Early Childhood Unit



Welcome to the ECU bulletin 28 May 2015

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Conferences

Policy

1. Election 2015: Prime Minister and ministerial appointments

Following the 2015 general election, David Cameron has formed a government and has confirmed ministerial appointments. You can view details of the appointments, organised by government department, on the GOV.UK website.

2. Short changed: the true cost of cuts to children's benefits

In this report, End Child Poverty is calling for Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit to be given the same protection as the basic state pension. In April 2015, the previous government announced it would give pensions a "triple lock" guarantee that they would rise in line with inflation, earnings, or by 2.5% – whichever is the highest. End Child Poverty is asking the government to put in place the same triple lock for child benefit and child tax credit. The report shows that 4.1 million families and 7.7 million children have been affected by below inflationary uprating of child benefit and child tax credit over the past three years. One in five families - the equivalent of one and a half million families, with two and a half million children - said that they had cut back on food, and a similar proportion had to cut back on heating their home as a result of benefits being increased below inflation.

Practice

3. Early years agenda: an evidence-based manifesto for change

The Pre-school Learning Alliance has published a post-election manifesto for the new Conservative government. The manifesto focuses on three key areas of policy — funding, 'schoolification' and Ofsted — and outlines the Alliance's key calls to action to the new government.

4. How Early Years Profile data can be used to influence health visiting practice: free webinar

This webinar, created for health visitors, explains how the Early Years Profiles can used to influence their practice. It discusses the importance and purpose of early years data, and explains how to use each of the four Early Years Profiles views.

5. Preparing minority ethnic children for starting primary school: integrating health and education

The Marmot Review (2010) recommended support for transition between home and primary school as this is highlighted as a period which may be particularly challenging for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This paper draws on findings from a small study with foundation stage minority ethnic children, their parents and school teachers in a northern city in England, together with relevant literature to identify issues in transition of minority ethnic children to primary school.

6. Building social capital through breastfeeding peer support

Peer support is reported to be a key method to help build social capital in communities. This paper reports the findings from an evaluation of a voluntary model of breastfeeding peer support in North-West England to describe how the service was operationalised and embedded into the community.

7. Barnardo's analysis of children's centre funding

Research by Barnardo's into Department for Education figures reveal, during the period 2010/11 to 2014/15, the annual children's centres expenditure has decreased sharply from £1.2 billion to an estimated £740 million. Barnardo's is calling on the new government to act now to stop the decrease in funding of children's centres.

8. **High-quality, inclusive childcare in schools**

Family Action is being funded by the DfE as part of The National Prospectus Grants Programme 2015-16 to deliver a new programme, **Increasing the provision of high-quality, inclusive school-based childcare for 0-5s with SEND**. The aim of the programme is to increase the provision and improve the quality of inclusive childcare for 0-5s with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). If you are a school-based provider you can visit the **Learning Exchange website**, where Family Action will be sharing news, tip sheets, templates, and case studies from settings across England.

9. **Pupil absence in schools in England: autumn term 2014**

This Department for Education release provides information on the levels of overall, authorised and unauthorised absence in state-funded primary schools, state-funded secondary schools and pupil referral units. It gives information on reasons for absence and persistent absence. The overall absence rate for four year olds decreased slightly from 5.2 per cent in autumn 2013 to 5.1 per cent in autumn 2014.

10. **More babies with 'special guardianship orders' as adoptions fall**

The number of babies being made subject to special guardianship orders in England has tripled in two years, according to figures obtained by the BBC. The measure sees a child placed with extended family, friends or foster parents until they reach 18 instead of being adopted or fostered. The figures showed that the number of babies involved rose from 160 in 2012 to 520 in 2014, while most of the children are aged four or under. The number of children placed for adoption has been falling. The Department for Education says it is reviewing the situation, but acknowledged local authorities are placing more young children with special guardians.

Research

11. **'… For the love of children and the joy of childhood': the reported values, beliefs and practices of male practitioners within early childhood education and care in England**

There is a lack of research on the experiences of men in the early childhood education and care workforce. Drawing on data collected from an online questionnaire, this study explored the reported values, beliefs and experiences of male practitioners working with children aged 0–5 years. Participants shared extremely positive experiences of their current work; however, the findings reflected the need to reconsider the extent to which cultural conceptions of gender roles and identities have changed in the area of early childhood education and care in the 21st century.

12. **Children's and young people's reading in 2014**

The fifth annual literacy survey, conducted by the National Literacy Trust, involved over 32,000 children and young people aged eight to 18. It shows that levels of reading enjoyment and daily reading outside class are both at their highest levels in nine years. However, the gap between the proportion of girls and boys who enjoy reading has increased and more girls are reading daily outside class. Children and young people who read daily outside class are five times more likely to read above the expected level for their age compared with young people who never read outside class. The findings also show there is still more to do to raise awareness among parents of how important their engagement is for their child's literacy development, particularly among the most disadvantaged children.

13. **School readiness: the views of pre-service preschool teachers and pre-service primary teachers**

This study published in Early Child Development and Care compared the views of the concept of school readiness as reported by 50 pre-service preschool teachers and 50 pre-service primary teachers. Findings from semi-structured interviews showed that both groups of teachers had similar views related to school readiness. Both emphasised that school readiness may be defined through the lens of developmental domains, and agreed that the most effective people in the school-readiness process were parents. However, there were some differences between the pre-school respondents and the primary school teachers. For instance, when defining school readiness, enhancing all developmental skills of children was mostly emphasised by the primary group.

14. **Early childhood educators' conceptions of infants' capabilities: the nexus between beliefs and practice**

Research on infants' development and the role of adults in infant learning has positioned infants as both being capable of independent learning, and needing adult intervention and involvement. However, there is a lack of research on educators' understanding of infants' capabilities, and how these conceptions influence their practices with babies. This study published in Early Years examined the ways educators' conceptions are influenced. Findings show that educators held conceptions of infants as more capable of independently directing their own physical and cognitive learning, and as more dependent on educators for emotional and social learning. Implications of how the practices might enable and constrain infants' learning are explored.

15. **The achievement gap in education**

Routledge Education has put together a dedicated research collection on the issues related to raising standards in education, focusing on the achievement gap. The collection includes a section on Primary and Early Years education.

Ofsted

16. **Ofsted good practice examples – early years**

Ofsted has created a new webpage with examples of good practice in early years providers. The examples are organised into the following categories: Art; Communication and languages; Early Years Foundation Stage; Engagement and inclusion; Improving; Information and communication technology; Learning; Outdoors; Reading; and Writing.

17. **Inspecting early years: handbook for inspectors**

This guidance is for inspectors conducting inspections under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006. It sets out what Ofsted inspectors must do and what early years providers can expect, and provides guidance for inspectors on making their judgements.

Health and Wellbeing

18. **National Maternity Review**

NHS England has announced the full list of members for the national maternity review, a major review of maternity services set to modernise care for women and babies across the country. The review will be led by Baroness Julia Cumberlege, who outlines the importance of the review in this blog.

Safeguarding

19. **NSPCC: Update for Directors of Public Health: Identifying 'invisible' babies**

The NSPCC has asked all Directors of Public Health to complete an online survey on the number of pregnant women and babies living in socially excluded families in their local area. Please note that the deadline for completion has been extended to **Friday 29th May 2015** - please contact Alice Haynes with any queries: **Alice.Haynes@nspcc.org.uk**

Disability and Special Needs

20. Inclusive childcare

The Family and Childcare Trust has developed a series of case studies, looking at childcare providers around the country who are best meeting the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The case studies showcase the good practice already being delivered by specific childcare providers, illustrating what should be in place in order to provide for children's individual needs and demonstrates ideas about how settings could become more inclusive. There are four filmed case studies and a number of written case studies.

21. Statements of SEN and EHC plans: England 2015

This DfE release provides statistics and analysis on statements of special educational needs (SEN) and education, health and care (EHC) plans. 4,205 EHC plans and 235,980 statements were in place at 15 January 2015.

Conferences

5 June 2015, Birmingham
Pre-School Learning Alliance Annual Conference and AGM
This year's event celebrates the unique learning and development of young children: their communication and language, physical, personal, social and emotional development.

11-12 June 2015, Coventry
Essential Nursery Conference
Organised by the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA), the conference will feature a range of speakers and workshops.

12-13 June 2015, Plymouth
2015 Early Education Annual National Conference: Explore, Discover, Create

23 June 2015, London
Reconnecting with Maths: Engaging practitioners and parents in children's mathematical development

25 June 2015, Leeds
Reconnecting with Maths: Engaging practitioners and parents in children's mathematical development

2 July 2015, London
Two-Year-Olds: The drive for high-quality provision
This Nursery World one-day conference will focus on the latest policy and best practice to help settings deliver places that meet the emotional and learning needs of two-year-olds.

17 July 2015, Margate
6th Annual Baby Room Conference: Babysong
This conference, with a focus on singing with babies is for anyone whose work involves the care, learning, development and wellbeing of babies and young children from birth to two. Keynote speakers are Dr Susan Young, Exeter University (Music One to One Project) and Dr Carmel Brennan, Early Childhood Ireland (The Lullaby Project).

22-25 July 2015, Edinburgh
My Rights, My Voice: Celebrating the Rights of the Child: International Family Day Care Organisation Conference
This international conference, held every three years, is hosted by the Scottish Childminding Association and Children in Scotland. The conference will focus on three themes: The importance of play; Learning and development; and Participation, listening and the right to be heard.

24 July 2015, London
Provision and Use of Preschool Childcare in Britain
This event will present key findings from a new research study, looking at how parents combine formal and informal care; and the characteristics, qualifications and work patterns of the children's workforce.
Email Michelle Cage at **M.Cage@ioe.ac.uk** to book your place. This seminar is free but spaces are limited, so please book early to avoid disappointment.

30-31 October 2015, Birmingham
TACTYC Conference: Children's and practitioners' experiences of early years care and education
The aim of TACTYC conferences is to enable people interested in the promotion of high quality early childhood services to meet together and to share opportunities for the highest quality professional development, to offer and receive mutual support and to encourage debate and discussion.

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Please note that there may be a charge to download or view some documents featured in the Bulletin.

The Early Childhood Unit (ECU) works to sustain and improve the quality of services for young children through direct work with children's services and settings, and through its national networks. This fortnightly bulletin provides up to date news and information for the Early Years sector, including research, policy and resources.