natural curiosity and confidence so they leave nursery as inquisitive explorers who love learning.”

Their approach is child led and draws on Piaget and Vygotsky’s theories. They have designed their own curriculum¹⁹ which includes seven areas of learning, such as:

- Harmonious relationships: a focus on building caring relationships between staff, children and parents
- Home learning: supporting parents to extend children’s learning at home
- Multigenerational approach: ‘connecting with the local community’
- Enabling environments: using the environment, indoors and out, to facilitate high quality learning

5. Childminders in the UK

A childminder is defined by industry body PACEY as someone who is paid to look after one or more children under the age of eight for more than a total of two hours a day.

As they are based in the home, childminders provide a ‘unique’ offer, highly valued by many parents. Childminders can provide a flexibility that nurseries often cannot. Parents who choose childminders are more likely to want their choice of childcare to provide a ‘substitute of mother’ type of care which a home-base environment with fewer children and one or two adults is more likely to provide. Additionally, childminders are used as ‘wrap around’ (before and after school) care for many children over 5 as well as children in the early years.

There are almost twice as many childminders as nurseries in England. However, because they are smaller businesses with one or two adults only, they provide fewer childcare places overall. There are around 40,000 childminders providing around 19% of childcare places (see table 1).

Table 1: Number of providers and places provided by each type of setting.

	Number of providers	Number of places	% of total places provided
Childminders	40,800	253,900	19%
Nurseries and pre-schools	24,400	1,032,200	77%
Other	600	48,500	~4%

1. Nursery numbers rounded to nearest 100.
2. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding

However, the number of childminders has been in serious decline for the past two decades: in the mid-90s there were 100,000 childminders. The downward trend is ongoing; in the last half of 2018, 1,700 childminders left the profession and only 700 new childminders started.

We know some factors behind this drop:

- **A lack of flexibility:** the flexibility on offer is the reason that many childminders started their business in the first place. However, many now feel that increased regulation and paperwork is taking this benefit away.
- **Difficult interactions with Ofsted:** many childminders who leave the profession report negative interactions and communications with Ofsted
- **A lack of support:** childminders need more support, especially with the increased admin burden they face, however, reduced local authority funding due means that childminders again cited the administrative burden of the role and the fact that they needed more support.

PACEY (Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years) has highlighted issues around funded hours as a key factor in this decline and a key place that the government could take action:

‘There is action government and local authorities could take now to help stop this decline and PACEY is frustrated by the lack of urgent action. Like all small businesses, childminders tell us they need prompt and sustainable payment for the early education entitlement. This doesn’t happen for many of them and, with more now delivering funded places, this is becoming a critical concern.’20

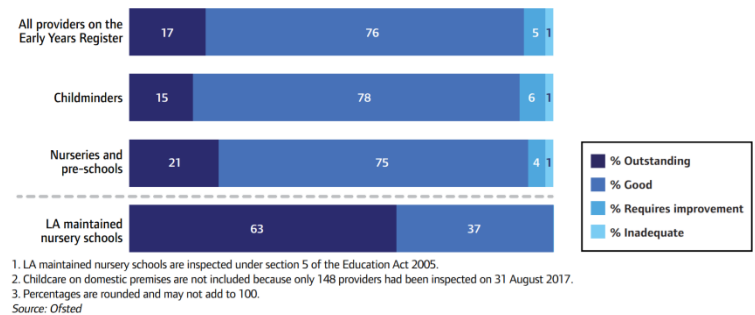
-Liz Bayram, chief executive of PACEY

Another challenge for childminders is the issue of funding for related children. Childminders cannot claim funding for the 15 or 30 funded hours for two-year olds and three year olds (see section 3) for children that are related to them. It’s estimated that around 38% of childminders look after relatives such as nieces, nephews and grandchildren. These children count towards their ratios but they cannot claim the money for funded hours from the government. This often leaves them out of pocket or results in the children having to move to another setting, disrupting their education. Nurseries and other settings can claim this funding for

children related to their staff. Childminders and childminder organisations are campaigning to have this policy changed.

However, the good news is that standards among England's childminders are high and are improving. More childminders, and indeed early years providers in general, are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted than ever before. 93% of childminders are good or outstanding. However, childminders are less likely than nurseries to be graded outstanding (see figure 2).

Figure 1: Overall effectiveness of early years providers at their most recent inspection, 31 August 2017



Why do parents choose childminders?

Parents who do choose childminders do so for the following reasons:

- **‘More family friendly’:** parents perceive childminding as more family-friendly for working parents, citing flexibility including swapping days to fit in with shift work or inconsistent work schedules.
- **‘More affordable’:** parents perceived childminding as more affordable and complained of nurseries raising fees often and unexpectedly.
- **‘Closer to home’:** generally parents said that they could find a childminder closer to home whereas nurseries were often far away.
- **‘Group care inappropriate for young children’:** parents that chose childminders viewed nurseries as ‘inappropriate’ for young children, citing a lack of safety, ‘overly strict’ practice and too much structure.
- **‘The need for one-to-one’:** parents that chose childminders view one-to-one attention as very important for their young children and felt this wouldn’t be sufficient in a nursery setting. The consistent relationship with a single caregiver was viewed as highly important.
- **‘A mix of group interaction and individual care’:** parents who chose childminders felt that this childcare could provide a mixture of group interaction, at play groups and activities, and individual care in the childminder’s home. Parents felt this provided a balance of stimulation and care.

Childminder Agencies

Childminder agencies (CMAs) were introduced by the government in 2013 as a ‘one stop shop’ for childminders and parents who use childminders. Childminders and parents have to pay to join the CMA. Childminder agencies are registered with, and inspected by, Ofsted and in turn, CMAs register and then inspect the childminders who are registered with them. However, when Ofsted inspects the agency, this will include visits to around 10% of the childminders registered with that agency.

CMAs main role includes:

- Registering childminders, including ensuring they are able to deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage
- Training childminders
- Helping parents to find childminders (and, in so doing, helping childminders fill vacancies)
- Monitoring the standard of the childminders registered with them, and therefore, improving the quality of provision.

They might also support parents with finding childcare when a childminder is sick.

In 2018, there were only eleven childminder agencies registered with Ofsted and only seven had childminders on roll. Only four had so far been inspected by Ofsted.

Currently, childminders do not have to join an agency, they can remain independent.

Becoming a childminder

Steps and requirements

There are 6 main steps to becoming a childminder:

1. **Get a paediatric first aid certificate:** there are a variety of training providers and training usually takes about one day
2. **Do a childminder course:** the training course needs to be Local Authority approved. The courses are often delivered online though some have face-to-face elements too.
3. **Join the Ofsted early years register:** this can take a few months and involves getting a DBS check for themselves and anyone in their household that is over 16, as well as a medical check to ensure they are physically able to be a childminder.
4. **Ofsted home inspection:** once step 3 is complete, an Ofsted inspector comes to the home to check whether the home is suitable as well as asking how they plan to support children's learning and development.
5. **Get childminder insurance:** available from a variety of providers.
6. **Receive certificate of registration:** once steps 1-5 are complete Ofsted will send a certificate of registration and the childminder will be ready to open their business to children and families.

Costs of setting up a childminding business and ongoing costs

Compared to starting up other types of small business, the start up costs of a childminding business are quite modest. The main costs are outlined below.

Pre-registration training	PACEY charges £238.80 Local Authority course may cost less
First aid training	Costs between £100-£130 for a 12-hour training day
Registration fee	£103 initial registration fee (£35 annual fee to remain certified each year)
	Varies
Childminder insurance	PACEY membership: £93.23 Morton Michel: £59.50

Prospective childminders will also need to budget for setting up their space. This could simply including buying toys, books, other resources and child-proofing, but in some cases might involve more costly work such as decorating a room or gardening or landscaping work to ensure the outdoor space is usable and safe.

Childminder Earnings

A 2016 survey found that childminders make, on average, £16,800 a year. However, 51% of childminders made less than £15,000. London childminders earn more: on average £21,000, with 20% earning upwards of £35,000. However, childminders' earnings can be quite precarious depending on whether they fill their vacancies and whether parents change their plans frequently!

6. Who's who in the Early Years sector (key individuals and orgs)

UK and international experts in early years

Name	Who are they?	Contact details
Ellen Galinsky	President and Co-Founder of Families and Work Institute, an organisation which researches families and communities. She is also an expert on children's early development and the author of a number of books on child development and parenting.	@ellengalinsky
Julian Grenier	Head of Sheringham Nursery School and Children's Centre and a former Labour and coalition government adviser on primary curriculum and early years qualifications	@juliangrenier
Lydia Cuddy-Gibbs	Teacher and early years expert. Head of EYFS at Ark.	@lydiamgibbs
Julie Fisher	Professor of Early Years Education at Oxford Brookes and author of 'Interacting or Interfering' a book about how adults can support children's play.	https://www.early-education.org.uk/julie-fisher
Alistair Bryce Clegg at ABC Does	Alistair is an educational consultant specialising in the education of children in the Early Years. He is the founder of ABC Does a website, blog and resource hub for early years practitioners and author of the book ABC Does.	https://abcdoes.com/abc-does-a-blog/
Anna Ephgrave	Early years practitioner, trainer, consultant and author	@annaephgrave
Iram Siraj-Blatchford	Professor of child development and education at the IOE and author of 'Sustained Shared Thinking' (see section 7)	Iram.siraj@education.ox.ac.uk
Professor Edward (Ted) Melhuish	Professor of Human Development at the University of Oxford, and Birkbeck, University of London. One of the leaders of the Effective Provision of Pre-School Primary and Secondary Education project, which followed children from age 3 until they ended school	edward.melhuish@education.ox.ac.uk
Professor Kathy Sylva	Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Oxford. One of the leaders of the Effective Provision of Pre-School Primary and Secondary Education project, which followed children from age 3 until they ended school	kathy.sylva@education.ox.ac.uk

Penny Tassoni	President of PACEY, the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years, trainer, consultant and author of 40 books on early years practice.	@PennyTassoni
Gill Jones	Ofsted Deputy Director for Early Education	@GillJonesOfsted
Sara Bonetti	Director of Early Years at the Education Policy Institute	sara.bonetti@epi.org.uk
June O'Sullivan	Chief Executive of LEYF nurseries. 'Speaker, author and regular media commentor on Early Years, Social Business and Child Poverty'	https://www.leyf.org.uk/about/leadership-team/june-osullivan/
Kym Scott	Consultant, author, speaker and early years expert with expertise in child-led learning, high quality early years environments and early years improvement.	https://www.early-education.org.uk/kym-scott @kymscott5
Dr Lala Manners	Early years expert, teacher and consultant with expertise in children's physical development. Founder of 'activematters' the only organisation offering accredited training courses on Early Years Physical Development	https://www.activematters.org/about-section/about/

Influential organisations in the Early Years

Organisation	What do they do	Details
Early Excellence	The leading Provider of Early Years Resources, Furniture and Training in the UK	https://earlyexcellence.com/
The Anna Freud Centre	A children's mental health charity that provides useful training, resources and research to Early Years practitioners looking to support children's mental health and wellbeing.	https://www.annafreud.org/what-we-do/our-help-for-children-and-families/
Harvard Center on the Developing Child	A research centre which aims to support children facing adversity.	https://developingchild.harvard.edu/about/
TACTYC	A membership organisation which provides and promotes high quality professional development for Early Years professionals	https://tactyc.org.uk/
PACEY- Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years	A charity 'dedicated to supporting everyone working in childcare and early years to provide high quality care and early learning for children and families'. They provide training, practical help, expert advice and represent the views of practitioners.	https://www.pacey.org.uk/
Education Endowment Foundation	They have an 'Early Years toolkit' an accessible summary on the evidence	https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/early-years-toolkit/

of ‘what works’ in early years
practice.

Early Years
Alliance
(previously Pre
School Alliance)

The largest Early Years membership
body in England. Provides advice,
training and representation to early
years professionals.

<https://twitter.com/EYAlliance>

Bright Horizons

The UK’s leading childcare provider:
300 nurseries

<https://www.brighthorizons.co.uk/about>

7. EYs reading list

Child Development

- [Lighting up Young Brains](#): A report by Save The Children on ‘How parents, carers and nurseries support children’s brain development in the first five years.’
- [How babies think](#) By Alison Gopnik: An article explaining the work of Gopnik and the importance of play and exploration in babies’ and children’s development, as well as a review of the research around how babies think and learn.

The Importance of the Early Years

- [The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education \(EPPE\) Project](#) – This accessible 10 page summary of the findings of the EPPE project summarises findings relating to important questions including ‘What are the characteristics of an effective preschool setting?’ and ‘What is the impact of the home and childcare history on children’s development?’
- [Invest in Early Childhood Development: Reduce Deficits, Strengthen the Economy](#): This two page summary explains James Heckman’s work on why investment in the Early Years has the greatest return.

The UK Early Years Sector

- [The Early Years Workforce](#) by Education Policy Institute gives an overview of the early years workforce in the UK and the main challenges it faces.
- [The Nutbrown Review \(2012\)](#) A review of why quality in Early Years matters, what it looks like and the challenges in the EY sector especially relating to the workforce.
- [TACTYC’s response to Bold Beginnings](#): this is a response to Bold Beginnings, a controversial Ofsted report released in 2018, but it also summarises the evidence base around the importance of play and reviews the debate between those that advocate play based early years versus those that advocate a more formal approach.

- ¹ https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Annual_Reports/EEF_Attainment_Gap_Report_2018.pdf
- ² Andrews, J., Robinson, D., & Hutchinson, J. (2017). Closing the Gap?: trends in educational attainment and disadvantage. August 2017.
- ³ <http://data.parliament.uk/WrittenEvidence/CommitteeEvidence.svc/EvidenceDocument/Education/Life%20chances/Written/83820.html>
- ⁴ <file:///C:/Users/Ellie/Downloads/Early-learning-and-childcare-delivering-for-disadvantaged.pdf>
- ⁵ Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., & Taggart, B. (2004). The effective provision of pre-school education (EPPE) project technical paper 12: The final report-effective pre-school education. Accessed at: <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/10005309/1/sylva2004EPPEfinal.pdf>
- ⁶ https://www.scaany.org/documents/quality_earlyed_scaapolicybrief_sept2012.pdf
- ⁷ Sammons, P., Thomas, S., Mortimore, P. and Smees, R. (1995), Stability and Consistency in secondary schools' effects on Student's GCSE outcomes over three years. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the International Congress of School Effectiveness and Improvement, Leeuwarden, The Netherlands.
- ⁸ Sammons, P., & Sylva, K. T. K. (2015). Pre-school and early home learning effects on A-level outcomes.
- ⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/dec/11/preschool-education-boosts-children-academic-success>
- ¹⁰ <https://46y5eh11fhgw3ve3ytpwxt9r-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/How-Early-Experiences-Shape-the-Development-of-Executive-Function.pdf>
- ¹¹ <https://www.mindinthemaking.org/7-essential-skills/>
- ¹² <https://www.playengland.org.uk/about-us/why-play-is-important/>
- ¹³ <https://www.early-education.org.uk/about-froebel>
- ¹⁴ <https://foundationyears.org.uk/evfs-statutory-framework/>
- ¹⁵ <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110120090141/http://povertyreview.independent.gov.uk/media/20254/poverty-report.pdf>
- ¹⁶ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmeduc/1006/1006.pdf>
- ¹⁷ <https://www.lkmco.org/changes-free-childcare-entitlements-explained/>
- ¹⁸ https://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/sites/default/files/Resource%20Library/Childcare%20Survey%202018_Family%20and%20Childcare%20Trust.pdf
- ¹⁹ <https://www.leyf.org.uk/pedagogy/>
- ²⁰ <https://www.earlyyearseducator.co.uk/news/action-needed-to-halt-decline-of-childminders-1>