



The Michael Sieff Foundation

Working together for children's welfare

**THE RECEPTION YEARS:
ensuring children's well-being from
3-5 including preparing for school**

REPORT ON THE CONFERENCE HELD:

21 - 23 SEPTEMBER 2009

***Cumberland Lodge,
Windsor Great Park***

Report published November 2009

CONTENTS

Title	Page Number
Foreword and Acknowledgements	3
DAY 1 – 21 SEPTEMBER 2009	
1. Welcome from Sieff Chairman – John Tenconi	5
2. Overview of the key issues about children’s early school years? Professor Christine Pascal, Director, Centre for Research in Early Childhood, Birmingham <i>For a copy of Christine Pascal’s PowerPoint presentation please: click here</i>	6
3. Development and change in the pre-school child Wendy Rose, Senior Research Fellow, Open University <i>For a copy of Wendy Rose’s PowerPoint presentation please: click here</i>	12
4. SureStart / Children’s Centres – preparation for learning Fiona Colton, Head of Service, Childcare & Family Learning, Derby City Council <i>For a copy of Fiona Coltons PowerPoint presentation please: click here</i>	16
DAY 2 – 22 SEPTEMBER 2009	
5. Managing disability – historical overview and the inclusion debate - Philippa Russell, Policy Adviser on Disability, National Children’s Bureau <i>For a copy of Philippa Russell’s PowerPoint presentation please: click here</i>	21
6. Whatever the problem – the workforce is the solution Jane Haywood, Chief Executive, Children’s Workforce Development Council <i>For a copy of Jane Haywood’s PowerPoint presentation please: click here</i>	25
7. Dealing with troubled children – targeted intervention in the learning setting: Natalia Stafler, Primary Schools Project Manager, The Anna Freud Centre <i>For a copy of Natalia Stafler’s PowerPoint presentation please: click here</i>	30
8. The longer term effects of early years experiences: Ted Melhuish, Professor of Human Development, Birkbeck College, University of London <i>For a copy of Ted Melhuish’s PowerPoint presentation please: click here</i>	34
9. AFTER DINNER SPEECH - No Fear: growing up in a risk averse society: Tim Gill, Writer and Consultant <i>For a copy of Tim Gill’s Speech please: click here</i>	38
DAY 3 – 23 SEPTEMBER 2009	
10. Overview of the conference and resulting research needs: Michael Little, Director, Dartington Social Research Unit	39
11. Plenary Discussion	42
12. Response from the DCSF: Paul Dagleish, Deputy Head, Family Policy Development & Delivery & Ruth Talbot, Assistant Director, Quality and Standards Division <i>For a copy of the DCSF’s PowerPoint presentation please: click here</i>	48
13. Conference Recommendations	52
Appendix 1: List of Delegates	55
Appendix 2: Useful / Relevant Reports	57

FOREWORD

This is a Report on the 22nd Annual Residential Conference of the Michael Sieff Foundation.

In 2007 the Foundation decided at its 20th Anniversary meeting to embark on a five year conference programme of examining the prevention of the abuse of children and young people, the protection of their emotional and mental health and well-being and improvements in work with young offenders. All these are of course interlinked in their aetiology.

In 2008 the conference was entitled: From Conception to Reception: Early Years Intervention (the report is also available on this website).

This 22nd conference considered more specifically the issues involved in bringing up children in modern society from the important stage of a child's life before the start of school and the transition into school to the end of the reception year. Speakers addressed the development and change in the pre-school child, preparation for learning, the management of children with additional needs and the provision of a suitable workforce.

The conference provided an all too rare opportunity for those involved in the policy and practice development of early years' services, including those in Central and Local Government, Primary Care Trusts, CAMHS, Children's Services, Education, Research and Child Welfare Agencies, to discuss their work in a more relaxed atmosphere than might usually be the case.

The Foundation will continue to organise its annual conference and seek to publicise the important messages which emerge every year.

Richard White
Secretary

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend a thank you to members of the conference steering group (Richard White, Francis Listowel, Stephen Pizzey and Dr Eileen Vizard) for developing the programme and contributing to the planning and organisation of this event.

My thanks too to all the speakers for their fascinating presentations, their useful input during the conference and for their contribution to this report. A particular thanks to Paul Dalglish and Ruth Talbot from the DCSF for their support and helpful input to this years conference. I am extremely grateful again to Wendy Rose for agreeing to chair this year's conference.

A special thank you goes to all the staff at Cumberland Lodge who made us very welcome and comfortable during our stay. We are indebted to Louise Appleby for organising the conference.

John Tenconi
Chairman

DAY 1 – 21 SEPTEMBER 2009

1. WELCOME FROM CHAIRMAN OF THE MICHAEL SIEFF FOUNDATION – JOHN TENCONI

Good afternoon and welcome to this year's Sieff conference. I would like to share some observations with you about this year's event:

This year we decided to reduce the number of speakers in an attempt to alleviate some of the pressure, which delegates have felt in previous years by allowing increased time for debate on issues and questions to speakers, which will hopefully help to enhance even further the quality and meaningfulness of your conference output and recommendations this year.

Sadly, though, some of our longstanding delegates from within the charity sector and indeed the major organisations within that have had to give their apologies in the current financial climate. As I observed at the Legal Conference, which we held in April of 2008, it is a shocking indictment of a so called developed society if it does not devote appropriate resource to the future of the next generations, particularly those members, who are so disadvantaged that they may not speak for themselves. In this time of heightened economic pressure on Government and citizens it is even more important that organisations like Sieff continue to address the needs of those people otherwise the most vulnerable will inevitably be the most susceptible to further cuts in the support, help and attention they deserve.

We are therefore continuing to do so with this, the second year of our 5 year conference programme. We are particularly pleased to have such a good representation from Local Government and have received much helpful input and representation from the DCFS. We appreciate the pre conference preparation done by our talented speakers, delegates and trustees alike and hope to turn that very much to account in producing this year's recommendations.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE KEY ISSUES ABOUT CHILDREN'S EARLY SCHOOL YEARS

Presentation By: Professor Christine Pascal, Director, Centre for Research in Early Childhood Birmingham

Christine is Research Director of the Centre for Research in Early Childhood in Birmingham. She has led number of national and international large-scale research projects, including the Effective Early Learning Programme, the Accounting Early for Life Long Learning Programme and the Children Crossing Borders Project.

Key Points from Presentation

Introduction

This is a time of historic significance for our society. It is often said that the mark of a civilised society is how it treats its very young and very old. In England we might reflect that historically we have not performed well on either of these markers compared with many other European countries but things are changing. Today is not a day to focus on the elderly, although they need attention too. This conference is celebrating the young child and critically examining the success of the 'quiet' but none-the-less radical 'revolution' in services for children and families that has been underway in recent years. I feel there is a great deal we can now be proud of and we can no longer be humiliated as offering our youngest citizens the Cinderella service of the recent past.

The main thrust of all the changes in early years provision we have seen is to better secure children's well being and give them a strong start to living well throughout the rest of their lives – it is much more than a mere preparation for school. The focus of today is on the Reception Years, roughly defined as being from three to five years. However, I shall argue that the reception years provide at best a marker, or guide, to how well we as a society has done with our children during the more formative first 36 months of life, and it is this phase of learning that still presents enormous challenges to policy and practice. We now know an awful lot about how our youngest children learn and what conditions best enable them to succeed in school and all that follows, including their old age. How well we are doing in putting this knowledge into practice to ensure all our young children, and particularly the most excluded, get the best possible start to their lives, is the focus of this presentation.

This presentation will explore:

- what we know about children's learning
- what conditions support early learning
- how policy and practice has responded to this knowledge
- what challenges remain

We shall begin with some visual clues about the mastery, talents and expertise of our youngest children: they are indeed supremely competent human beings.

- Video footage of Freddie: Introducing a unique and competent young child

1. What do we know about children's learning?

We now see young children as highly competent and active learners from birth. New evidence from neuroscience shows that the brain is developing fastest in the first months of life and that learning begins from the moment we exist. Longitudinal studies have also shown that the earliest learning is the most formative and long lasting. Studies reveal that children are learning in all contexts and from all interactions and experiences. Further, a child's personal, social and emotional capacity underpins all other areas of learning and needs particularly nurture and scaffolding. The child's ability to use language(s) to interact with and make sense of their world, is also essential to the learning process, as learning is both a social and cognitive process and so requires the capacity to communicate well. It should also be noted that children learn with and through interactions which are culturally and contextually situated and therefore diverse. Finally, recent studies are emphasising again that the mind and body are linked so movement is essential for development and learning to occur.

2. What do we know about the conditions which support early learning?

We have increasing knowledge of the enabling conditions for learning. Companionship and attachment between children and the adults who share their lives is essential. Children thrive within affectionate and encouraging relationships. Positive and stable relationships within the family and wider community support the child's attachment, security and sense of belonging. Experience of high quality early years settings can make a difference to a child's life chances but the home environment is the most formative context for learning. Supporting the development of a positive sense of self and identity within the young child enables exploration, curiosity and agency to flower. An enabling environment for learning includes both the socio-emotional climate and a stimulating physical environment. Movement, space and freedom to explore rich environments indoors and outdoors create positive conditions for self directed, deep level learning to occur.

3. How has policy and practice met these challenges?

There has been serious and sustained investment to build capacity and commitment in the system prior to compulsory school entry to secure the Every Child matters (ECM) outcomes. This rapid and significant increase in attention to the early years of children's life in Government policy has won international recognition. Within this policy there has been an increase in the rights and entitlements of young children and their parents to expect high quality services from birth and in ensuring their participation and voice in the development and delivery of services. A key part of realising this vision has been work to raise the status, qualifications and career pathways of the early years' workforce, which traditionally has been held in low esteem and poorly remunerated. Enhancing leadership in the early years' system is important in ensuring the change agenda is realised.

The establishment of the statutory early years' curriculum (EYFS) from birth to the reception year (The Foundation Stage), creating a unified and cohesive phase of education prior to the National Curriculum protects Reception class children from an inappropriate model of learning. The EYFS also ensures continuity and progression across the diverse range of service providers from birth to five, and also aims to raise the quality of practice and level the playing field across different providers. Clarifying expectations and awareness of what constitutes quality services, and embedding quality improvement processes in all settings, should ensure the movement from acceptable but often mediocre services towards a universally excellent system. The push to restructure the system to create integrated services (Children's Centres), with education, health and social care support for children and families, with a clear

acknowledgment that care and education are inseparable from birth, will help to ensure earlier intervention and support for those who need it most. Ensuring children's safety and protecting them from harm is also a key priority for which action has been taken. This quick resume provides some indication of the considerable progress that has been made.

4. What challenges remain?

As I said earlier, I am suggesting that we have made enormous strides in developing an early years' service fit for 21st century demands. However, the job is not done and I believe the biggest challenge facing us right now is in holding our nerve and sustaining, or even increasing, the necessary funding and political commitment to ensure these achievements are not lost during times of economic constraint. This challenge will require a concerted campaign to convince the unconvinced of the benefits of continuing such a significant scale of investment. It will also require more than an economic rationale, but demand that we make the ethical and moral case for sustained investment. This debate is fundamentally about what kind of society we all want to live in and will involve all of us in decisions which are based on our values, our ethics and our beliefs. In making this case there is an urgent need to better disseminate information and awareness of the 'quiet and historic revolution' that has occurred and how it is contributing to achieving a more cohesive, inclusive, secure and responsible society.

The legislative process over the next few months will be imperative in securing, embedding and extending a universal system for all children from birth to five which is as secure as schools. This would also help in the realignment of the early years and school systems to ensure smooth transitions and the structural change demanded to create a cohesive birth to nineteen approach in policy and practice across the country. As the demographic 'time bomb' hits, the recruitment and retention of a more qualified and inclusive early years' workforce may become more difficult. Finally, the priority which needs better understanding is the enormous struggle we face in engaging the 'most excluded' families and children in non-statutory services earlier – and I mean well before the 'reception years'. Making better progress here is the only chance we have to secure not only children's well being but more critically, greater equity, improved equality of outcomes and a more socially just society. Every year that goes by results in more of our most vulnerable children living their lives without the opportunities to develop their full capacity and talent and, inevitably, this results in further costs to society. I agree that today we need to acknowledge the Reception years as a significant milestone in our progress in helping children into school but would argue that much more needs to happen earlier.

For a copy of Christine Pascal's PowerPoint presentation please [click here](#)

Questions and Answers to Christine Pascal

What is it that kids learn best from other kids, or learn only from other kids?

I don't know that we can say that there is something that they only learn from other children and something they only learn from adults, because I think it depends on the relationship, the closeness and the proximity, but I do absolutely agree that children learn from their peers an enormous amount, and one of the issues in society in the 21st century is that children are growing up in smaller and smaller family units. I am one of six and I know the power of the learning and development that went on amongst my family, my siblings. But I am also aware

of what I learned from my parents and the other things. What did I learn? I learned things about having to take care of yourself when there was nobody around to sort things out for you, so resilience; when to stand up and fight, when to run away.

We used to have this place in Birmingham -- I lived at the back of the Longbridge Car Works; that's another story there, isn't it? -- and around the back was this place called the allotments, where we weren't supposed to go but that's where we all went. And we all went, all my brothers and sisters went, but the other kids around the community went there, and we got up to all kinds of stuff there, away from being supervised, I suppose, and all kinds of monkey business, really. We took risks, explored, we lit fires, we floated each other down streams, we climbed trees, we fell out of trees.

So it's that robustness of getting on where people aren't always going to have your best interests at heart, you do not have that connectivity, or that supposed wisdom of other children.

But I think we also learned things like -- there is that sense of self that you learn about who you are in relation to others, but we also learned about community, how to take care of others, the younger ones, or how to be taken care of. So I suppose it's the personal, social and emotional stuff you learn a lot from your peer group.

The other thing that you do in those kind of contexts is have adventures that you wouldn't have in a constrained way, and that brings you into contact with all kinds of other areas of learning that we can categorise as science, music and arts. My family was not musical but we used to play with a family that was musical, so you get contact with all of that.

It is quite an interesting thing reflect on, but the peer group is very powerful. I wouldn't go as far as Judith Rich Harris, by the way. I would contest quite a lot of what she says, but I acknowledge the central thrust that the peer group is as formative -- I don't know whether it is more formative, but it is as formative.

What can be done where the early damage or the early disadvantage to a child has been so marked?

I have to say, absolutely, that it's never too late, you know. There is some optimism in Michael Rutter's work in that what he shows is that there are critical moments and incidents all the way through our lives where, if you get the right kind of support at that critical moment, even with older children, you can begin to change their direction of travel from being an inevitable trajectory like that into that way again. So it is putting the right kind of support at critical moments as the child goes through. It is never too late, but what I am saying is that it's harder later, and there are actually some critical things around language development and social relationships that, if they are missing in those first months of life, we really do struggle to readdress those things. They are the lifetime things, the base things that children need to make the most of what comes later.

So if a lot of the conditions haven't been right early on and you have these children, where do you start? There is a hierarchy with that. You have to start with supporting children's emotional well-being, their emotional security, their sense of self, their sense of identity. There is the capacity to interact socially with their peers and others around them, and that will give them the dispositions and attitudes where you might then be able to start working.

I suppose I rally against those who say that what we have to concentrate on is the basics, because for me the basics are social and emotional stability and security, and then the other stuff.

I am polarising because you wouldn't do that and not other things as well, but that is where you need to do the work, I think, where you have vulnerable children coming through. We don't live in an ideal world and we cannot wrap children in cotton wool. Stuff happens. It

happens to everybody. There is always the optimistic chance that you can make a difference, but the difference that will matter most for that child is around their capacity to be emotionally secure, to find attachments, to make friends and to be able to open themselves up to alternatives. So that is where I would start.

Do you think we are pushing parents into putting their children in nursery care too earlier, when the child is too young? Or are we moving in the right direction with our childcare strategy?

Are we moving in the right direction? I think the whole term "childcare" is of another century. I don't want to use that term because I think it skews and changes the debate. What we are into is saying who in a community can support the nurturance of the generation of children who are growing up in that community. Even if the mother is at home, the child will need somewhere to go to interact more widely than that, so these Children's Centres are places where families together and sometimes children on their own, sometimes parents on their own, should be able to come to get companionship and learning and enjoy.

Sometimes, because parents want to work or need to work, then the child might need to be left. There is quite a lot of evidence to say that that institutionalised care is too early on, but generally that is because the quality of that care is not good. I think we have a great deal of work to do with those who look after our youngest children. They are generally the least qualified; the kinds of resourcing and facilities the children are in are not that good, that appropriate. They should be in homely environments. If you have a childcare setting that is like a home, not an institution, that is where home based or family based childcare like childminders do a wonderful job for us, because they give that to the child. Where the relationship is right and the child is supported and they know what they are doing, then there is no evidence that that damages the child; it actually can extend and add to what the family has provided.

So I think some of the rhetoric is a bit polarised and dogmatic. I wish we would move away from the childcare agenda. All children, whether their parents are working or not, need places to go where there are other children.

I tried to show early on that in the first months of life the child needs the companionship of other children. It is very good for them to have that. Sometimes that might be with the parent, sometimes that might be without the parent. I do think sending children out of home too early -- that is why I think the Government's move to allow parental leave is so important, where parents really do have a choice if they can be at home. Isn't there something this week about saying the fathers and mothers can have six months and six months? That to me seems eminently sensible. In a lot of other European countries, the first year the parent can be at home and it's a genuine choice, but we have to remember, some parents choose not to be, or cannot be. So how do we provide the right conditions? I am not too fussed about what it is called or where it is. Are the conditions right?

As I say, I wish we could move away from using the term "childcare". What we are about is much more than that.

A lot of children don't have a positive male role model until they get to secondary school. What is being done to get more men into primary and nursery education?

Yes, it is a very gendered profession. The experiences and the culture is a very gendered feminised one, and it does have those consequences.

I actually also think girls need males around them, as well as boys. How do we do it? It is not just an English thing this is across the world, and it comes because the whole history of care of young children is viewed as women's work and low status. That is part of the agenda of the Children's Workforce Development and the career pathways and changing that kind of thing.

I actually think that if you move towards more integrated provision, where you have health education, care, we tend to see a less gendered team. When you have a mix of professions there you actually tend to have more males working in that kind of environment.

There are strategies and policies that can be done. I know one of the Scandinavian countries has a quota that says they have to employ and they have to incentivize males to come and work in it, but I do think it is quite hard for males at the moment to come in. There are all those issues around paedophiles, and the culture is one that has made it harder, not easier, actually. We sometimes think it is always going to be the males that abuse, not the females. In fact we know from the evidence that that is not true.

So there are lots of complexities behind that question. Work has to be done to reengage fathers in family life in a more proactive way, and it is going on. There is a lot of work at policy level to think through how that might happen, but on the ground I don't see a lot of progress being made. It is diversity in all its forms. It's a very gendered workforce, it's a very middle class workforce, and it's a very ethnically unmixed workforce often, too.

There is progress to be made. I am not depressed by that, by the way, I like a challenge, but we have to think through how we do that. There is some fabulous work going on try and help us learn how to do things differently.

3. DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE IN THE PRE-SCHOOL CHILD

**Presentation by: Wendy Rose OBE, Senior Research Fellow,
Open University**

Wendy is a Senior Research Fellow at The Open University, working on national and international child welfare research and development projects. She is currently a professional adviser to the Scottish Government and was previously a senior civil servant in the Department of Health in England. She is Vice-Chair of Home-Start UK. With Jane Aldgate and David Jones, she produced *The Developing World of the Child* (JKP 2006) for DCSF.

Key Points from Presentation

Why are concepts of development, progression and milestones useful in practice and planning? What helps to promote wellbeing in pre-school children? What happens when children's development is interrupted or their needs cannot be met? What are the implications for service providers?

The notion of children progressing through different, observable stages:

- fits with empirical observation of children everywhere – growing bigger, mastering new skills
- makes feasible the measurement of developmental progress in individual children
- provides a benchmark of wellbeing upon which care and education programmes can be built

Questions raised about adopting a developmental approach

- How far are general patterns of development socially and culturally defined as well as biologically determined – caution needed
- How far can description of developmental stages be interpreted as normative? How can they accommodate strong individual differences and variability between children?
- How far is each stage truly distinctive and separate from an earlier stage of development?

Key features of a developmental perspective

- For every child there is a sense of progression and increasing complexity
- Each stage builds on the previous stage but is not discrete
- Children become increasingly more organised, integrated and more complex
- Different stages of development lead to more competent individuals

The use of a developmental framework for children

- To understand changes that appear to be universal
- To explain individual differences
- To understand how behaviour is influenced by the environmental context or situation
- To assist professionals and service providers to help children develop as well as possible

Milestones are important to

- identify that as children grow, with appropriate inputs, they become competent and confident in different areas, and that development occurs in the same order for all children but not necessarily at the same rate
- identify impairments as early as possible in order to provide appropriate services
- modify milestones for disabled children and maximise outcomes for them
- Professionals should not assume impairment in one area means impairments in all areas
- Early identification of impairments is necessary to promote the best developmental opportunities for each child
- Impairments are only one part of a child's total life

Development and change in pre-school children

- Exciting and significant change, marked by energy, curiosity and imagination
- Still highly dependent but also developing more autonomy – increased independent mobility plus increased understanding of separateness from but interdependence with others
- More mastery in every area of development, including development of memory
- More open to influences beyond immediate family
- By age of 5, brain is 90% of its adult weight

Some key points at this stage

- A child treated with kindness and respect and observing people they care about treating others with kindness and respect is more likely to develop kindness and morality
- A child is more able to recognise the perspectives of others and converse about inner states if encouraged by family discussion of feelings and motives
- By 4, a child should be reasonably good at controlling aggression – if not, it needs to be taken seriously

Influences on development in pre-school children

- Too simplistic to say parents are primarily responsible for children's development
- Children are increasingly influenced by relationships with many others in their environment, including siblings and wider family, friends, other adults in school and community
- But children are still vulnerable to the worst effects of separation because they have developed selective attachments and are laying the foundations of autonomy

Children also influence their own development

- Children are not blank slates; interact with those around them
- Children can select and shape environments appropriate to their own characteristics
- Children are active agents in their own lives given the right opportunities
- Children bring their imagination, energy and creativity to their own development

Key problems for children 3-4 years when parenting capacity impaired

- Physical needs neglected – unfed, unwashed
- Increased risk of direct physical violence and witnessing domestic violence leading to inappropriate behavioural responses
- Cognitive development delayed because of fear and anxiety preventing exploration of environment and through lack of stimulation, disorganisation, failure to attend pre-school
- Secure attachment may be damaged by inconsistent parenting
- Trauma and stress may result in regression
- When parents' behaviour is unpredictable and frightening, may display symptoms similar to post-traumatic stress disorder

Protective factors for children 3-4 years

- Presence of an alternative, consistent, caring adult, able to respond to child's cognitive and emotional needs; safe adult listening & observing
- Sufficient income support and good physical standards in the home
- Regular long-term family support from health, social care services and community services
- Regular attendance at pre-school facilities
- Safe and supportive residence for mothers subject to violence/threat of violence

A more positive and optimistic view of impact of adversity on childhood

- Stress in early years need not affect children permanently; they can develop resilience
- Children who miss out on particular experiences can make up ground
- Healthy development can occur under a far wider range of circumstances than was thought possible in the past

Factors associated with resilience are: a sense of self esteem and confidence; a belief in own self efficacy and ability to deal with change and adaptation; a repertoire of problem-solving approaches

Pre-school children in adverse situations have a right to be given the best possible chances

- Outcomes depend on inputs, which are often fragmented and not co-ordinated
- All professionals need to keep the whole child in their thoughts and actions
- Importance of planning help in partnership with the family

Impact on parenting may be:

- Difficulty in organising their lives and meeting their own and children's physical needs – shopping, cooking, cleaning are neglected
- Roles reverse as children assume physical and emotional care of parent and younger siblings
- Increasingly focused on their own issues
- Difficulty controlling their emotions; severe mood swings can frighten children
- Capacity to form strong bonds with their child may be affected – resulting in insecure attachments

For a copy of Wendy Rose's PowerPoint presentation please [click here](#)

4. SURESTART / CHILDREN'S CENTRES – PREPARATION FOR LEARNING

Presentation by: Fiona Colton, Head of Service, Childcare & Family Learning, Derby City Council

Fiona Colton has 30 years experience of working in the early years sector in a variety of roles. Her current position is Head of Service, Childcare and Family Learning. Her brief includes strategic development of Extended Services across Children's Centres and extended schools. She has responsibility for implementing the Local Authority's responsibility for the Childcare Act Early Years Outcome Duty and strategic development and management of family learning and study support.

Key Points from Presentation

Fiona Colton considers the Derby scene in relation to Children's Centres. Population of 221,614; Children and young people 52,277; Under 5's 15,946.

- Rich mix of cultures and backgrounds; 12.6% BME and 60 languages
- 23.3% of school age children from BME communities
- 11,200 children living in out-of- work families
- 14 Children's Centres currently operational; by March 2010 will be 18

Grown from four Sure Start Local Programmes, Neighbourhood Nurseries and sited on school sites

- All managed by the Local Authority with Children's Centres in every community; accessible for all families especially those who find services difficult to access
- 0-5 Integrated Early Years and Childcare at seven sites; for 3-5 year olds on six sites
- Integrated Early Years and Childcare with Child Health Services, Family Support, Access to learning and training; Family Information Services, Good quality learning environment, Well qualified staff, including Children's Centre teacher, Recognition of parents as primary educators

PEEP (Peers early education programme) integral to the Children's Centre Core Offer

- Early Years Foundation Stage focus
- Role modelling for parents; Experiences of play which is easy to transfer into the home; Play sessions clear focus on Early Years Foundation Stage
- Stay and Weigh sessions; Speech and Language drop ins; Healthy Eating sessions
- Be Active; PEEP delivered in the home; Family visiting and outreach

Targeted training: Job skills; Basic skills; Level 1 childcare training; Safeguarding

- Family Nurse Partnership; Social and Emotional Aspects of Development; Buddying; Singing Playgrounds; Baby Room Project
- Research in the USA showed that music and movement for children from very disadvantaged families at the beginning of the day was highly beneficial to their cognitive development. The research showed that these affects weren't repeated if the music and movement was undertaken later in the day.
- For children with disabilities there are a number of Special Schools across the city, and we work in partnership with our Children's Centres. There is open access for children with disability and their parents, and they are supported. We have a number of family visitors who have just done some specialist training, including on autism.
- In order to ensure the long term viability of Children's Centres, there is a strong performance management system that looks at, particularly with things like PEEP tracking our children through. We look at those families that we have worked with who may have moved into work, so we capture all that data. Good performance management systems and good self-evaluation can actually show where families are starting and where they are moving to.
- The early years workforce across the Children's Centres is predominantly women; with some male nursery nurses. There are about 60 family visitors, with five male family visitors. We have a rich mix of cultures, with about 15 black and Asian family visitors. We have proactively recruited men for Children's Centres and childcare, in particularly the family visitor, the key role in Children's Centres. In our early years workforce we have a high proportion of mostly female black and Asian workers. That is right across management as well, with black and Asian workers: no male Children's Centre leads.
- We identify children in need, on Child Protection Plans, where there is some instance of family breakdown. We ensure that family visitors offer the right support to those families. In the surrounding areas we are not reaching black families particularly. On average each of the operational Children's Centres are reaching 100 to 150 families. Once all 18 are operational, we would want to reach at least 80 per cent or more.

For a copy of Fiona Colton's PowerPoint presentation please [click here](#)

Questions and Answers to Fiona Colton

Research in the USA showed that music and movement for children from very disadvantaged families at the beginning of the day was highly beneficial to their cognitive development. The research showed that these affects weren't repeated if the music and movement was undertaken later in the day.

There is evidence that what you are doing there really can work and be advanced. But timing might be everything, so at the beginning of the day. There may be quite an interesting thing to develop there.

I think there is sometimes a danger, though, that you can absolutely load children, and sometimes I do worry that you know, we do things in the playground, be active, so all the children are off doing their bit in the morning before they go into school and actually, when is

there some time for them to just be calm? It is getting the balance, but I think it is about opening their minds ready.

How much does it depend on your personality to do this? What is going to happen if you were to leave?

Every local authority has their own way of running Children's Centres. This is how we do it in Derby. I think it is about personalities. We have quite a visionary Assistant Director who, when our Children and Young People's Department was created, came in to manage integrated locality working, which we were piloting in one area of the city: social care, reception, family support and safeguarding, youth service, education, welfare. That was a huge learning curve to start with. For me it was like going home, because my working life started in family support and social work so I loved it, and I think sometimes it is about personalities and it's about the joint vision.

We have lost that Assistant Director and I have moved divisions -- I have moved into performance and commissioning, which I think is right from the point of view that now our Children's Centres are established, my role is to commission that operational management. The challenge is keeping that working relationship together. I guess a lot of Derby's work is around personalities and who it is, and I have been around quite a long time in various different roles, so that does mean I do know quite a lot about the city.

What the voluntary sector has brought to a lot of Children's Centres and early years provision around the UK has been so advantageous, so what was behind the decision to, centralise and control within the local authority. Might you at any stage rethink that?

It is always open to rethinking. Perhaps what I didn't make clear is that whilst the local authority has accountability for all the Children's Centres as far as the budgets, etc., we have some really good partnerships with Barnardo's, with NCH and with the PCT. We have a very active Derby City Children's Network, which is our group of voluntary sector providers. One of our Children's Centres, actually, whilst the local authority are accountable, the centre is a voluntary day nursery, so perhaps I was not as clear as I could have been.

And, yes, I think there is always that opportunity to look at things. I don't think we have got it right, and I think if we look at some of our childcare particularly, I think that has become a challenge to us. When I came into post, neighbourhood nurseries, the plan for Derby was written. If I had that time again I might ask them to stop and rewrite it, because actually it is not always the best thing to have it centrally managed.

How are children with disabilities integrated within the service.

We look at, at the moment, where our Children's Centres are, and work quite closely. We have a number of Special Schools across the city, and we work in very close partnerships with our Children's Centres at the hub. I would say that from our childcare sufficiency and everything, that is our weakness. That is where there is still quite a lot of work to do. There is open access for children with disability and their parents, and they are supported. We have a number of family visitors who have just done some specialist training around different conditions, so we have our family visitors who specialise in PDD-NOS, we have a family visitor who has just done some additional training on autism, but we still have a long way to go. That's our one real weakness. You have got it.

I think the important thing is that it is very high on the agenda, and we really need to look at the mapping of the initiatives in Safe Place to Be and those sort of things. What we have at the moment is a piece of land that is attached to one of our Children's Centres that has just been developed into a very small residential home for children with autism, and we are hoping that there will be quite a strong partnership across the two.

The roles and effectiveness of Children's Centres are being questioned. What do you have in place to capture the impact of Children's Centres, so that they can be viability long term?

We have quite a strong performance management system that looks at, particularly with things like PEEP, etc., tracking our children through. We look at those families that we have worked with who may have moved into work, so we capture all that data.

Personally, I think it is still too soon. Our foundation stage profile results have increased. We haven't hit those aspirational targets that DCSF (or DFES as it was at the time) made us set a few years ago. We are on target to do that. That measures some of the impact, but we still have quite a way to go. All my staff team, they know that the minute they say anything to me, the first thing I am saying to them is what is the impact, because actually I think that is the position we are in, particularly now with funding, that we need to show.

One of our private day nurseries had a visit from David Bell, who used to be the lead inspector at OFSTED, who now I am told is very close to Ed Balls. He asked me, "Come 2011, Fiona, which service will you cut?" So you are thinking on your feet as you are eating a sandwich, thinking "Oh, which is the answer he wants"? What I was saying to him at the end of the day was actually if I took a risk I wouldn't cut any of them because actually they are all very valuable, but I would have to say that I need to look at those services that are having the most impact, but actually I still have some work to do to be really able to show that impact. From our point of view, good performance management systems, good self-evaluation, that can actually show where families are starting and where they are moving to.

How representative is your workforce across the Children's Centres of different age groups, disabled people, and particularly black and ethnic groups, and men and women and well?

Men is a challenge, and as we talked about earlier, historically the early years workforce is predominantly women. We have some male nursery nurses, family visitors, we probably have 60 family visitors, and we probably have five male family visitors. We have a very rich mix of cultures, so I would say that if we look at family visitors perhaps as a representative group, across all centres I would say that we have probably about 15 black and Asian family visitors. I couldn't tell you figures on disabled members of staff.

We have proactively gone out to recruit men, and we have had some projects running in our Children's Centres around getting men back into childcare and into particularly that family visitor role, because I think that, for us, is the key role in our Children's Centres.

Again, I think in our early years workforce we have a high proportion of mostly female black and Asian workers. That is right across management as well, with black and Asian workers: no male Children's Centre leads. Heads of service -- well, one actually, the rest are female.

What proportion of families that are eligible do you reach? And are there any particular groups that you are not reaching?

We very much use our data around each of our five localities in the city to look at those children who are identified as children in need, who are in receipt of Child Protection Plans, where there is some instance of family breakdown. So the data that we have we use to ensure that family visitors are trying to capture and offer the right support to those families. Those groups again, sometimes there is a challenge. It is perhaps not in the inner city, where I think there is a rich mixture of culture as far as what we are offering, but out in the surrounding areas we are not reaching our black families particularly. In some areas around the city there are quite large housing estates where they have put very small pockets of social housing. But those communities tend to stick together.

As far as knowing how many families we reach, how long is a piece of string? It depends how you count them. Is 'reach' just about some contact, or is 'reach' about those families that come through the door? On average each of the operational Children's Centres are reaching somewhere within probably 100 to 150 families, but that is sort of the bottom line. I am sure if we unpick that more, or if I got the figures in front of me, I would probably be able to tell you.

When all 18 Children's Centres are fully operational what proportion of that population, that is in need, would you be able to reach, theoretically?

Ultimately you would want to reach a good, I would say, 75 per cent. Actually, ultimately I would want to reach them all, because that is part of the passion, isn't it, actually being able to get out and reach all those families in some way or another, and it may be that actually the whole bit about differentiated services is targeted at those most vulnerable.

I would say that once all 18 are fully operational, that of those that we have identified as the most vulnerable we would want to reach at least 80 per cent or more.

DAY 2 – 22 SEPTEMBER 2009

5. MANAGING DISABILITY – HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND THE INCLUSION DEBATE

Presentation by: Dame Philippa Russell, DBE, CBE Policy Adviser on Disability, National Children's Bureau

Philippa is the Chair of the Prime Minister's Standing Commission on Carers, launched by Gordon Brown on 3rd September 2007. She was Disability Policy Adviser to the National Children's Bureau and was formerly was a Commissioner with the Disability Rights Commission and Director of the Council for Disabled Children.

She is an Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. She has Honorary Doctorates from the University of York and King Alfred's College of Higher Education, Winchester for her work with disabled children and their families and is an Honorary Fellow of the University of Central Lancashire.

Key Points from Presentation

1. The population of disabled children is increasing and changing. Disabled children form the fastest growing group of disabled people in the UK. There is a marked increase in children with autistic spectrum disorders and also with complex health problems and disabilities (largely due to the 'new survivors' of improved neonatal care).
2. Families of disabled children are at greater risk of disadvantage because of their caring roles. Disabled children are more likely to live in families that are financially disadvantaged; are single parent families and have poorer housing than their non-disabled peers. Many families have to give up paid employment because of their caring roles.
3. But notwithstanding the risk of disadvantage, the UK has seen significant developments in improving access, inclusion and practical support for families with disabled children. The **Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005** protect disabled children from discrimination and less favourable treatment in access to health, education and social care. The **Early Years Curriculum** and the emergence of the **Early Years Professional** have improved educational and developmental outcomes. There is a strong emphasis on earlier identification and early support and intervention.
4. **Aiming High for Disabled Children**, the Government's flagship programme to improve outcomes for disabled children and their families through the development of a 'core offer' of integrated assessment, active participation by parents and transparent and achievable feedback and outcomes. For the first time there is a National Indicator (**NI54**) to address parental experiences of services for disabled children. The first national survey to underpin **NI54** suggests that around 59% of families are satisfied with services.

5. **The Early Support Programme** has made a major impact upon the lives of families with a young disabled child. It backs early identification with practical family-focused information and action (including home learning programmes); introduces **keyworkers** and **family files** to maximise parental participation at every stage and provides a range of integrated training materials for early years professionals.
6. **Children's Centres, Sure Start and wider child-care arrangements** have an increasingly inclusive focus, in part in response to their duties under disability discrimination and legislation around special educational needs, but also because of parental pressure and demand. The **EPPE Project** evaluation clearly demonstrates the value of high quality early years education, child-care and support for parents as home educators and has in turn stimulated awareness of the particular importance of high quality early years provision for children with disabilities or SEN.
7. **Challenges for the future** include expanding and adequately resourcing the expansion of Children's Centres, Sure Start and other early years provision with special reference to the changing population of disabled children. The introduction of **Individual Budgets** into children's services is keenly anticipated, with the possibility of greater flexibility in making provision for children with additional needs. Individual budgets also offer the possibility of tailoring family support (such as short breaks) to meet individual needs. Parents' enthusiasm and capacity for being active partners in their child's development must in the end depend upon a holistic and family focused approach to meeting wider family needs as well as maximising outcomes for individual children.
8. But the key message in services and support for disabled children and their families is 'aiming high', with an aspirational approach to maximising access and inclusion, thereby ensuring that disabled children meet the five outcomes set out in *Every Child Matters*. In effect, we now have an agenda for change that should ensure that every *disabled* child matters!

For a copy of Philippa Russell's PowerPoint presentation please [click here](#)

Questions and Answers to Philippa Russell

Many children autistic spectrum are the victims of bullying. A lot of the time parents are told "It's your child's behaviour that has led to the other children bullying them". These children can misreading situations but they can learn to modify their behaviour so as to avoid or stop the bullying.

I think that is a very, very important point, and I think we need to do much more to build up children's resilience. It is very easy for a disabled child to be in a way overprotected so that they become natural victims.

I can think of one school, one young man I know in particular, he is now a young adult, but the story is very relevant. He was at a mainstream school. He had an autistic spectrum disorder for various reasons. He moved to a mainstream school with a Special Unit, and the Special Unit was determined to maximise independence and resilience. There was a lot of opposition from the parents, saying "You are putting these children at risk in making them travel on their own, making them deal with ordinary situations."

Jamie moved on to college, having been through a whole programme which the parents weren't happy about. I knew the parents well, but Jamie knew how to manage his own

behaviour in difficult situations. Jamie had to learn to travel across London to this college in Ealing, and everybody was worried that he would blow up on the underground if the train was late or whatever, but he had various coping strategies.

Jamie was in an underground carriage in Edgware Road station on July 7th, and you know what happened then. He was in the train where one of the terrorist bombs went off. He was in the carriage. A number of people were killed, a number of people were badly injured. Jamie was only mildly hurt, but his resilience training kicked in, and Jamie actually managed everything. He introduced himself to the woman sitting next door. He said "I have got autism. I can get very nervous. Can I hold your hand for a moment, please?" He had his little torch, which he always carried with him, contingencies from school days, and basically, afterwards the people who got out said Jamie kept them going, because he was completely calm.

Now, that is a very extreme example, but it is a reminder this somebody with a temper, capable of blowing up like a volcano, can nonetheless learn to actually manage his behaviour.

Now, nobody expected a terrorist bomb, but they did think somebody might tread on Jamie's foot or push him or something, and he had basically been given a skill such as you are talking about.

This is why, of course, managed inclusion matters, because if children cannot get out and meet their peers, they won't acquire these skills, but they do need a lot of support. A lot of parents now are saying that we need to put life skills into the curriculum right from the start. For example, in early years provision, the head of a Children's Centre was talking to me the other day about a very small child, a little child in this school with cerebral palsy and a lot of problems. Everybody was well prepared, the right support was there, the other children were enthusiastic to help Claudia, but after a month or so, Claudia's mother said "It's absolutely lovely here, but Claudia is looked after like a doll. I mean, the other children love her, she loves them, but she lets them do things with her because she wants to be their friend. Really, she would like to do them herself."

So the centre reorientated its training. They looked at challenges. Then didn't pull back the children who had become Claudia's friend and peer and mentor, but they looked again and they thought, yes, we are not really including this child. She is here, but we are not actually helping her to acquire the independence that she will need for the transition in school. So that was a very important point about the extra skills.

How is parental depression dealt with as distinct from the child's disability?

I think that parental depression can of course have a very negative effect on the child. It may result in overprotection, it may result in withdrawal, particularly if there are hostile neighbours or the community is not felt as safe.

Given that we will never have enough professional support for everybody who needs it, and not all these families will actually have clinical depression which requires formal medical treatment, I think we have to do much more to create and support parents support groups, peer support. There is lots of evidence that if parents are part of a peer support group, that they do provide mutual friendship, information, advice.

My local Parent Support Group just had its 40th birthday party. It totally replicates the ethnic, social, cultural income mix of two North London boroughs. I don't think many of us would necessarily have ever met some of the people that we know, but it is having the person that you can talk to, the person who will know when to trigger something more, that really matters. Within Pathfinders, the parent forums that have been set up in every area under Aiming High money, I think we could do a lot more. Social isolation: I am thinking of the

asylum seeker parents I have met, who are often uncertain about their residency, isolated from their family and culture. They have a disabled child. It is not only having a disabled child that makes them worried, it is all the circumstances. That is where, again, Children's Centres, Sure Start, etc., offer a safe place to be in a sense of community.

Eric Emerson commented on a study I quoted, how many of the families who clearly were depressed and felt oppressed were very isolated. We can make a lot of assumptions about family, and even in black and ethnic minority communities where family matters more, the family may not always be supportive any more than families are always supportive in our own communities.

So really it is identification, but it is also creating the social links and networks that will actually enable families.

Just one final comment might be interesting. Many of you are aware that of course the Government has put a lot of money into improved access to psychological therapies, the IAPT programme. My daughter manages an IAPT programme in north London, and she is getting a specific number of referrals via GPs of parents of disabled children.

In many cases this is just really about enabling families to talk about what they feel and helping them to access local services and support groups that are actually just there, but neglect and poor emotional well-being in families can have serious consequences.

6. WHATEVER THE PROBLEM – THE WORKFORCE IS THE SOLUTION

Presentation by: Jane Haywood, Chief Executive, Children's Workforce Development Council

Jane is Chief Executive of the Children, Young People and Families Workforce Development Council (CWDC). Jane has substantial experience in the children and youth field with a particular interest in learning disability, volunteering, play and youth work. She has been an active volunteer since 1970 and is the joint organiser of a small voluntary organisation that provides a residential summer camp for children aged 9 – 12 in Kirklees.

Key Points from Presentation

1. The children and young people's workforce is critical to the success Every Child Matters and the delivery of the Children's Plan. It is the workforce that makes a difference and their needs and development are at the heart of any change process.
2. The 2020 Workforce Strategy set out a programme of work to address workforce needs. It has a focus on cross cutting issues such as leadership and integrated working as well as a sector focus looking at social care and early years in particular. There is also a strong focus on data and research which can be difficult to address in this workforce.
3. The workforce is complex and diverse. It ranges from paid professionals working in some of the most difficult situations to volunteers supporting children and young people for two hours a week. Employers sit in the statutory, private and third sectors. It is very difficult to get accurate workforce data in such a diverse area which can then make it difficult to target appropriate interventions.
4. This diversity is reflected fully in the early years workforce with a large number of part time and home based workers. We do know that when this workforce is skilled, well trained and qualified it makes a significant difference to the outcomes for children. So investing in their development is an important strategy.
5. The early years workforce operates as part of a wider workforce and their role in early intervention and prevention in an integrated workforce is important. The evidence is starting to show that this integrated working in children's centres is making a difference to the quality of professional relationships and support for children and their families.
6. There is a significant programme underway to invest in this workforce to introduce graduate leadership across the whole sector with a minimum level 3 qualification. This work must run alongside using learning to bring people up to level 3, not to exclude them, as this training and recruitment in communities makes a significant impact in building a diverse workforce and in offering economic investment in communities.

7. There are real challenges ahead as we build this workforce. Early years is seen as “womans work” with low pay and status. The private and third sector face real challenges in retaining staff who move on as their skills improve or move out of the sector altogether. The financial crisis is making it difficult for small settings to remain viable. We need to support and lead this workforce through these difficult times and keep a clear focus on the skills of the workforce. This will make a difference to children and a difference to their status and value.

For a copy of Jane Haywood’s PowerPoint presentation please [click here](#)

Questions and Answers to Jane Haywood

Newly qualified social workers haven’t in the past received proper supervision. They have had trainers rather than social workers supporting them. How is that progressing?

Also, how can the public sector learn from or replicate good practice in the private providers who provide good provision and train their staff, treat them well and make a profit? Any ideas or do we need to wait for the results of the research?

On the first one, the newly qualified social worker programme, which started last year, is a pilot programme, so we are going to have to listen to that feedback very carefully. We have a support programme in place to support the managers and the supervisors. There is a whole host of support for supervision, but of course, once you get things out there, people are facing pressures and they might not be able to do the job that they need to do.

The early feedback from the programme is that it is going well for people. They are more likely to stay than they were in the past, but these are very, very early days. Clearly we will need to do more about supervision. My guess is that we will need to change those standards a bit. But this was one of those times when we got people signed up to running a newly qualified social worker programme, we had got some money for it, and then everybody wanted to 'put their bauble on the Christmas tree' on the standards.

So we are trying to please Government, we are trying to please ADCS, we are trying to please BASW and Unison, and I think we have a set of standards that are a bit clunky, there is absolutely no doubt about that. But our judgement was, we just needed to get this going. It's a pilot. We will test it, and if it is not right, we can change it.

So although it is clunky and some people might feel it is a tick-box, I think it is making a difference. The task that we have now is to get it better and to shape it. We need to see what the Social Work Task Force says about initial training for social workers, because of course a part of the problem is that we had to shove so much into that year because insufficient, I think, is done in the degree course.

Now, you cannot learn everything you need to be a social worker in the degree course; you need to learn it while you are being a front line social worker, but I think we are probably too much the other way and we are not giving them enough and probably somewhere in that second/third year there should be increased specialisation and skills to help people. I am focussing on children and families, but my guess is it is the same if you are moving into adult social work.

And why do people leave jobs? It is because they come in, it is hard, they don't know what they are doing and the supervision is poor. We need to tackle all of those things. We cannot just pick off one. So even if we got a degree that made them feel more confident about the job they were doing, if the supervision was not right and if they were thrown straight into hard end cases, it still wouldn't work. This has to be a systemic change.

On your second point on the characteristics, I don't know, because I have talked to people from the big chains who are doing rather well out of it, but I also spoke to a chap running a private sector nursery in the back of a Community Centre actually with pretty ropey facilities, and it was fantastic.

So I don't know what the characteristics are, and I think we do need to wait for the research on that.

How can we ensure that staff working with children under five actually have real experience and qualifications in the early years and not just teaching experience?

What progress is being made to ensure that OFSTED inspectors who are inspecting early years settings are qualified in understanding young children.

Part of our problem is getting an equivalence with the early years professional status and QTS, and my position is that they are equivalent and should be granted the same equivalence, which I think would then open up schools to having people coming in who have had the right training and qualifications.

I think I'm not likely to win that argument in the short-term, and, you know, that is what I want. If I put the hat on of a Government minister, here I have a teaching profession, the system is running. People might have a few niggles but the system is running. Do I really want to unpick something and put something in that is new and untested at this point, close to election? Probably not!

It is my view that an early years professional is better qualified and better able to lead the early years foundation stage than a qualified teacher, unless the qualified teacher has done some substantial early years on top of it. We are in discussion with the Training Development Agency for Schools to see if we can link the early years professional training and the training for early years teachers, so we can get some cross-over on that, but I think we need to do more with the training of early years teachers.

But it is very difficult to change, and in the run-up to the election people don't want to have those kinds of conversations.

The second point is, thankfully I'm not responsible for OFSTED, and I think as an organisation they have a very tough job to do. We all keep bringing in lots of changes and the like, but they are still on this treadmill of doing all the inspections. I think we probably have to try a bit harder to help them with that, and I will feed that back into the system and try and offer some briefings on it. I think that is probably the way forward.

There is quite a pervasive safety first mindset amongst a range of professionals working with children, that is really quite hard to challenge and isn't being very well challenged. We focus on reducing certain types of risk in children's lives, and not how we can allow children the kind of experiences to enable them to deal with the things they might come across. Should we accept this?

In my summers I spend five weeks running a children's summer camp and deal with that. We had a difficult experience this year where we missed a child's broken arm, a greenstick

fracture. If anyone has come across a greenstick fracture -- they are very difficult to diagnose. We missed it and the parents were very upset about the way we handled it, completely understandably. We have a way of working which is about giving children space, and when they are homesick, getting them to deal with being homesick rather than just bundling them up and sending them home. So that felt really bad, and we are going to have to change the way that we deal with some of those, because we have learned from that experience.

But my fear, in thinking about the changes that we brought in, was am I now just closing this down and closing this down and closing this down, because if I put that child to one side, I must have had 20 children in that summer who were desperately homesick, who wanted to go home. We talked to them, we worked through, we phoned home and spoke to parents and they stayed and they had a fantastic time. Some of them who didn't have a fantastic time still learned a lot from it, which I think is an important part of it.

I will look at the common core on the risk aversion, because I have not read that in that, so I need to go back and look at it again.

The difficulty with this area is, you cannot give a clear instruction, can you? It is relying on professionals' judgements, and when you rely on professionals' judgements sometimes something goes wrong, because that is what happens when people use judgements.

So I don't have a solution to it, but I am absolutely with you that we have made our world too safe, so that people then do not see the risk, do not know how to handle risks. My view has always been with CRB checks that everybody then thinks these people are safe, whereas I have always taught my children how to keep themselves safe: what they should do if somebody offers them a lift. If we have not got that, it is not going to work.

So it is very, very difficult, but I will take the point away and look at the common core, but I do think it is about us as a group of professionals in the children and people's workforce, protecting that bit of the children and people's work, which is important.

I was out at a Children's Centre last week, where they were telling me about watching two children fighting in the sandpit and giving them some space before they then stepped into it, which I thought was a very brave thing to do, because at the summer camp I am always in straight away. Then I started to think about what you should do in that situation, where is the learning? So I think it is about helping our practitioners being able to use their judgements.

And on the workforce, actually the solution to the problem that you are talking about in terms of space is deciding what to do with space, understanding what children and young people need. Wherever you sit in the workforce, whatever you are doing, if you understand children's and families' needs then you will be able to provide a solution to their problem. The problem is that people don't understand it. But that is just dragging it out too far, isn't it?

It is vital that all disciplines within the children's workforce particularly newly appointed social work colleagues receive good quality supervision from an appropriate person. This is not happening and many new social workers, because they have had some training, there is an assumption that they can then carry very complex case loads with no supervision

My National Forensic Service is providing telephone supervision and consultation for many people around the country because they are actually not getting it. The same also is starting to be true, I think, for health professionals and other disciplines who are not having proper supervision from trained seniors built into their clinical workload. I wondered if you had some thoughts on that?

I absolutely agree. The interesting thing is, if you use the word "supervision", with different parts of the workforce it has different meanings, but I am clear that it transforms the service for children and young people. I am clear that when things have gone wrong in situations, it is because the supervision is not right.

So we are embedding that in the newly qualified social worker programme in the next programme that is coming along, which is early professional development, and trying to make that a core part of the offer to a social worker, which is good quality supervision. I think that is a very strong message that has gone into the social work task force. But I don't think it should stop at social work. I think it sits right across the workforce. But managers struggle to find the time to do it, and we almost have to sell this back to them.

Could this be built into job descriptions as an expectation that there will be supervision in your job, and if you are a senior person, you will provide it? Other disciplines do do that!

My guess is that it is built into job descriptions but people still don't do it. I bet if you talk to a social worker manager, it will be in the job description!

7. DEALING WITH TROUBLED CHILDREN – TARGETED INTERVENTION IN THE LEARNING SETTING

Presentation by: Natalia Stafler, Primary Schools Project Manager, The Anna Freud Centre

Natalia obtained her undergraduate degree in Psychology and Criminology at Bar Ilan University in Israel. After completing an MSc in Developmental Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy at the Anna Freud Centre/University College London she trained at the Anna Freud Centre as a Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist. Since September 2008 she manages the Primary Schools Project at the Anna Freud Centre. She also runs one of the Anna Freud Centre toddler groups and works in private practice. Her professional interests lie particularly with preventative work for children and their caregivers. At present she is enrolled with UCL to do a DPsych in Developmental Psychoanalytic Psychology and is researching play within the evolving parent child relationship.

Key Points from Presentation

1. The struggle of schools with increasing numbers of behaviourally and emotionally challenging children is shifting from the secondary to primary school setting. Large numbers of primary school children, as young as 4 years old are reported to be excluded from schools. Over the past one year there has been a 6% increase in the exclusion rate of primary school children (national equivalent to 25,128). Some of these children never achieve entrance to secondary school.
2. The Department of Children, Schools and Families initiated a number of projects to combat this trend, including policy papers like 'Every Child Matters' and programs like 'Targeted Mental Health in Schools'. Their chief goal is to foster collaboration between the education sector and social services by integrating CAHMS practitioners into the school setting and offering a wider range of interventions to reach out to children and families who are hard to reach.
3. Building on their experience working with children and families some statutory and voluntary organizations, including the Anna Freud Centre have developed models of outreach work that can be integrated into the school context.
4. The Primary School Project developed at the Anna Freud Centre has at its core psychoanalytic understanding and thinking about children, families and their developing difficulties. Primary school aged children are thought of as finding themselves at a developmental stage where their focus shifts away from home to school, teachers and peer group, hence allowing the school to have an important influence on their development.
5. Some children, having experienced trauma, abuse and neglect however carry around undigested painful feelings that act as obstacles to achieving a state of mind necessary for concentrating, forging friendships and learning. These children are often difficult to deal with and their behaviour causes much concern within the school framework.

6. Theoretical concepts of *attachment*, *transference*, *countertransference* and *mentalization* can be helpful constructs when employed to understand the meaning behind certain behaviours that would ordinarily be considered as 'bad' and 'naughty'.
7. Utilizing these concepts the Primary Schools Project targets those hard to reach pupils on four distinct levels:
 - a) Indirectly through "Teacher Work Discussion Groups"
 - b) With the help of "Classroom Interventions" (IGTAC, designed by Marta Cioeta)
 - c) Through work with the parents and (where indicated)
 - d) Through individual psychotherapy with particular children.

Ad a) The "Teacher Work Discussion Groups" aim to enhance the emotional literacy of staff, rousing their awareness of certain unconscious dynamics in order to help them feel less overwhelmed by challenging students and deal with individual students as well as entire classes in a more thoughtful and understanding manner.

Ad b) "Integrated Group Therapeutic Approach in Classrooms (IGTAC)" is designed to address classroom difficulties around transitions, envy, jealousy, isolation etc and employs specifically designed pictures to evoke children's verbal expression of thoughts and emotions. Its aim is for children and teachers to become more aware of the impact of their and other people's feelings within the classroom in an effort to replace acting out with dialogue.

Ad c/d) Parent work and individual work with children is geared at improving the work alliance with the school and help parents and children explore and understand certain aspects of their behaviour. It is also a necessary tool in identifying those families in need of further help.
8. Service evaluation must systematically address whether a particular model serves its stated objective. Avenues for replication must be found balancing carefully between specialist input and lay involvement to provide the best service possible whilst facilitating nationwide provision.

For a copy of Natalia Stafler's PowerPoint presentation please [click here](#)

Questions and Answer to Natalia Stafler

How many schools and how many children do you work with and how cost-effective is it in terms of a model for managing behaviour, managing attitudes. Have there been any comparisons about different ways of working which are either as effective as or less effective than yours?

To start with the last question, I think the evaluation will be done within the training in mental health and schools, where we will be part of that evaluation as well, where a different approach is tried out in different local authorities in order to find really what is the most effective to reach the most children.

The project itself has only been working for about two and a half/three years, with an initial 18-month period, and we at this moment are not at the stage of wanting to be in many schools; really we are at present only involved with two schools and trying to improve our service before we can go out and say this is something that can be offered to a wider population. One needs to be very careful before wanting to reach many, many schools. For example, classroom intervention is a very new thing we are developing at the moment, and it has proven to reach a lot of children at the same time with a very short-term intervention, really, one hour three times, and you actually can see the changes within the classroom dynamics as opposed to seeing individual children for therapy. So I think we are still trying to figure out what works best, yes.

Do you have any further thoughts about how you could further support teachers, because I think they need it? How can you work constructively with them and not put them on a back foot and feel that they are somehow or other to blame for everything?

I think probably the best way forward is to empower the teachers to do and understand certain things, so not to come in as the expert who knows it all, but actually work with the people together and empower them to start dealing with those very, very difficult and challenging children, so that they feel able to actually take up the challenge as opposed to sending the child out of the school, as opposed to distancing themselves from those difficult children and leaving them to the professionals, actually finding a way of working together with those teachers so that they feel able, through their own understanding and thinking, to work with these children, and to actually face these problems together with the child. Very often we don't want to know about them because they are too horrible to know about. As a teacher you signed up to teaching, you didn't sign up to hearing about what happened at home last night and how the mummy bird takes the worm and eats it all herself. That is not what he has signed up for, in a way. You have signed up for teaching.

So I guess, to answer your question, it is really about finding a way of empowering those teachers to feel less helpless when faced with those situations.

How do you manage to do all of this on one day a week in the school? Now that you've established yourself in the school the demand must have increased?

There is, and we have just started to recruit volunteers, for example, to come and work in the schools with us, so that it is not just one person trying to do it all, but that we have more people. Very often a single observation can lead to quite a lot, so if there is a teacher struggling you have somebody there observing. You see this teacher getting upset with this child who just always throws things. Suddenly you have an observer there who sees that it is not just suddenly that things are thrown, you see the child working up, being frustrated, without anybody noticing, and then throwing everything.

So having people present like volunteers, to help us actually observe certain classrooms and to observe certain dynamics which before have gone through unnoticed, is one way. But I agree that with one day a week you have difficulty in establishing a presence.

One needs to be very sensible also in terms of not coming in as the expert, because I have no idea about teaching. I don't know how to teach, I don't know how to stand in front of a classroom of 30 children and try to teach them anything, but I can have my understanding of the emotion, the difficulties of learning, the hazard that can be on the way.

So by taking the teacher's expertise and my expertise, it is something that we can do together. I think one needs to be very sensible to that.

How do you go about engaging parents in this process? How do you get over the issue of stigma of a child seeing a therapist?

I think again, very similar to the initial what I saw as apprehension of therapy, of psychotherapy, of psychoanalysis, of all these big words, big things. I am conscious, what does this mean? And I think similarly with parents. I would say 90 per cent of the time, it doesn't take the parent by surprise that the school is worried about one particular child. They might not know, but really they do know, one way or another. And very often, the initial apprehension one has is met by actually finally somebody notices, finally somebody is taking me seriously. Finally somebody is actually seeing how horrible little Jake can be. Yes, he can be horrible, he can be a nightmare.

So very often I think we are so apprehensive of how can we talk to parents about their children's bad behaviour, when really very often there is a sense of gratitude that somebody is there to take them seriously and not to point a finger at them that it is their fault, but actually to help them think together about how we can work together as a school. I am independent, I don't know what the school does. Yes, the teacher might be horrible, you are absolutely right, I don't know, but it is not about whether the teacher is horrible or not, but it is really about thinking, why is Jake struggling at this moment? What is going on?

To give you one example: a child was acting out incredibly and later on we found out that the mother was pregnant and mother had had two previous miscarriages before, which she found very, very difficult. At the school everybody just thought "He is so naughty. He is horrible. He is misbehaving." "Wow, Mum is pregnant. Great!" But it was not great at all for this little child, who had seen Mum going through two miscarriages, mourning through those miscarriages, and was incredibly worried about Mum. And for Mum to actually be able to think about this -- I hardly saw the child; I really worked with Mum -- to understand this boy's behaviour through her own experience was incredibly enriching.

So I think very often, although we think parents don't want to know about it, very often they are quite happy to be taken seriously and to be able to think things through together with somebody who is willing to hear and listen.

8. THE LONGER TERM EFFECTS OF EARLY YEARS EXPERIENCES

Presentation by: Ted Melhuish, Professor Human Development, Birkbeck College, University of London

Ted is Professor of Human Development at Birkbeck, University of London, and Visiting Professorial Fellow at the Institute of Education. He is the Executive Director of the National Evaluation of Sure Start research team.

Key Points from Presentation

- The most important mental and behavioural patterns, once established, are difficult to change once children enter school.
- Current expenditure on the early years is incongruent with the importance of this period.
- Early years programmes have benefits in terms of:
 - improvements in school readiness and achievement
 - reductions behaviour problems and crime
 - the benefits far outweigh the costs
- The quality of childcare affects development.
- The biggest effects in first 3 years for language development. Those children with good language development then do better on literacy and most educational outcomes.

Home Learning Environment

- The home learning environment is more important than parents' social class.
- What parents do is more important than who parents are.

Preschool

- Preschool quality has enduring effects upon children's educational achievement and social development.
- From age 2 all children benefit from pre-school.

- The quality of preschool matters.
- Part-time preschool has equal benefit to full-time.
- Quality of preschool effects persist until at least the end of primary school.
- High quality preschool can protect a child from consequences of attending low effective school

Educational Success

- 3 elements that can lead to educational success:
 - **Good** Home Learning Environment (pp. pre-school)
 - **Good** Pre-schools for longer duration
 - **Good** Primary schools

Those children with all 3 will out-perform those with 2, who will out-perform those with 1, who will out-perform those with 0.

Sure Start / Children's Centres

- The impact of Sure Start has improved, probably because of:
 - increasing quality of service provision, greater attention to the hard to reach, the move to children's centres, *as well as*
 - the greater exposure of children and families
- Sure Start programmes have improved over the years and Children's Centres are in the right direction.
- Many examples of good practice, but still great variation between best and worst.
- We need to learn from the most effective Children's Centres.
- We need greater focus on early language development.

For a copy of Ted Melhuish's PowerPoint presentation please [click here](#)

Questions and Answers to Professor Ted Melhuish

What qualifications do SureStart staff need and what training do they receive?

A very great variation, is the simple answer. They were graduates and unqualified people, a whole range of people. Actually Jane, who talked this morning, might be better placed than

myself to tell you about the evolution of the qualifications of SureStart staff, because that is an element of work which we followed through until 2005. Our funding for that aspect of our work stopped in 2006, so we weren't able to continue with that work after 2006.

In the early programmes you had basically a policy and practice vacuum in existence prior to the first SureStart programmes being set up. You had to recruit staff when there was no cadre of earlier staff to recruit, because there hadn't been anything like the SureStart programme in existence beforehand. There were some voluntary programmes on a very small scale, but they were tiny compared to the scope of SureStart. You had to take on staff from a wide range of backgrounds, some from educational backgrounds, some from social work backgrounds, some from child care backgrounds, some from nursing backgrounds and so on: a wide range of backgrounds. I remember some were actually ex-Housing Managers. It illustrates the range of variation.

The early programmes had to be set up by a partnership which would involve a consortium of Social Services, health, education, the voluntary sector, and parents had to be involved in the consortium. But having said that, you tended to have one of those sectors dominating. Some SureStart programmes were health led, some SureStart programmes were education led, some SureStart programmes were social service led, etc. There were differences between programmes because of those biases, if you like, built in from the start.

50 per cent of the managers would have some graduate or graduate equivalent type qualification in terms of years of previous experience in an area, and roughly 50 per cent probably not. That has been changing all the time. I believe now it is actually a requirement that the programme be graduate led or graduate equivalent led, so there has been an evolution over time in terms of the staff training.

The Child Workforce Development Council, which we heard about this morning, has done great work in improving the qualification level of staff in Children's Centres, but it is still the case that there is very high staff turnover, there is still the case that qualification levels of many of the staff are very low, particularly in relation to the kind of jobs they are being required to do with parenting programmes and parenting support.

I also do some work for the Norwegian government, where we look at childcare centres in Norway, and if you advertise for a job in the Norwegian equivalent of a Children's Centre, you will have 20 well qualified applicants for every job you put up, so you have a big choice about who you recruit. Do that in Huddersfield and you will be very lucky to get one applicant who is adequately qualified for the job, so you end up taking whoever you can get, not being very choosy about who you recruit.

So there is a big scope for improving the staffing for all children. It's a combination of pay, prestige and so on, and just history. Pay and prestige are key amongst them. If you go to Finland, teaching and early years professionals would be ranked (if you ranked all the professions) quite high in the rankings. If you did the same in England, early years professionals would be very low in the rankings of professions. So we have to overcome that history of lack of investment in this area.

What is the pay of a typical Children's Centre manager?

A manager would earn approximately £36,000, and a family support worker would earn about £35,000. Private sector staff do receive more than voluntary sector staff.

Are the levels of funding for Children's Centres improving?

In some senses it is getting worse, because the funding per Children's Centre has gone down in recent years. Remember the Government has a target of 3,500 Children's Centres by 2010, and they have almost reached that target. One of the consequences of that very rapid expansion has been that the amount of money per child per Children's Centre has

actually been going down over the years to what it was in the early years. Back in 2002 it was roughly £1,200 per child per year in income per Children's Centre, so if you had 800 children in your area that you were serving, you would get 800 times £1,200, almost £1m income per year, a very large income. That has gone down quite markedly with the expansion of Children's Centres.

You stated that interagency collaboration is essential for good services - what is the evidence base to that? Have you compared different mixes of disciplines and professionals?

No, we didn't go into that level of detail. Basically, we had to take what was available to us, and basically, in looking at SureStart programmes in the early days we saw some effective programmes and some ineffective programmes. By looking at the data we had on staffing and processes happening in those programmes -- and interagency collaboration was one of the aspects we looked at -- we saw that the effective programmes were much more likely to have good processes in place to ensure good agency collaboration in the ineffective centres. That is why I made that point.

The home learning environment is obviously very, very powerful. How does that get disentangled from a family's income?

Okay, 3,000 families. We know their income level. We know the parents' education, we know the social classification, we know the birth weight of the child, we know the agenda. We measure the whole learning environment.

Back in 2001, when I initially presented these results on the home learning environment, people said to me, "Oh, isn't that just parent education? More educated parents are going to do more of this, therefore all you are showing is a parent education programme?" I said "No, it's not, because this is true even for parent education." The reason we could do that was the correlation between the home learning environment and parent education or social class. What that means is that there is a general tendency for more educated parents to do more of it, but it's not a tremendously high association. There are many highly educated parents and high social class parents who don't do much of it. Conversely, there are some unqualified parents who do quite a lot of it. We can, with a big sample in the right kind of analysis, tease out the separate effects of each of those variables having control for all those other effects.

So those home learning environment effects, I am telling you, are having control for the income effects and the educational effects on social class factors, and so on.

Let me tell you something. These results have been undertaken with the highest possible standards of sampling, statistical analysis etc. You will not find, anywhere, higher quality research. We have shown that because we get published in the highest possible status journals. So when I told you about the effect of the home learning environment or preschool or whatever, that effect I told you about is having control for everything else we could measure about the child, the family and so on. There is control for the gender, the birth weight, the behavioural problems, mother's education, father's education, family income, social class, etc., etc. That is essentially it.

Do you know the cost benefit impact of SureStart?

I'm not going to say anything about that because one of my colleagues, an economist, Pam Meadows, who works for the National Institute for Economic and Social Research, is actually doing that cost benefit analysis as we speak, so I'm not going to pre-empt her report.

9. AFTER DINNER SPEECH - NO FEAR: GROWING UP IN A RISK AVERSE SOCIETY

Presentation by: Tim Gill, Writer and Consultant

Tim Gill is one of the UK's leading thinkers on childhood, and an effective advocate for change. His work focuses on children's play and free time. Tim's book *No Fear: Growing up in a risk-averse society* was published in 2007, and in recognition of its impact, in 2009 he was awarded an honorary doctorate by Edge Hill University. He appears regularly on radio and television, and writes for the mainstream and specialist press.

Tim has advised political parties and think tanks across the political spectrum, and has carried out consultancies for major NGOs and public bodies including the Mayor of London, the National Trust and the Forestry Commission. In 2002, while Director of the Children's Play Council (now Play England) Tim led the first ever Government-sponsored review of children's play. Tim's website is www.rethinkingchildhood.com

Summary of Talk

Childhood is being undermined by the growth of risk aversion and its intrusion into every aspect of children's lives. As a result, activities that previous generations of children enjoyed without a second thought have been relabelled as troubling or dangerous, and the adults who permit them branded as irresponsible.

The wider context is that for decades, the horizons of childhood have been shrinking, with growing adult control and oversight of children's everyday lives. This shift is largely a consequence of wider social and cultural changes, and not merely a result of parental fears. Nonetheless the consequences for children are dramatic. Their play is restricted, their freedom of movement and action is limited, their learning is constrained and their relationships with adults are corroded.

Playground safety, vetting and anti-bullying provide three illuminating case studies of the nature, growth and impact of risk aversion. In each case a preoccupation with eliminating risk has led to measures that worsen children's quality of life and limit their opportunities for learning how to cope with the people and places around them.

The case studies also show how confusion about the nature of childhood can lead to a distorted perception of the relative risks, poor use of resources and neglect of the possible side effects of safety measures.

Two radical steps are needed to liberate childhood. The first is that society at all levels needs to move from a philosophy of protection to a philosophy of resilience. Only by taking this step will agencies help children to learn for themselves, through their own self-directed experiences, how to deal with everyday risks in an uncertain and fast-moving world.

The second is that politicians need to make the creation of child-friendly communities a much higher priority, so that children have the freedom to get to grips with the people and places around them on their own terms. Only by taking these steps will we strike a better balance between protecting children from genuine threats and giving them rich, challenging opportunities to learn and grow.

For a copy of Tim Gill's full speech please [click here](#)

10. OVERVIEW OF THE CONFERENCE AND RESULTING RESEARCH NEEDS

Presentation by: Michael Little, PhD, Director, Dartington Social Research Unit

Michael was trained as a social psychologist and sociologist. He is the Director of The Social Research Unit, base at Dartington in the UK and also a faculty associate at Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. He holds professorial positions at the universities of Bath and Exeter; and is Research Director of the Warren House Group at Dartington. He is author of more than 10 books and over 100 other publications on child development and services aimed at reducing social need. Michael's work has been used in the formation of policy and practice in England, five EU countries and three US states. Michael's work is best known for establishing connections between research, policy and practice.

Key Points from Presentation

The Contribution of the Sieff Foundation

The great contribution of the Michael Sieff Foundation has been to bring people together who would not otherwise meet and persuade them to talk about subjects they might otherwise avoid.

For 20 years, thanks to the skill of its founder Elizabeth Haslam, the Foundation has made a virtue of listening closely to a range of opinion and incorporating it into a single coherent perspective.

Arguably, during the life of a government that has been self confident in its attitude to providing solutions to problems, the full benefit of the Foundation's work has been felt less. Now, with financial constraints impending, and a change of political administration increasingly likely, the time is ripe for more reflection and collective problem solving.

Progress during the last decade

The conference has captured the significant progress made in the last decade. The focus on child outcomes, for example via Every Child Matters, has provided a strong conceptual framework. The greater attention given to children's rights, notwithstanding the limitations on the contribution of the Commissioner for Children, has also been welcome. Major inroads have been made into child poverty, although we remain some way off achieving targets. At this conference much attention has been given to children's centres. The government is on target to build 3,500 by 2010. We heard from Derby where there are 18 serving 16,000 children. We heard about their modest, positive impact on child well-being. Again, challenges remain, relating for instance to the considerable variation in provision and the failure in many cases to reach the children who can most benefit.

What is the point?

We have considered the objective of better early years provision. In some parts of Scandinavia children do not learn to read until relatively late, but in the UK reading and writing early has become a primary goal. We heard that in China they are using early years to boost the cognitive abilities of the population, to make the country economically competitive. In Singapore they are investing in social and emotional regulation to create another sort of competitive edge. As conference presentations reminded us, development is

neither linear nor uniform. In places where there are high levels of difficulty -in a country where levels of childhood disorder exceed those in competitor countries- what amount of change can be achieved?

The workforce

The conference has highlighted the significant difficulty in getting the best people to work with children, and getting the best from those people. This is an emerging science. For example, we are beginning to understand from experimental studies that a small proportion, maybe ten per cent, of practitioners delivering interventions that are known to improve the health and development of children actually leave their clients worse off.

At the conference we have reflected on the low status of parts of the children's workforce – hardly surprising given the extraordinarily low pay some receive. Much has been done to address this issue, but much more is needed.

Systems and outcomes

Emphasis – but still not enough – has been placed on the science of what works, for whom, when and why. Better outcomes for children will also require understanding of the behaviour of large systems. They manage a high proportion of expenditure on children. A large local authority will spend over £1 billion per annum on the children it supports, but only a tiny proportion of local authority activity is based on high quality evidence.

Cost-benefit analysis is one of several areas of science that combines what works evidence with an understanding of system behaviour. It demonstrates for example (i) how the cost of some effective interventions, such as HeadStart, exceed the economic returns, (ii) that some interventions with good returns on investment can only be applied to a small population, (iii) that some interventions with modest returns on investment can reach a universal population, (iv) that some interventions supported by policy makers are not effective and are a huge drain on the public purse.

This confluence of systems and science may persuade local authorities to invest more wisely in high quality evidence. Intelligence functions that offer local epidemiology, reliable cost-benefit analysis, systematic reviews of what works, service design to promote fidelity of intervention and experimental evaluations to estimate the impact of local pilots may become a priority among local authorities that seek to use science to improve child well-being.

Public health

Like most multi-disciplinary meetings these days, this year's Sieff conference has focused on targeted prevention and intervention. Harvard public health specialist David Hemenway's *While We Were Sleeping* is a reminder of the power of public health in saving the lives of hundreds of thousands of children, and improving the quality of life of millions more. He provides a striking catalogue of what can be achieved by backing up often quite small technological advances with a change in the law. In the relationship he describes, the law does not inflict a change in behaviour; rather it gives people permission to change their behaviour. (Car makers wanted to put seatbelts in cars, and we the public wanted to wear them; changing the law permitted companies and individuals to do what they wanted.) Ted Melhuish explained the huge potential impact on child outcomes of a healthy home environment. What can be done to alter behaviour to promote such an environment for children?

Conclusion

It is important to build on the successes of the last decade and to be more franker failures and continuing challenges. There is also scope for deeper reflection on what we want to achieve for children, nationally, locally and within families. Are we trying to use early years initiatives to compete with China or Singapore?

Our deliberations should incorporate the people who lead large systems such as local authority children's services. We need to know more about how children's services operate, to pay more attention to the realities facing children's services staff, to be more realistic about what can be achieved in different jurisdictions, and to be more respectful of the efforts of leaders who try to steer these supertankers of provision on a more fruitful course.

I hope we can pay more attention to the workforce, and establish why practitioners do not always do what is asked of them (and with what result), why some practitioners achieve good outcomes regardless of the training and support they are given and why others make the lives of children worse, even when they follow a prescribed course.

Finally, I hope that the Sieff Foundation, guided by Elizabeth Haslam, will continue to play a key role in bringing together people who do not normally meet and encouraging them to reflect on matters they might otherwise avoid and, in the process, usher in a new period of well considered collective action.

11. PLENARY DISCUSSION

RICHARD WHITE: I am struck by the consistency between the discussion groups and the recommendations they have put forward, about outcomes and the values or goals we have which are related to those outcomes. The status of the workforce, the public awareness campaign and colocation of workers in Children's Centres, actually follows on from that.

PETER WILSON: In our group we emphasised the need for research and evidence, but we were also there to talk about training, which perhaps we did not sufficiently emphasise. We talked about the importance of child development and that people need to know about child development and need to have an idea about whatever norms we may have as far as evaluating child development.

EILEEN VIZARD: On the question of competence and therapists with reference to the slide on functional family therapy and the differences shown between effective therapists and those who were trained and manual compliant and did all the right things, and yet they actually weren't very effective. Has the role of supervision had been looked at in terms of finding out what were the therapist variables which had made those people who had been well trained and were compliant, but nevertheless weren't effective. Does supervision have a role? It has come up quite a bit in this conference. Is there the evidence to support it as a good thing to do?

MICHAEL LITTLE: There is very good evidence now that you can achieve fidelity through the following mechanisms: (1) explaining to people why they are doing the things that they are doing; (2) providing adequate training so they are able to deliver their intervention in the way it is supposed to be delivered; and (3) providing coaching, which is usually the bit that is forgotten: that there is somebody on hand that can enable people to put things right when they are not going right. Inevitably, when you actually get out there in the field, it's not quite as easy as when you are in the training process.

The other aspect of that is accountability, so you have to monitor whether people are doing things that they are supposed to be doing. You cannot just take that for granted. If you monitor, people are more likely to do things they are supposed to be doing. There is very good evidence from type 2 translation research, including little bits and pieces we are doing as well, that shows those kinds of things will make a difference to fidelity, and fidelity will make a difference to outcomes for children. However, what the FFT slide shows is that even when you achieve very good fidelity, you will still have a small proportion of practitioners who don't achieve good outcomes. It is not the be all and end all.

PROF TED MELHUISH: That reminds me of the difference between the situation in the UK and the Scandinavian countries. If you have a vacancy in Scandinavia, in the equivalent to a Children's Centre, you will get 20 well qualified, well experienced staff applying for that job, and so you can be choosy about who you appoint. You do the same in the UK and basically you have to take whoever happens to come along, because you may not be able to fill the post otherwise.

What that means is that we have people in this work in the UK who really are just not equipped with the basic individual characteristics that make them do a good job. Not all of us can be bankers, not all of us can be statisticians, not all of us can be social workers, not all of us can be childcare workers or whatever. We need to recognise that. But the thing about it is, if you talk to the public and you talk to teenagers leaving school, they think, "Oh, anybody can work in a Children's Centre". There is a general perception that it is something which anybody can do. The simple fact is that it is not.

EILEEN VIZARD: Those of us engaged in clinical supervision are familiar with the dilemma of training people up to the neck in the right thing to do, and yet oddly enough some people just don't quite get the result. So my question still remains -- is there a role for a different kind of supervision: not just checking compliance with manuals but reflective supervision?

MICHAEL LITTLE: Maybe there is room for innovation in that area, but I think the hard question actually is that we get to the headpoint, which is what do you do with the 10 per cent of people who, with all the support, just don't do it very well? They have to do something else -- maybe they would be better in the banking sector -- but we are not very good at facing up to that, just as in my organisation we get people who want to do research but they don't do it very well.

JOHN TENCONI: I take the points about the need to try and ensure proper performance, but we shouldn't vex ourselves too much about this, because this is not a problem of our sector alone, this is a universal problem. Wherever you look in corporate or any sort of management activity, you find that there are good managers, bad managers, good management structures, bad management structures. One of the things that troubles me about the way we conduct ourselves today is that because there is not enough confidence within the organism to produce effective results, we end up with incredible amounts of reporting which are really about managing risk and highlighting risk when things go wrong. If we actually had more cohesive organisms with people who could manage, who could develop, who could share vision and leadership, we would get better outcomes and we would only need to report by exception when the outcomes were not working. That would mean that we wouldn't need so much reporting and people wouldn't need to spend so much time filling out bits of paper just to prove that the system is or isn't working.

So from the perspective of training and management, this is a problem I think that is endemic to every sphere of organic life within our society, and I don't think that we need to try and write a management programme for this part of the sector. It is there. It needs to be developed. The sort of things we have talked about are standard practices in that, we need to get people good enough and well trained enough to share it and cascade it downwards and make it happen.

MARGARET LYNCH: When they were comparing the competence of the professionals, were they taking into account differences in the children, because children are not going to follow the manual and a lot of them will have other things going on in their lives which might be more powerful than seeing the therapist every other week. The children are a variable so we have to make sure that somebody has the right children with the right programme.

MICHAEL LITTLE: It is incredibly important to make sure that the right kids get to the right intervention, and in this particular case that is exactly what happens. The results I gave you control for the difficulty of the children. It is a randomised control trial, so these kids are placed randomly on either side and they all have to meet a threshold of conduct disorder at the point of entry. It is going to distribute equally across both sides of the equation. What is interesting is that what you find with these kind of results and with the CBT results is that the bad practitioners are consistently bad.

MARGARET ADCOCK: We have to recognise how inadequate, for many years, social work training has been for preparing people to do the job. There is now a focus on child development, but I think what I have observed, and I am still involved with social work training, is that people are being given the knowledge base but they are not then being helped to think about how they apply that knowledge to their activities in social work.

A very simple thing is that people don't seem to apply the knowledge of the importance of the first year of life and brain development to their work with some of these very hard-end child abuse cases. For many years the best people in social work teaching got syphoned off into research. The bridge or the gap between the people involved in research and the people involved in teaching social work practice really does need to be worked on, so that you have

really good practitioners and really good researchers working together to help students to understand how to apply their knowledge.

CHERYL HOPKINS: Coming from a local authority, I want to do a reality check. We have put a lot of investment into early years in Birmingham. If we are really really serious about this, you have to think about what are you going with this group (high end, complex needs), there are finite resources. In fact, there are going to be less resources than ever over the next few years. If you are going to shift your resources into prevention and early intervention and into the very young, how are you going to make that shift?

In Birmingham it is only because we have a major transformation programme that we have some new investment money, some pump-priming money to put into preventive and early intervention. Otherwise we could not have moved money from the complex end, children looked after, children with special educational needs, etc., etc., where we are spending most of our money now. How do you persuade the politicians to take money out of that group and put it in here? The money has to come from somewhere, and there are some very, very difficult choices to be made.

EILEEN VIZARD: One way to save money is by way of more targeted investment. I appreciate we are talking about universal services that can also save huge amounts of money, but the ones who end up either alcoholic or criminal, in the case of the children I see, are a very small group who are actually quite readily identifiable much much earlier, and there have been cost benefit analyses to saving a great deal of money to the community and identifying them.

TIM GILL: What is our consensus about what we think good childhood looks like? To take that a little bit further, what I would be arguing for is a certain amount of humility in the interventions we are trying to draw up. I think there is a danger, with some of the thinking about social policy around children, that we effectively see children merely as the containers for a whole set of outcomes. That is what makes up a child, that they have succeeded or made progress along certain dimensions. I point to Richard Layard's stuff in the Good Childhood Inquiry as almost a sort of reduction *ad absurdum* of that, that really our business is to make children happy and we don't even need to worry about what happiness means because we just ask people if they are happy, and if they score more than 6 then that means they are happy.

I suspect there would be quite a lot of consensus about the kind of goals we are aiming for. They are about improving life chances and enabling children, as they grow up, to have a sense of their own destiny and their own life path, and not be at the mercy of their economic circumstances or whatever. But also, within that, that we retain an understanding that the one thing that makes us human beings is that we feel some determination in our lives, that we give our own life meaning, that we don't just, as it were, accept meaningless being imposed on us from others. Some of the thinking around social policy can look very utilitarian and can really simply see people, including children, as kind of containers of happiness or containers of certain sets of outcomes.

TIM GILL: Because I think you can see some people argue that some type of intervention might well, in my view, go well beyond that vision and step into the territory of effectively determining what matters in children's lives for them.

MICHAEL LITTLE: Ask communities what they want to achieve for their children, and what you tend to find is that when you get into systems, the kind of things you have down here are the things that are stressed, but if you are talking in communities to children and families, although they are not disinterested in employability and educational performance, but it is not their priority. It is very important that we continue a series of dialogues with children and families and communities, to allow them to express what it is that they want to achieve for their children, and children express that for themselves, and that continues to inform how we formulate our values.

RICHARD WHITE: We might link it to the five aims in the Children Act 2004 and the Early Childhood Matters outcomes. We might say that to promote those aims, this vision of what we think the early years needs to look like, supports those five aims.

JONATHAN PICKEN: If you talk about Children's Centres, we have already heard it's a mixed picture, so it is being clear about what is the mix of professionals and disciplines and skills and abilities that are required to actually achieve the five outcomes from ECM, or whatever measures you may choose. One of the issues we debated long and hard in our group was about that interagency buy-in and having the right professionals, skilled professionals, actually at the table working together effectively.

So it is just the term we have used, "early years services", that conjures up in my mind maybe a set of particular workers which will be different to somebody else working in other parts of the country because they have a slightly different configuration. There needs to be more specificity in what we mean by "early year services".

STEPHEN PIZZEY: I take that point about the early year services. What we actually meant is it ranges from people who are working in centres to people who are helping parents learn to read to their children and actually making use. We saw the workforce extending to volunteers and parents, so we had a quite broad sense of that, which perhaps isn't necessarily conveyed by that.

PROF TED MELHUIISH: I would take the variability that we see in Children's Centres as an opportunity, because the ones that are doing it well, having the best outcomes, should be teaching the rest of us how to improve their services. So how do we identify the Children's Centres which are having the best outcomes?

There is actually a very straight forward mechanism for doing this: every child in the country currently has a foundation stage profile, and for every child in the country we know their postcode, their gender, their ethnicity, their preschool meals status, the area they live in, the area of deprivation they live in, etc., because this is all on the National People's Database. We also know the catchment area served by every Children's Centre in the country in terms of the listed postcode. So you could do a multilevel analysis of the National People's Database foundation stage profiles for every child in the country, feed into it the Children's Centre catchment area of that child, and you would actually produce an effectiveness score on a foundation safe profile outcomes for every Children's Centre in the country, controlling for the catchment area that those children come from, the preschool meals status of the child, the ethnicity of the child, the age of the child, etc. This is very similar to essentially what happens in school effectiveness research.

Now, having identified which are the most effective and ineffective Children's Centres, one then does case studies of the effective and ineffective ones to find out what is distinguishing them. What is happening in the effective centres which makes them effective?

CHERYL HOPKINS: I worry that if this gets into the hands of Government they will do exactly what they do with school league tables, and Children's Centres will become as competitive and as difficult as school league tables. We need local research, and one of the things that we have done in Birmingham that Michael alluded to was to collect data about our kids -- not national kids, it's about *our* kids and what is happening in the lives of Birmingham children.

So by using all the standardized measures, we now have data on 17,000 children in Birmingham. We know a lot about the lives of kids, so it's very local data that you can then translate into, "Okay, and what are you going to do about that?" My plea for any further research would be at a very localised level.

MICHAEL LITTLE: Birmingham have a very ambitious plan to establish a research and what they call an intelligence function that will do epidemiology, cost benefit analysis, high quality evaluation of impact on outcomes, a service designed to make sure you deal with implementation issues, etc. They don't have this because they are aspiring to be one of the leading research organisations in the country, they have it because they see it as fundamental for improving outcomes for children. It is also the quality of the evidence that they collect which will determine how successful they are.

In describing what Birmingham are going to do, I described four of eight components of the kinds of evidence they are going to collect, so just to put to bed the issue that arose slightly yesterday, which is that it is not all about randomised control trials. Randomised control trials are part of the portfolio, but there are several other things you can do of high quality evidence that will make a difference to children's lives.

EILEEN VIZARD: On research, this very tiny minority of so-called high risk, high harm children who do not respond to parenting programmes, who require novel parenting and child interventions, there is a lot of research on it. We need funding to look at that, because the Children's Centres and the available training and the programmes won't touch those children. We have evidence on that. We should be funding pilot studies to look at treatment interventions for those children.

DAVID JEFFERIES: There is probably not going to be a lot more money available. The thing that struck me as being, if you like, the amateur here, is the way in which the vast majority of the public, including politicians, are unaware of the importance of the early years, and that if you want to get anywhere at all, you have to try and work out something which is about educating the public, educating the politicians to the full, but that with the limited sums of money, some of it may have to be diverted. All of your other debates about research and everything else are very important and they should be continued, but you have to get a very simple and very clear message across to everybody.

RUTH TALBOT: In going forward, the discussion here is absolutely right. We are moving forward into a time when there is going to be a tighter pressure on spending, and it is important that from the start we are looking towards the evidence of the impact of the services that are provided to children. I think it is right that a local approach be taken to that.

EMMA KNIGHTS: The second recommendation under research and training about quality of preschool staff is one of our main campaigning and work area issues at present. We have a project being funded by the Nuffield Foundation at the moment where we are working with the Institute of Fiscal Studies to actually look at what it would cost us if we were to improve the pay and qualification level of staff throughout all sorts of preschool settings, including Children's Centres, but only looking at the early education staff. We will be coming out with some numbers in a couple of months, which clearly, in the current context, we have to present very carefully.

LYNFA MOSES: In relation to the family home environment, if the public awareness campaign is talking about preschool, if it could also target parents. I know people do know in theory about reading to their children but obviously people aren't doing it. If that could be included in the public awareness campaign, that would seem to be the most important aspect.

STEPHEN PIZZEY: In terms of Group 1 recommendation it perhaps should emphasis that we need to understand factors that enhance positive development in children, i.e. reading to your children. This is a broad statement which can be used to embrace precisely the point raised.

MICHELE ELLIOTT: An example was given earlier of going into a home and everybody went outside to smoke and the visitor was left inside. One of the reasons that that probably happened was that incredibly effective advert which was on television where the parent was smoking and the child was there and the smoke went right into the child's mouth. I think campaigns like that, both for parents, particularly about leaving your baby just there in his little crib, which is not going to get him very far, is very important. We have done it with smoking, we have done it with drugs, we did it for a while with HIV, we did it with infant death, shaken baby syndrome, drunk driving -- you name it. This is probably in many ways, because it affects everyone, more important than those campaigns.

The focus is on getting it to the public in general, i.e. parents. It is how you treat your children between those ages, what you do and what you don't do. It's the vision that does it; it isn't just the reading.

DR EILEEN VIZARD: And note the slide on brain malleability and investment, because that says it in one. This is why you should speak to your child at a young age.

MICHELE ELLIOTT: There are two groups we want to get to: the general public and the parents, and the people working with the kids; and the politicians.

JOHN TENCONI: A public awareness campaign directed to inform parents that what happens to their children from conception to five is of the most seminal importance going forward, and that investment in their children at that age is going to be hugely beneficial for the child in the future. We felt that that was very misunderstood, not appreciated, and it could change dramatically the emphasis that parents actually put into the way they deal with their children at that age, rather than thinking, well, when they grow up we can do something with them. It is completely wrong and it needs to be changed.

12. RESPONSE FROM THE DCSF

Presentation by: Paul Dalgleish, Deputy Head, Family Policy Development & Delivery & Ruth Talbot, Assistant Director, Quality and Standards Division

Paul is the Deputy Head of Family Engagement Division, which is part of the wider Families Group in DCSF. Since 2007 Paul has led on a variety of different workstrands around parenting support but he currently has particular responsibility for a range of activity to improve the level and quality of parents' engagement in their children's early learning, including the free books for children programmes; the capacity of the third sector to support parents and families, especially during the recession; and improving access to the information and support parents need to parent confidently and effectively.

Ruth is the Assistant Director of Quality and Standards division, which is part of the Early Years Group in DCSF. She has particular responsibility for the inspection and regulation of early years, the implementation of the early years foundation stage, and the quality of provision within the early years. Prior to joining Quality and Standards division at the beginning of 2009, Ruth worked in DCSF's central strategy unit, helping to create the Children's Plan, which sets out DCSF's ambition to make this the best place in the world for children to grow up and the priorities it is focusing on to achieve this ambition. She also led on the development of the Play Strategy, and reviewed delivery of the Children's Plan priorities through the Children's Plan One Year on document.

Key Points from Presentation

- The importance of the early years in supporting and setting the foundation for children's later development and achievement, as recognised in the Children's Plan and Children's Plan: One Year On documents.
- Significant achievements already, e.g. delivery of Sure Start children's centres; introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage to support welfare, learning and development in all settings; improvements in qualifications of Early Years workforce.
- Recognition in Children's Plan of importance of families - their attitudes, aspirations and values - in supporting children's development and wider well-being.
- Parental *engagement* and family learning activity within the home environment are strong drivers for raising attainment and promoting wider well-being.
- Our vision is that in each local area there is a range of services spread across the continuum of need - from universal open-access services to targeted, referral-based services. Parenting and family support services sit alongside and work with other existing local services for children and adults.
- Sure Start Children's Centres play a critical role in supporting early learning and bringing together local services to address and support children's and families' needs.
- A number of challenges lie ahead - at a time of economic pressure and movement towards more partnership working, with greater autonomy for local areas, and a change in the way that improvement support is provided to early years.
- New parental engagement strategy will focus on ensuring that parents can have a

consistent expectation of the services and support they receive from their child's school, so that they can support their children to do well.

- Themes arising from the Conference recognised DCSF's commitment to raising knowledge and understanding of the importance of the early years, and of the importance of a high calibre, well qualified workforce with a culture of continuing professional development.

For a copy of the DCSF PowerPoint presentation please [click here](#)

Question & Answers to DCSF Speakers

How do you provide the necessary link with between preschool and first year in school?

We are trying to build on the use of the early years foundation stage profile, which is completed when children turn 5. One of the gaps that we are aware that currently exists is the use of teachers in key Stage 1 of that profile assessment, so that when the child enters Year 1, they fully understand where the child is in terms of development and what they need to be doing during that Year 1 to support that child's further development.

What messages should we giving parents about smacking?

We all recognise that smacking is a very emotive issue. The DCSF has been careful not to be too prescriptive, but in the Positive Parenting pack we do encourage people to look at other techniques and tools rather than resorting to smacking. We say to parents that there are some very simple ways short of physical smacking, which are equally effective.

You have described a universal service preschool, and we have a universal service reception year, first year in primary. What makes that transition seamless?

There is a whole range of agencies and services which all have a role to play in supporting children and the wider family. They all need to work in a collaborative and integrated way in which they focus on the needs of the child and the context in which they are living in terms of that wider family. Local authority have budgets to effect a dialogue between the current setting and the setting to which the child will move. As part of that dialogue, there is a very clear transfer of knowledge about what is known about that child and, more importantly, engagement with the parents so they and the child know what to expect when they move from one setting to a new setting.

The transition guides parents through that process and makes them aware of the support mechanisms that a school has put in place to ease the journey for the child.

What programmes or research do you plan to put into place to look at what would be the best kind of intervention for the small number of high risk children?

In the context of the Think Family reforms, over the last year we have been building on the roll-out of family intervention projects and then linking that to the youth crime family intervention projects, to the child poverty intervention project. They have illustrated that for those families with the most explicit needs and the biggest drain on local services, that this whole concept of family intervention project, which allows for a dedicated individual with all the right skills to intervene directly with that family, and to enter into "a contract" with that family which says "You will have access to a range of support and advice, whether it be help to give up smoking, give up drugs, to deal with other such issues, but in return for that

support there will be sanctions applied by us if you don't adhere to the requirements of those particular programmes."

The early family intervention projects, which ran in about 65 local authorities, showed in terms of the early evaluation that intervening in that way not only reduced their requirements on the services at the local level, but also had a very positive impact upon their children's behaviour.

What about the extremely disturbed children and families who require something different, far more focused by far more trained people? We can identify some of these cases. What we need now are novel approaches to dealing with them beyond ticking boxes.

Sure Start Children's Centres make a very important contribution, but it's what takes place within the Children's Centre that really makes the difference. These Think Family reforms, the way you talk about family intervention projects, you talk about individual workers and their role and so forth, but there is also out there lists -- we keep one list but there are many others you could go to -- of models that are proven to be of the highest standard to have an effect on children's well-being. Too little attention is being paid to those models.

What about a campaign on the importance of treating children of this age in a particular way?

If you look at our child care literature, you will see what we are trying to do throughout is to emphasise the importance of high quality early learning and care. It is there already, although there is no separate more accessible campaign. We are on a longer journey still trying to get children into childcare in the first place. The second reason is that the appetite is just not there. There is a risk that we could spend a lot of money at this stage and actually it is not what parents want to hear.

Parents are willing to move house to get their child into a good school, but they are not willing to pay extra money to get their child into good quality early years provision. So you would ask why doesn't Government fund that additional cost of good quality early years provision? Using the figures from the workforce presentation [see] yesterday, to give staff who work in the early years sector £100 extra a month, would cost £500m per annum.

That goes to show the difficulty of the situation, where we have parents who are saying they cannot afford to pay for high quality early learning and care, and a Government which is in a tight financial position. We are trying to tackle it and we are trying to raise parent's knowledge and understanding of the importance of early learning and care. The idea of a single campaign to tackle this question is a good idea. We will consider it further.

The issue is not so much getting parents to come into the services but of raising awareness generally for the public about the value of reading with your child at home, for instance in a home environment, between ages 3 to 5, because of the beneficial effects on the child. Obviously that would cost money, but it is a developmental argument, and it is an information-giving thing. It is requiring action in the home in terms of reading.

We have thought about campaigns from time to time. We ran one in 2008, during the European Football Championships, aimed directly at fathers, to encourage them to get involved in reading with their child. That was a huge success.

What we are talking about is public information, because having seen the presentations, it seems clear that the cost benefit of early years positive intervention with the population at large is extremely great. The standard of primary school that a child goes to, if they have had very good early years of work, isn't so significant; they will tend to do well if the primary school is good

or bad if they have had that initial exposure. So it is about information to the public, to say we don't think you understand physiologically how important that period is for your child. There should be an emphasis on it: the Government is doing something, local authorities are doing something, but you should be aware that input is required.

We seem to be understanding more and more about this early effect and the great importance of it for producing happy children, competent children, well adjusted children. Is there any input applicable at a European level, either in terms of legislation or funding or public awareness, because this must apply to the whole of Europe?

There is no simple answer to all this. We recognise and acknowledge what you say. We have been clear about the need to be more effectively joined up amongst government departments, so in areas like the Family/Nurse Partnership, through a programme we are running, which is Birth and Beyond, and that title is very deliberate. What we are looking at collectively is actually, at the point of birth, that is when the dialogue needs to start, or even before then.

On all these sorts of issues, it is how you communicate. I recognise what you say about the messages, but equally, if you look at it from the parent's perspective, we always have to think in the department, and we are always being reminded by our Parents' Panel that "It is easy for you as officials to assume that we know what you are talking about, but we don't." One of the criticisms that we come in for is that we need to put things in very plain and clear simple terms. One of the things that we are wrestling with in all of our publications is how do we achieve that balance between imparting quite a lot of knowledge and supporting evidence, without actually diluting the core message that we want to get across?

So I think what I would do in closing on this is to acknowledge that there are issues here about how we communicate the essence of that diagram to parents per se, but I'm not at this stage convinced that simply producing that diagram and then putting it in front of parents will facilitate the reaction that we want.

What about Children's Trusts?

There should be a Children's Trust in every local authority. Whenever I go on my travels, perhaps it is just because I am a departmental official that I am connected with the right sort of systems and processes that get me into that, but the whole rationale for a children's trust, as I described earlier on, is that it is supposed to be a vehicle which draws in representatives from all the relevant agencies and services locally, and more importantly, gives them, through that vehicle, an opportunity to discuss what the priorities for the area are, and agree in effect a strategy of what it is they are going to fund and take forward.

In Think Family we are on a journey, and the Think Family is about trying to effect system change. We have talked about Every Child Matters and the five outcomes, and therefore that quite rightly led agencies and services to focus on the child. The Think Family is to try and bring that around to that broader 'onion', as I describe it now, where the child continues to sit firmly at the centre of the onion, but you need to look at the outer skin in terms of the wider family. The whole thing about the family approach is advocating joining up services, effective cross-referral so that all parents, and particularly those who are most in need, we can begin to address that continuing concern that they have, which is "I am having the same conversation with X number of agencies and I am being continually brought back to square 1." This approach is advocating you need to be joined up, you need to clearly identify the issues for that family and within that child, and you need to agree the proper sequence of support and advice that you offer that family.

13. CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATIONS

GROUP 1 – WORKFORCE

1. Vision

Investment in Early Years Services (0-5) should be a priority because research has shown such investment to be highly cost effective in increasing school achievement, employability, father's involvement with their children and in reducing welfare dependence, teenage pregnancy, criminality and anti-social behaviour.

2. Public Awareness Campaign

Due to a lack of understanding about the importance of the early years and its impact on life chances, these services suffer a low status. It is therefore difficult to pay and recruit a high calibre and stable workforce. We need a public awareness campaign to increase understanding of the development of the brain and factors that enhance positive development in children, with a view to increasing the value society places on the work of the Early Years workforce.

3 Implementation

A first class stable workforce will be achieved by supporting and training current staff and recruiting increasing numbers of qualified staff. There should be a culture of continuing professional development. The workforce should reflect the diversity of society and changing pattern of men and women roles in raising children, in particular recognise the positive contribution men make to children's development and encourage their involvement.

We recommend that a small working group is formed from this conference to take forward its recommendations in association with partner agencies.

GROUP 2 – RESEARCH AND TRAINING

Research evidence justifies the emphasis on the importance of early years' services and the recent government investment in it.

1. Any future government must pursue a strategy of evidence based policy. For such a strategy to be effective the government must establish mechanisms for acquiring high quality evidence, appropriate to the questions being asked.
2. It should be an immediate priority to improve the quality of staff in every children's centre and other pre-school group settings. This could be effected by improved training and pay scales with the intention of achieving parity with the workforce in schools. The aim should be to have a workforce of one third graduate, a third at NVQ level 3 or A Level equivalent and a third in training.
It should be noted that the next generation of parents, now in the age group of 18 to 25, is experiencing increasingly high levels of unemployment, which reinforces the need to protect the early years' services for their children.

GROUP 3 – INTERAGENCY WORKING

We define “interagency” as inter-professional collaboration focussing on achieving positive outcomes for children, young people and families.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

We want to see a consultation based model to bring professional knowledge, expertise and information together to inform:

- Identification of need
- Engagement
- Assessment
- Planning
- Intervention
- Decision-making
- Reviewing
- Evaluation

This model could be applied to sub-populations of families / children, the process could build on CAF panels, CP conferences, core group meetings, etc. Benefits would include a supportive collaborative network for learning and challenging practice. This would result in avoidance of delay and duplication, leading to efficiency, cost effectiveness and shared responsibility and ownership and better experiences for children.

The facilitation of this process should be conducted by an objective experienced professional.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

The government should further support existing good practice towards integration of services for children. This should include developing multi-professional clusters which are co-located in children’s settings (e.g. schools, youth clubs) or through deployed linkages.

The evidence base from youth offending teams could support this model development. Vital ingredients:

- Shared recording and physical facilities
- Single operational managers?
- Professional identity / task retained through supervision
- Strategic buy-in
- Ring fenced funding

GROUP 4 – SERVICE PROVISION

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Maintain at least the current level of investment in services for 3-5 year olds.

- Positive impact on children demonstrated.
- Evidence that investment now saves money in long-term.
- But need to communicate the success to policy makers and the public (issues with media!)
- Services to include Children’s Centres, health visitors, nursery education for all.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Improve early identification and respond to children needs.

- Graduate-level workforce with a better gender balance.
- Spreading reflective practice through effective supervision.
- Knowledge training to enable early education and reception teachers to recognise different needs.
- Appropriate referral to specialist services (is there sufficient capacity?)

APPENDIX 1

List of Delegates

Name		Job Title	Organisation
Margaret	Adcock	Social Work Consultant	
Dr Tony	Baker	Consultant in Psychiatry	The Ashwood Practice
Liza	Bingley Miller	National Training Coordinator	Child and Family Training
Judi	Charters	Headteacher	Cookham Nursery School
Fiona	Colton	Head of Service, Childcare & Family Learning	Derby City Council
Paul	Dalgleish	Assistant Director, Families Policy	DCSF
Michele	Elliott	Chief Executive Officer / Founder	Kidscape
Barbara	Esam	Lawyer / Trustee	NSPCC / Michael Sieff Foundation
Tim	Gill	Writer and Consultant	
Jane	Haywood	Chief Executive	Children's Workforce Development Council
Patrick	Heisel	Policy Advisor - EYFS Implementation	DCSF
Cheryl	Hopkins	Service Director - Strategy and Commissioning	Birmingham City Council
Sue	Hynds	Early Years Advisory Teacher	London Borough of Hillingdon
David	Jefferies	Trustee	The Michael Sieff Foundation
Mohammed	Jolil	Children Centre Strategic Manager	London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Emma	Knights	Joint Chief Executive	Daycare Trust
Lord Francis	Listowel	Trustee	The Michael Sieff Foundation
Michael	Little	Director	Dartington Social Research Unit
Margaret	Lynch	Emeritus Professor of Community Paediatrics	
Melian	Mansfield	Chair of Early Childhood Forum	National Children's Bureau
David	Marsh	Director of Workforce and Programme Development	Children England
Liz	Marsh	Early Years Adviser	London Borough of Hillingdon
Prof Ted	Melhuish	Professor of Human Development	Birkbeck College, University of London

Name		Job Title	Organisation
Lynfa	Moses	Senior Lecturer	Sheffield Hallam University
Samantha	Parsons	CLLD Adviser	London Borough of Hillingdon
Prof Christine	Pascal	Director	Centre for Research in Early Childhood, Birmingham
Jonathan	Picken	Chair	BASPCAN
Stephen	Pizzey	Trustee	The Michael Sieff Foundation
Ed	Roberts	Policy Adviser, Early Years Improvement Support	DCSF
Wendy	Rose	Senior Research Fellow	Open University
Dame Philippa	Russell	Policy Adviser on Disability	National Children's Bureau
Natalia	Stafler	Primary Schools Project Manager	The Anna Freud Centre
Nicky	Stanley	Professor of Social Work	University of Central Lancashire
Dwynwen	Stepien	Director, Early Childhood Unit	National Children's Bureau
Ruth	Talbot	Assistant Director, Early Learning and Care	DCSF
John	Tenconi	Chair	The Michael Sieff Foundation
Deborah	Toni	Assistant Director Social Work	SSAFA Forces Help
Rita	Vasa	Senior Adviser (Early Years and Primary)	Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Dr Eileen	Vizard	Trustee	The Michael Sieff Foundation
Amy	Weir	Director	AW Associates
Richard	White	Secretary	The Michael Sieff Foundation
Kevin	Williams	Chief Executive	TACT
Peter	Wilson	Clinical Adviser	The Place2Be

APPENDIX 2

Useful / Relevant Reports *(included in conference delegate packs)*

1. **Being a Parent in the Real World: a supportive guide to being clear, staying calm and remaining confident.** Written by Lerne Antrobus.

Booklet available from DCSF Publications. Tel: 0845 6022260.

2. **Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents 2008.** National Centre for Social Research.

The full report (DCSF-RR136) can be accessed at www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/

3. **Early Home Learning Matters – a good practice guide.** By Kim Roberts.

Cost: £14.50. Available from <http://www.familyandparenting.org/item/publication/71>

4. **No Fear – growing up in a risk averse society.** Author: Tim Gill.

Available from all good book shops or from Central Books.

E-mail: mo@centralbooks.com / Website: www.centralbooks.co.uk

5. **Prevention Action Newsletter - On Paper**

To sign up for their weekly newsletter visit www.preventionaction.org