



**National Review of
the Early Years and Childcare Workforce**
Scottish Executive Response

Investing in Children's Futures

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Foreword

There is ample evidence that high quality early education and childcare services can improve children's development, learning and behaviour. We also know that a well qualified, professional workforce is by far the most important factor in delivering the quality of services that will give children the best possible start in life.

My long-term vision is of services that combine quality and flexibility to meet the needs of children and hard working families. I want to see all providers aspiring to the quality of the best, and investing in their services to deliver the standards that children deserve and parents expect. I also want to see the public sector in particular delivering more flexible services, and working more closely with voluntary and private sector providers to provide a seamless experience for children.

I plan to start investing more priority in the workforce now in order to deliver this vision, and investment will need to continue over a 10 year period to develop a truly professional early years and childcare workforce which is respected for the importance and the quality of the services it provides for our children and families. In my vision of the future, this will no longer be a workforce which is perceived as low skilled, or low paid.

For parents, this is an agenda of choice and empowerment. By delivering a combination of quality and flexibility, we can give parents the confidence to choose services that meet their needs, knowing that their children will be in a safe, stimulating and rewarding environment. For children, we will deliver consistently better quality learning and care, improving further their life chances. We must keep their needs at the forefront of our thinking as we pursue these goals.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Peacock". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Peter Peacock, MSP
Minister for Education and Young People

A view of the early years and childcare workforce from 2016: Alex's Story

I'm Alex and I started my career as an out of school care worker in the voluntary sector in 2006. I qualified as an early years and childcare practitioner mainly by training in the out of school club, with some work placements in other centres.

In 2008 I moved to a local authority pre-school centre as a practitioner. My existing qualification allowed me to work as an early years worker, but I undertook some continuous professional development to help me improve my skills and knowledge in working with younger children, e.g. in child development and delivering the curriculum. Once I had completed that, I went on to do further courses in leadership as I took on increasing responsibility in the centre.

At the end of 2012 I felt I wanted a change and moved to a deputy management position in a nursery in the private sector. My knowledge of working with different professionals involved in children's lives was a big asset there, as there were several children who needed intensive support of one form or another. I had to learn a lot in a short space of time about managing a centre which operates all day, with children attending in every pattern imaginable, including out of school care for older children.

I knew I wanted to become the manager of a centre one day, but that in order to register as a manager/lead practitioner I would have to gain a degree or equivalent level qualification. I took some advice and was told the continuous professional development I had already completed in my previous job could count towards a new leadership qualification which had recently been developed. I spoke to the owner of the nursery and she agreed to support me with the additional study required. Together with my manager and the local college and university, I agreed the additional learning I needed. It involved a short research project which I was able to do in my nursery, and it really helped me think about how to adapt what I do to meet each child's needs. It was hard work, but I was able to complete it within a year.

A year or so later a friend of mine told me about a couple of posts being advertised. One was for a manager of a new local authority extended day nursery centre which delivered all-day services for children and families in partnership with the voluntary sector and the other was for the manager of a family centre. Because of the experience I had gained in managing all day flexible services in the private nursery, I felt I was a strong candidate for both posts and I knew I had the right qualifications. Sure enough, here I am managing a family centre catering for over 100 children a week and providing family support and a whole range of other services.

I never thought when I started in the out of school cub that I would have a degree level qualification and be managing a big centre like this. My family are as proud as can be and I'm pretty proud of myself too. I still see quite a few of the people I have worked with down the years and most of them are still in the sector. A few have moved into management like me but a lot of them have decided to stay working in the front line, doing a whole variety of jobs.

One of my best friends now works with me here in the family centre. We met back when we were both nursery nurses and she had just joined from college. She decided to develop her skills in working with children with additional support needs because she enjoyed that part of the job and wanted to stay working with children rather than doing management. She now has a promoted post specialising in additional support needs and, as well as being a key worker, she plays a big role in providing guidance for students and colleagues here at the centre. We often talk about how things have changed in the sector when we go out after work, and there is no doubt that it is a real career with good prospects now. I have to admit I miss not spending as much time in the playroom as I used to, but a really important part of my job is still with the children, supporting my staff to develop their own skills and careers as much as I can.

Alex

Key Proposals

My long-term ambition is for all centres to be led by early years and childcare leaders who are qualified (including through a professional development route) at SCQF level 9 (ordinary degree or work-based equivalent).

- I expect work to construct an integrated qualifications and professional development framework to start in September 2006 and to be completed by September 2007.
- I expect programmes offering the new qualifications and professional development for leaders to be in place by September 2008.
- I expect programmes offering new qualifications and professional development for those entering and progressing through the workforce to be in place by September 2009.
- I expect a toolkit which supports understanding of progression routes for early years and childcare workers to be in place by September 2009.
- I expect the workforce to be considered as a highly regarded, high quality, highly qualified sector with workers earnings reflecting the quality of qualifications.
- I expect local authorities to offer increased flexibility in delivering early years and childcare services.

To assist private and voluntary sector providers of pre-school education to recruit and retain qualified staff:

- From this year, I will invest an additional £5m p.a. in pre-school education to fund an increase in the “advisory floor” used to inform local authority decisions about the cost of providing pre-school places.
- In the longer term I intend to move towards a position where all centres providing quality services are funded on a similar basis.

Overview of Proposals

In this response I set out what I intend to do to start the process, building on the progress we have already made in improving services and providing development opportunities for many staff within the sector. The key actions I intend to take are:

- **Developing leadership** in the early years and childcare sector by creating a workforce that is led by degree (or a work-based equivalent) qualified professionals. I want the first managers to be able to start continuing professional development routes to the new professional leadership level by September 2008. I will ask the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) to amend their registration requirements from 2011 to require lead practitioner/managers to have attained this leadership level or to attain it within a specified period.
- **Creating a genuine career structure** for the workforce where career progression and development is supported by a qualifications and professional development framework. I want the framework to be in place by September 2009 to allow workers to develop their professional skill and competence to progress their careers, which for some will be towards management and leadership roles. Our analysis supported by economic theory indicates that increasing levels of qualification in the workforce would be expected to lead to increasing pay in the sector.
- **Supporting private and voluntary sector** providers of pre-school education to invest in their workforces by providing an additional £5m each year to increase the “advisory floor”. Increased payments to providers will begin in the 2006-07 school year.

I am confident that together, these actions will improve the status and recognition of the workforce and support improved recruitment, retention and progression within the sector.

There are many partners involved in delivering early education and childcare services. This response gives a clear lead to partners and stakeholders as to the action they need to take to deliver the high quality, flexible services parents demand:

- I want **local authorities** to develop and support career pathways for their staff. All staff in early education and childcare should be clear about routes for progression and have access to development opportunities that will allow them to work towards securing promoted posts and leadership positions, where they have the personal qualities to fulfil such roles. I would expect implementation of career pathways leading to staff increasing their level of qualifications and responsibility will affect job evaluation processes and, consequently, levels of reward.
- I will update guidance to **local authorities** to require them to work more closely with their partner providers to ensure a high quality service is delivered to all children. Central to this must be greater equity in partnership arrangements and funding for pre-school education providers.

- In return, I expect **private and voluntary sector pre-school providers** to use this additional support to ensure that they can attract, train and retain staff, ensure that their staff meet registration requirements and support workers' professional development. The level of professionalism of their workforce, particularly amongst leaders and managers, must be as high as other parts of the sector if they are to achieve the consistently high standards of service that children deserve.
- I am asking the **Scottish Social Services Council** to deliver a 3 year programme to develop a qualifications and professional development framework. I will ask it to do so in partnership with key stakeholders including representatives of employers, the workforce and education and training providers.
- We will only achieve the outcomes that we seek if **employers** assist their **managers and staff** to take ownership of their increasingly professional identity by actively managing their own careers and making use of opportunities for professional development and career progression.

In the following sections, I set out the case for investing in the early years workforce and the detail of the actions that we will be pursuing to deliver high quality, flexible services for children and families.

The Case for Investing in the Early Years and Childcare Workforce

We all know that childhood is a special time and that childhood experiences can have a profound impact throughout our lives, influencing attitudes, physical and mental well-being, life chances and life choices. We know how important it is, therefore, to give our children the very best start in life, from their earliest months and into adolescence and beyond. As parents, we do all we can to secure the best start for our children. For more and more working parents, that includes seeking the best childcare to provide for their children's safety, development and stimulation whilst they themselves are at work.

In recent years we have secured an unprecedented increase in the resources we make available to fund these services, and have seen a dramatic expansion in provision. We invest £156m annually to provide free, part-time pre-school education for all 3 and 4 year olds whose parents wish it – and almost all parents of eligible children now take up this offer. Funding of our childcare strategy, which aims to provide affordable, accessible, quality childcare for children has more than doubled since 2003-04, to the current figure of £44m. Other funding streams, such as the £57m for Sure Start Scotland and £15m per annum for Working for Families, also contribute to the development of childcare provision as part of their wider purpose of providing targeted support and help towards employment for vulnerable families. In addition, we have supported a substantial increase in the number of places available in out of school care and begun to put these services on a more stable footing. These are all welcome achievements, but we cannot be complacent. Inspection reports tell us that many services are achieving very high standards but we must ensure that *all* services attain the quality of the best.

High quality, flexible early years and childcare services are essential to enable all our children to meet their potential; to help them develop the social skills and attitudes which will stand them in good stead in later life; to provide the safe and stimulating care parents want for their children; and to enable parents to take up employment and training opportunities. There is now ample research evidence about the benefits of quality early years services for all children.

Research shows that high quality pre-school services enhance children's intellectual, social and behavioural development, helping them to make a better start at school, increasing their sociability, their ability to co-operate and their independence. The most recent and compelling evidence comes from England. The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) study which started in 1997 investigated the effect of pre-school education on children's development. The benefits are clear for all children, although there is evidence that vulnerable or disadvantaged children may derive even greater benefit. The intellectual gains last well into the early years of primary school, whilst long-

term studies suggest that the social and behavioural benefits can last through adolescence and into adulthood. It is becoming increasingly clear, therefore, that investing in early years services is an investment in our children's future and in the future of Scotland; that investment in these services can, and will, pay dividends into the future.

Childcare provision for school-age children is also vitally important, allowing working parents to continue to support their families financially and enabling others to return to work, knowing that their children will be cared for, kept safe, and involved in positive activities. The provision of affordable, accessible, quality childcare, available at the times parents need it, plays an essential role in the expansion of our economy, helping parents, especially mothers, return to work and creating further employment opportunities within childcare itself.

But the *quality* of early years and childcare services is a critical factor. Only high quality services can deliver the benefits research has identified. And the single most important factor influencing the quality of these services is the workforce. Again, research is showing us that high quality outcomes for children are directly associated with the level of qualification of centre staff. The more staff with higher qualifications in a centre, the higher the quality of that centre and the better the outcomes are for the children attending the service.

For too long, the early years and childcare sector has been seen as low-skill, low-status employment. If that ever was the case, it can not be the case in the future. As parents, and as a society, we rightly expect childcare providers to deliver the highest level of care to the children we entrust to them, to help those children enjoy happy and stimulating childhoods and fulfil their potential. To secure this, we need a skilled, flexible, professional workforce, able to adapt to changing demands and expectations, and who have clear opportunities for professional development and career progression. That is why I ordered a review of the early years and childcare workforce, and why I welcome the publication of the Review Report.

I would like to thank the review team for the enthusiasm and commitment they have shown in tackling the complex workforce issues facing the sector. I have read the Review's report with interest, and am determined to build on the momentum that the Review has generated, and on the progress we have already made to expand these vital services.

In the following sections, I set out my intentions for the early years and childcare workforce, and for the services they deliver to families.

Further Professionalising the Workforce – Leadership and Career Development

I intend to give the sector the status it deserves through the creation of a genuine career structure, which will enable workers to progress within their chosen field, and to move more readily to related areas of employment where they wish to do so. I want to ensure that every early years or childcare worker who aspires to a management or leadership role and has the necessary skills and aptitude, can identify opportunities for such progression. Enabling workers in the sector to progress into managerial posts and leadership roles will both increase the status of the sector and help retain the motivated, high quality workforce we need to deliver this vital service.

I do not believe it is possible, and I do not intend to move to a situation where pay and conditions are determined nationally. We have a mixed economy of provision in the local authority, voluntary and private sectors. This offers flexibility and choice in provision, and is able to adapt to meet local needs and circumstances. The services that children and families need can be very different in different communities: they may need services at different times of the day; services might involve intensive family support with early years and childcare staff working in family homes and other settings; in rural areas staff might be working in small settings with very different management arrangements to a large centre in a town or city. The services families need can also change over time. In such a diverse sector, local authorities and other partners need to be able to design services which meet local people's needs. For local authority staff, the Single Status Agreement framework provides the flexibility to reflect both similarities and differences in the roles of staff within the sector. I believe national pay and conditions would be a barrier rather than a support to the sort of flexibility that we aim to deliver for families and we must put their interests first.

Although I do not believe national pay and conditions are the way forward, the Review does create a strong framework for a more cohesive early years and childcare workforce across the whole of Scotland. In particular, it provides a common description of the roles of leaders, practitioners and support workers within the sector, which can be applied nationally and in a range of different settings. I believe this will support our desire for consistently high quality of provision across Scotland and that my proposals will provide better professional status and choice for staff in this vitally important sector, leading to clearer career progression routes and better recognition and reward.

Stirling Council

Arnprior and Croftamie are rural nurseries situated in the west of the Stirling Council area, serving the rural communities of Arnprior and Croftamie. Both offer flexible extended day and extended year provision for children from 2-5 years of age. The Head of Nursery, who is in a peripatetic post as manager of both settings, is an Early Childhood Educator who has recently completed some modules of study towards the BA Early Childhood Studies, and who is now working towards SVQ4. Croftamie Nursery has a Depute Head of Nursery, and the holder of this post is an Early Childhood Educator who has recently completed the BA Early Childhood Studies. The Senior Early Childhood Educator at Arnprior is also working towards SVQ4, and two of the Early Childhood Educators are working towards the BA in Early Childhood Studies.

Edinburgh City Council

Edinburgh City Council has a nursery provision that offers integrated preschool and childcare services to families with children aged 0-5 years. This service is staffed by qualified nursery nurses and a teacher who specifically leads the 3-5 curriculum. The management structure of the centre consists of the centre manager who originally trained as a nursery nurse but who has subsequently achieved her MSC in Early Education. She works with two deputies, one of whom currently holds a nursery nurse qualification but plans to undertake a management qualification to meet the SSSC requirements. The second depute, who is currently employed on a temporary basis, was originally qualified as a nursery nurse but has recently achieved her professional social work degree. The manager is in discussion with the local authority's professional development team about the routes to further qualification for the Nursery Nurses employed within the Centre.

Central to my thinking is a longer-term commitment that all leaders of centres will be qualified at degree or equivalent level. For some, this will be achieved through academic qualifications, whilst for others it will be through a work-based route and continuous professional development. My decision is informed by research which has shown the particular relationship between the quality of outcomes for children and the qualifications of the manager or leader of a centre, and will address the issues around leadership identified in some parts of the sector by HMIE. This will not be achieved overnight, but I wish to signal my intention to move towards this position and I want to see tangible progress towards this quickly.

In some parts of Scotland, particularly rural areas, it is common for a manager or teacher to have responsibility for a number of small centres. While these proposals will ensure that all leaders are qualified to degree or equivalent level, they are not intended to alter these arrangements.

Teachers are part of the early years and childcare workforce and are the leaders in many early years and childcare centres, and some people have questioned why the Review did not include teachers. Teachers have, and will continue to have, a distinctive and important role to play in pre-school provision alongside other professionals. However, I wanted this Review to consider the issues relating to non-teaching staff in early years and childcare settings, as we already carried out a review of teachers, *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century*, in 2000. Not every early years setting currently has a teacher and this is not going to change. Indeed, the balance is likely to shift towards more non-teaching staff managing centres in the future. It is therefore important for there to be clear routes for people entering the sector by a variety of routes to be able to develop their expertise and professionalism to progress to management and leadership positions.

My long-term ambition is for all centres to be led by early years and childcare leaders who are qualified (including through a professional development route) at SCQF level 9 (ordinary degree or work-based equivalent).

Linked to this, taking account of research evidence and in response to calls for recognition of the professionalism of many in the workforce, I intend to create a competence-based qualifications and professional development framework. The framework will provide a structured and accredited route for workers as they progress through their careers. This will apply equally across private, voluntary and public sector providers, so that parents can be sure of the quality and skills of staff whichever childcare provider they choose.

I recognise that the workforce is already in the midst of a significant move towards a professional basis through registration with the Scottish Social Services Council. I welcome the positive response of many in the sector to our registration plans, clearly identifying it as part of developing professional status. The action I have set out here is designed to build on the progress we have made through registration. We have already put in place the minimum qualification requirements for workers in the sector. Raising the level of qualification required for the leaders of the profession is the next step and we will do this by asking the SSSC to set specific registration and post registration training and learning requirements for these workers. The qualifications and professional development framework will also provide structured routes to ensure that professional development continues for all workers after registration.

I am clear that a new qualifications and professional development framework should build on existing qualifications. This will ensure that existing workers holding or working towards the qualifications they need for registration will not have to undertake a whole new qualification, but will use continuing professional development to reach the new professional status.

The qualifications and development framework will provide a real opportunity for workers in the sector to gain recognition for developing their skills and knowledge throughout their careers. There will be clear linkages between the qualifications and professional development framework and a toolkit to help workers and employers navigate their career options, working towards the level required to progress to management roles, or developing particular specialisms.

Enhanced Qualifications and Professional Development through Registration

Registration of the early years and childcare workforce starts in October 2006, and the qualification requirements were published in 2004.

- I do not plan to make any immediate changes to those qualification requirements.
- I want to signal now my intention to raise the qualifications requirement for initial registration for managers/lead practitioners of services. I will ask the SSSC to amend the qualifications requirements for registration of new managers/lead practitioners from 2011. Existing registered managers/lead practitioners will be required to undertake specific post-registration training and learning to meet the amended qualification requirements.
- The minimum requirement for registration for practitioners and support workers will not change. However, the current workforce will have routes of continuing professional development available, to develop themselves throughout their careers and to take on roles involving increasing responsibility.

The Review set out a 10 year timescale for implementing its proposals. I want to see progress in several key areas on a much shorter timescale. My priority is to develop qualifications and professional development routes for the leaders of the sector.

- I expect work to construct an integrated qualifications and professional development framework to start in September 2006 and to be completed by September 2007.
- I expect programmes offering the new qualifications and professional development for leaders to be in place by September 2008.
- I expect programmes offering new qualifications and professional development for those entering and progressing through the workforce to be in place by September 2009.
- I expect a toolkit which supports understanding of progression routes for early years and childcare workers to be in place by September 2009.
- I have asked the SSSC to coordinate this activity to meet my expectations and timescales.

I recognise that some parts of the workforce are closer to being able to achieve the new level of professional status than others. Qualification levels tend to be higher in the local authority sector than in the private and voluntary sector, and higher in the early years sector than in out of school care. I am clear that I want the whole early years and childcare sector to make the transition to a new professional workforce. However, it is also clear that we will need to adopt a phased approach.

There are good reasons for the early years workforce to form the early phase. Evidence illustrating the role that a qualified workforce, and particularly a highly qualified leader, plays in delivering quality services for children is strongest in the early years sector. This is also the sector where children can spend significant amounts of time – sometimes all day, several days a week.

The local authority early years sector currently has a higher level of qualified staff than any other sector of this workforce. I therefore expect local authorities to be at the forefront of the move towards a fully professionally-led workforce, by actively supporting their managers to achieve the new professional status once the necessary framework and qualifications are in place. I also expect them to support their wider workforce to develop their careers using the framework.

The private and voluntary sectors are also key providers of early years services. I know that these sectors both face particular challenges around the delivery of quality services at a price which remains affordable to parents. For that reason I intend to look again at the “advisory floor”, established by the Scottish Executive to inform local authority decisions about the cost of providing part-time pre-school provision in private and voluntary settings

to 3 and 4 year olds. It is clear that in some areas private and voluntary providers of free pre-school places are being offered a significantly lower level of funding than local authorities fund places in their own centres. This is an inequitable situation, which may contribute to unnecessary and unhelpful quality differences between providers, limit potential benefits to children, and, in the longer term, reduce parental choice.

- I will revise the “advisory floor” used to inform local authority decisions about the cost of providing pre-school places in the private and voluntary sectors. From this year, I will invest an additional £5m p.a. in pre-school education to fund an increase in the “advisory floor”.
- I expect private and voluntary sector pre-school providers to use the increased resources to invest in their workforces, to improve retention of experienced and qualified staff and to support their workforce to develop to meet the new professional status when it is developed.
- I will make revisions to the Scottish Executive guidance on pre-school education and commissioning pre-school places to reflect this by February 2007 and I expect this to be reflected in contracts by August 2007.
- I intend to build on this first step by making more significant changes to the way that pre-school places are commissioned to put in place incentives for partner providers to deliver quality services by February 2008 and I expect this to be reflected in contracts in August 2008.
- In the longer term I intend to move towards a position where all centres providing quality services are funded on a similar basis.

The out of school care and play for older children workforce will form a second phase. This is a pragmatic decision which reflects the circumstances of this part of the sector. These staff are often working in very small centres delivering services for a short period each day. In addition, the sector faces particular training challenges in view of the significantly lower levels of existing qualification amongst its workforce. However, as I make clear in the following section on flexible services, it is important that the whole workforce has the same professional basis, and I am clear that we must work towards this as a longer-term goal.

Childminders deliver essential services and are an integral part of this workforce. They work in quite different circumstances to most other early years and childcare workers – usually as the sole provider and manager of a service. Childminders are registered with the Care Commission, and there is not currently a requirement for childminders to hold qualifications, although childminders are encouraged to undertake training and development. I do not have any plans to introduce a requirement for childminders to hold a particular qualification, but I do want to see childminders undertake qualifications and

professional development. The qualifications and professional development framework will be designed to accommodate the specific circumstances of sole workers and there will be an expectation that childminders will undertake training and learning.

Introduction of Enhanced Qualifications and Professional Development

My long-term ambition is for all centres to be led by early years and childcare leaders who are qualified (including through a professional development route) at SCQF level 9 (ordinary degree or equivalent).

- The first phase will be leaders in early years settings which will start from September 2008.
- The second phase will be leaders in out of school care and play settings for older children.

Childminders will be encouraged and supported to undertake qualifications and professional development which will be designed to accommodate the specific circumstances of sole workers. However, they will not be *required* to hold qualifications.

Flexible Services

The position we want to reach is one where there is a wide range of flexible and responsive services, all of which are delivering a consistently high quality of care, learning and play opportunities for children. Parents should not have to choose between quality and flexibility.

Delivering these services in this way, for children and families will clearly demonstrate the elements of public service reform of user-focus, quality, efficiency, accountability and joining up services across boundaries which we have set out in “Transforming public services – the next phase of reform”.

The private sector has been quick to recognise the importance of flexible services, delivering services when parents need it. However, inspection reports suggest that, while many private sector providers deliver excellent services, quality can be more variable than in local authority centres. The proposals I have set out above are intended to ensure that the flexibility offered by the private sector is matched by consistently high quality of services.

Some local authorities have begun to develop services which are more responsive to local patterns of need, and these developments must be extended across Scotland. I want to see more flexibility in the way that pre-school education is offered, in patterns that suit families and that fit seamlessly with other services for children. I want this to be a priority for local authorities – providers and commissioners of childcare. Clearly local authorities will have to balance carefully how they deliver flexible services, whether directly or in partnership with providers in the private and voluntary sector, while ensuring they deliver effective and efficient services.

Scottish Borders Council

Private sector and local authority providers work in partnership at a nursery in Peebles to offer parents flexible all-day childcare. First Nursery, a privately owned nursery in Peebles, is built on land leased from Scottish Borders Council in the playground of Kingsland Primary School. The nursery offers a wide range of services for children, from babies to school age children. This includes a baby room, care for young children, pre-school education, breakfast clubs, holiday clubs and out of school care. First Nursery provides pre-school education for 3 and 4 year olds, and also offers wraparound care for children attending the nursery class of the primary school. Staff from the nursery go to the school to collect children from nursery and primary classes.

Dundee City Council

Dundee City Council Education Department has expanded provision of childcare in all 12 nursery schools. This is offered flexibly to meet the needs of parents. Children can access all day services or can add time on to their pre-school place in the early morning, over lunchtime or in the evening. This care is available on a paid for basis to parents who work or are training for employment. The nurseries have adapted accommodation to provide a relaxed and informal environment where children are in small groups.

Full time placements are also available in all nursery schools and six nursery classes free of charge to children with additional support needs in low-income groups. In addition all year provision is offered in two nursery schools providing holiday childcare services for children from across the city.

In order to provide the flexible services families need, we must have a flexible workforce. Workers must have the skills and knowledge to be able to work in different settings, sometimes with children of different ages; with parents and families; perhaps in different types of centres; or working on their own. That is why I want all parts of the early years and childcare workforce to be similarly skilled and qualified.

Flexible services will not be achieved with a fragmented workforce where parts of the sector struggle to attract the right staff, and where staff are not able to move easily between types of provision. Although I am initially focusing on the early years sector, I expect the rest of the sector to follow as the workforce development programme beds down. Indeed, as services become genuinely more integrated and flexible, I expect the distinctions between the different parts of the sector to diminish. This does not, however, mean that we should lose the expertise in particular areas, or that workers will no longer be able to choose to specialise.

Designing flexible services, and ensuring that there is a well qualified workforce in place to deliver those services, are intertwined. Workforce planning is the crucial component of the programme to develop a professional workforce. It is the bridge that connects development of a professional and competent workforce with the delivery of quality flexible services. I want the SSSC to develop a national approach to workforce planning which will help local authorities plan workforce needs with local partners.

I have asked the SSSC to develop a workforce planning toolkit for the early years and childcare sector by June 2008.

Implementing the Plan

I am clear about my vision for a professional workforce in the future. I want quality, flexible services for children and families. I want the workforce to be professionally led, which is why my priority is to develop qualifications and professional development routes for leaders of the sector. I want a clear route for workers to navigate and secure the qualifications and development they need to progress through their careers. I want an integrated workforce that is able to deliver the flexible services families need. I want a funding system for pre-school education that provides incentives for high quality provision.

I intend to consult on the detail of how we implement the programme of work to increase the professionalism and raise the status of this important sector which will feed into the programme's development. The Review's report includes questions about the features of a qualifications and professional development framework, workforce planning and improving the status of working in early years and childcare. The consultation exercise will finish in December 2006 and I will publish a summary of responses in 2007.

- I will publish the summary of consultation responses in 2007.
- I have asked the SSSC to provide information to the sector about progress on the development work it is coordinating on qualifications and professional development, career pathways and workforce planning.

I have set out the early action I intend to take to develop the professional workforce we need to deliver quality flexible services for children and families. This is a large and challenging programme of development work. However, it is the next step in building on the progress we have already made in the services that are available for children and families and in the professionalism of the workers delivering them.

This is not the end of the process, but the start of one where I want to see Scotland continue to develop a truly professional early years and childcare workforce which is respected for the importance and the quality of the services it provides for our children and families.



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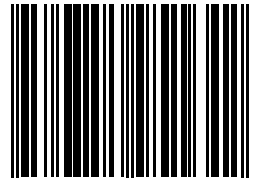
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