

Childwise Issue 32 Autumn/October 2008
Daycare Trust National Childcare Campaign
Childcare news for parents

The Early Years Foundation Stage



Welcome

Welcome to the Autumn edition of *Childwise*. Since our last edition, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) has been introduced to all settings working with children under five. Whether your child attends nursery, a childminder, pre-school children's centre or school reception, the EYFS should provide you with a greater opportunity to see how your child is developing in their childcare setting and to understand how they are learning through play.

In this issue of *Childwise*, we will give an overview of the EYFS and take a closer look at how it is being put into practice in some childcare settings.

EYFS was devised through much consultation with a range of experts – childcare providers, academics, child development specialists and indeed Daycare Trust.

Most good settings have been working to the main principles anyway, so in practice, for many there won't be much change. For other childcare settings, the introduction of the framework provides a spur to be working towards better child led practice.

We hope the information here, and in the enclosed leaflet, answers any questions you might have, but if you do have any further questions, we would be very pleased to hear from you on our information line on 020 7840 3350.



Emma Knights and Alison Garnham
Joint-Chief Executives



What is the Early Years Foundation Stage?

The EYFS pulls together three existing sets of standards which nurseries and other childcare settings were already following. It updates these standards and simplifies things by pulling them all together into one place.

The EYFS covers two key areas – the welfare and the development of children.

The welfare section sets out the safety and general standards of childcare that children receive. It includes basic checks, such as ensuring that appropriate staff are in place, and that facilities and equipment are safe and suitable for children. It also covers the quality of the environment that the children are in – for example it recommends that there should be access to outdoor space.

The development section outlines some of the milestones that most children should have reached by the age of five, like interacting with other children and adults and the recognition of simple, written words. These milestones are laid out to give those working with children guidance and to help them to identify if a child needs a little bit more help.

Why is EYFS being introduced?

The Department for Children Schools and Families are introducing statutory standards for childcare from birth to five, so every child, regardless of their background, has the right to play, have fun and develop safely when they are looked after away from their home.

The Government believes that these standards are key to giving all children, particularly those from less advantaged backgrounds, a better start in primary school.

What does EYFS mean for my child?

In most early years settings, the EYFS should not bring any significant changes, but will simply reinforce the good work already being done by the childcare provider. Your child will have a development booklet which will be kept by your childcare provider and which you can contribute to. This will form their Early Years Profile which is usually compiled by the Reception class teacher.

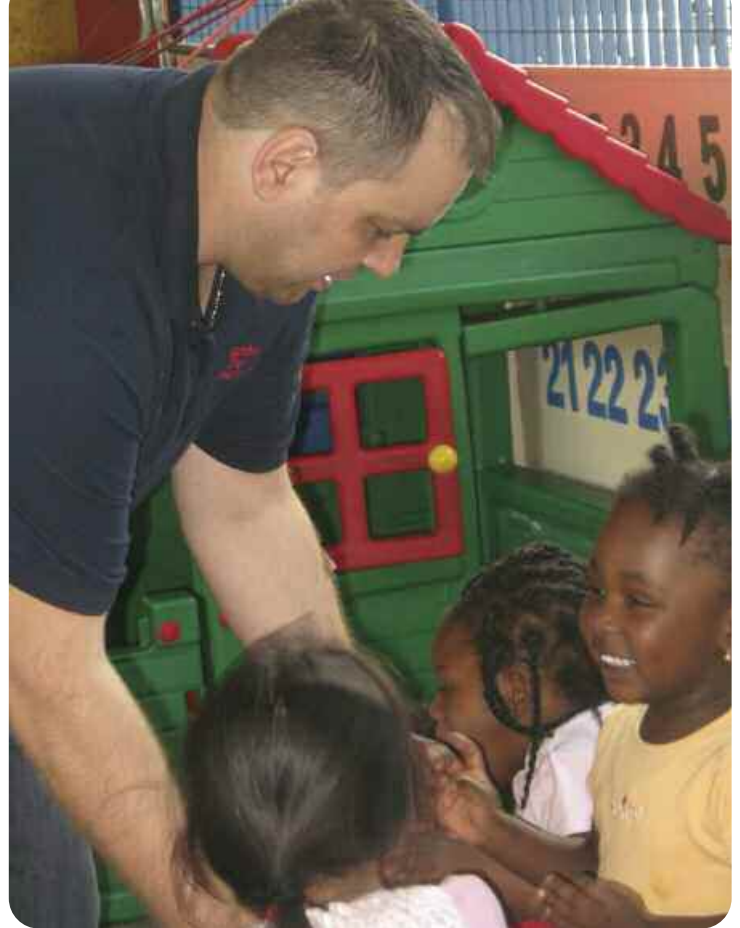
There are critics of the new standards and certain aspects of the new framework are being reviewed, for example the Literacy goals but overwhelmingly there is widespread support among practitioners.

EYFS in practice

We visited a few settings to find out what these new guidelines mean in practice and how you as a parent can become more involved.

At Matchbox Nursery in Tower Hamlets, Richard Wells, Room Leader, asks if anyone wants to play outside. 'YES' squeals the excited group of three to five year olds. The children run outside and are free to move between the covered outside area or stay inside and continue with what they were up to. As Richard is chased round the sandpit he explains: 'This framework is so much simpler than before. It's all child led and a lot more flexible. We let the children decide when they want to do an activity rather than us as adults setting rigid times for activities. For example, a child might start the day sticking or drawing, then feel like dressing up, look at a book and then maybe want to come back to finish their drawing. If drawing is only for a set time and the drawing table has been cleared away, then they can't finish what they were doing. Now things get left so the children can decide when they are ready to move on to something new. This is all about allowing children freedom to do what they want to do when they want to do it, in an informally structured environment.'

Beverly Webb, Deputy Manager continues: 'It's a much softer approach, and much more inclusive. This isn't about ticking boxes of academic achievement; children are allowed to develop at their own pace, through play. All children are capable and competent learners – they're not all academic, and these guidelines acknowledge children's differences and abilities. For example, we had a little boy who is very clever, very capable but who just wouldn't sit down to do anything. So we adjusted to him; he was happier outside, so we made sure he could do the range of activities in the area that suits him.'



Room Leader, Richard at Matchbox Nursery

In Erith, three year old Loubell Perkins is writing a letter to her brother Len who has just started school. Both children are cared for by Zuzanne Cooper who has been a childminder for ten years: 'There's a lot less pressure to meet milestones in these new guidelines,' she explains, 'I've had a lot of support from the childminding network co-ordinator and once you get into the guidelines, they make a lot more sense. I've been cross referencing the old and new guidelines for a few months in my observations and planning book and now I'm just using the EYFS.'

Loubell is very proud of her letter to Len and posts it into a box. Len has autism so for Zuzanne, working in partnership with the children's Dad, nursery teachers and other health professionals has always been essential. 'These new guidelines mean there is more consistency between all those concerned. Len's Dad and I have always worked closely and more recently I have been preparing Len for school in various ways such as helping him to sit crossed legged at circle time. This is a big achievement for Len, it means he feels part of his social group at school and can enjoy a story. Because I know Len very well, I can share my observations and thoughts with the school.'

Principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage

- **A Unique Child** – every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self assured.
- **Positive Relationships** – children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or key workers.
- **Enabling Environments** – the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning.
- **Learning and Development** – children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of learning and development are equally important and inter-connected.



Loubell Perkins writing a letter and with childminder Zuzanne

At Overland Children's Centre daycare service in Tower Hamlets, Gill Bird welcomes the new guidelines: 'This is a very disadvantaged area and all the children here are referred to us by other health and social professionals. We hope that we've created an environment where all children can thrive and develop regardless of their background or circumstances. These new guidelines acknowledge that children are all starting from different points and through our observations and planning we strive to enable all children to achieve their potential. We are continually trying to communicate with parents; finding out what the children like at home and being led by their interests; offering suggestions of books or activities for the children to do at home and also involving parents in forums, and community activities.'

In Peckham, South East London, Jeanne Peskett, Head Teacher, feels that very little will change to the way she and the staff work at Nell Gwynn Nursery: 'We have been working this way for many years. The children are free to move between activity areas, inside and out and all the activities are replicated in both indoor and outdoor areas. All our activities are play based yet the children are constantly learning.' The garden enables children to grow their own vegetables and eat whatever they grow, they crawl between the hedges to make dens, run around on the grass area or paint, play with sand, music or building blocks; whatever activity they are doing they are exploring and learning but most of all having fun. Jeanne explains: 'All our observations are led by the children's interests. If we feel we need to be more focused in one area with a particular child we will plan accordingly. The main change is that we're now only working to one set of guidelines covering the whole 0-5 age group. There is often a huge range of abilities at this age and these guidelines acknowledge that children learn and develop at different rates.'

The EYFS offers you as a parent a greater voice in the development of your child while they are being cared for and it's important that communication is two way; let your childcare provider know what your child's interests are at home, add photos and comments to their development booklet, and if you have any questions about the new guidelines, your provider should be happy to discuss this with you.



Key facts

- The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is based on research which shows that the years between birth and five are crucial in a child's development.
- The EYFS allows for each child to be able to develop at their own pace. There is no testing and no exams for children to pass or fail.
- The EYFS standards are guidelines for childcare workers. Most childcare settings already meet the standards set out in the EYFS.
- If a childcare setting does not meet the guidelines in the EYFS they will not be shut down immediately, they will submit a plan to OFSTED setting out how they will improve.
- The EYFS will not push children into formal learning when they are too young. The EYFS is founded on the importance of play. In fact it discourages formal approaches.
- The EYFS does not push children to read and write. It lays out basic milestones for forming letters and words.



Exploring the garden at Nell Gwynn Nursery

Listening to young people about childcare

The research team at Daycare Trust want to know more about what young people think about childcare, such as holiday clubs and Extended schools provisions. The Government has ambitious plans to make Extended schools available to all children and young people by 2010, and wants to ensure that there is sufficient childcare accessible to all.

This research, commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, sets out to gauge what children and young people's views and preferences are. 'Listening to Young People about Childcare' is the final phase of a three year research project. Previous strands of the project involved extensive consultation with parents and children between the ages of 6 and 12 about their experiences of and thoughts on childcare. The final stage of the research will explore the experiences and views of young people between the ages of 11 and 15 (or 18 for those with additional needs) on 'childcare' for their age, such as out-of-school clubs, Extended schools and holiday clubs.

We plan to consult with young people from diverse backgrounds all over England including: those who use childcare as well as those who don't; young people with additional needs; young people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds; and those living in rural and urban localities. Consultation will mostly be through focus groups and individual interviews and we want to encourage as many young people as possible to get involved.

If you would like to know more about the research and/or would like to get involved, contact us at: listeningtofamilies@daycaretrust.org.uk or 020 7840 3350. For copies of our previous Listening to Families reports, including Listening to children about childcare, visit our website www.daycaretrust.org.uk.



New interpretation service

Daycare Trust has recently launched a new interpretation service to enhance our Information Line.

If you or anyone you know would like to speak to an adviser about childcare and paying for childcare, in another language, please call our Information Line and we will arrange for interpretation.

020 7840 3350

Daycare Trust is a member of the Campaign to End Child Poverty



For more information about the campaign visit
www.endchildpoverty.org.uk

Daycare Trust now offers longer information line opening hours

Monday: 10am–1pm and 2–5pm
Tuesday: 10am–1pm and 2–5pm
Wednesday: 2–5pm
Thursday: 10am–1pm and 2–5pm
Friday: 10am–1pm and 2–5pm

Policy news

Welfare to Work

The Government's Welfare to Work programme is underway and this may affect you if you are a lone parent on benefits. From November this year, when your youngest child is 12 years old, you will be moved from Income Support to Jobseeker's Allowance and expected to attend jobseekers' interviews. This may have implications on your childcare needs.

Daycare Trust has lobbied the Government to ensure that parents in this situation are given adequate support to find childcare and are not penalised if suitable childcare is unavailable. For parents who are coming off benefits and who participate in the New Deal programme, there are schemes such as Childcare Assist and Childcare Subsidy to help with the costs of childcare. You will need to ask your adviser about these schemes. Once you are working more than 16 hours a week you can claim the childcare element of Working Tax Credit which can pay up to 80% of your childcare costs.

If you require help in finding childcare in your area, call Childcare Link: 0800 234 6346. For more information on paying for childcare visit www.payingforchildcare.org.uk or call our information line on 020 7840 3350.

Childcare vouchers and maternity leave

Recent changes to the Sex Discrimination Act mean that if your baby is due on or after 5 Oct 2008 and you have been participating in a childcare voucher scheme prior to your maternity leave, you will be entitled to receive vouchers throughout your leave.

Until recently vouchers were only given up to week 26 of your maternity leave but under this amendment, women taking additional maternity leave (wks 27-52) will be entitled to continue receiving these vouchers even if they are not receiving any salary. If you are not receiving a salary for this period of your maternity leave, your employer is responsible for the cost of the vouchers. This change can raise complex contractual issues. If you are unsure how your entitlement to vouchers is affected, seek advice. For more information, download our factsheet 'Childcare during maternity leave' from www.daycaretrust.org.uk.

Become a Parent member of Daycare Trust

Daycare Trust membership for parents is free in 2008. For your free subscription to *childwise*, please fill in the form below and become a Parent member of Daycare Trust. Return completed forms to: Daycare Trust, 21 St George's Road, London SE1 6ES, or fax it to 020 7840 3355. You can also download the membership form from our website: www.daycaretrust.org.uk

I would like to become a Parent member of Daycare Trust and receive my free copy of *childwise*.

Name

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We may occasionally contact you about other publications and services we offer. If you do not wish to be contacted please tick this box.

NATIONAL CHILDCARE CAMPAIGN

daycare
trust

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