

Evaluation of the Early Years programme

Final report to the National Strategies

April 2010



Executive Summary

Introduction

1. In October 2009, the National Strategies commissioned SQW Consulting, in partnership with QA Research, to evaluate the Early Years programme, by conducting interviews with local authority Early Years Consultants, lead professionals, practitioners in schools and settings, and childminders.

Background

2. The National Strategies supports improvements in the quality of learning and teaching in schools and early years settings. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is the key stage (for birth to five-years old) and the title of the statutory materials for that key stage introduced in September 2008. The National Strategies works with local authorities on the EYFS to help them support schools, settings and childminders to raise children's standards of attainment and improve their life chances. Local authorities embed the EYFS framework by providing a wide range of training, materials and other support for lead professionals and practitioners across the early years sector.

The evaluation

3. Where such local authority support for EYFS has been successful, the National Strategies expects that:
 - 80% of practitioners in schools, 80% of childminders and 80% of private, voluntary and independent sector (PVI) practitioners will have a good knowledge and understanding of EYFS
 - there is good support from local authorities for head teachers and practitioners in schools, childminders and childminder networks, and PVI practitioners
 - there are good links between head teachers and practitioners in schools, childminders and childminder networks, and PVI practitioners
 - external communications between local authorities, schools, childminders, PVI practitioners and other partners are good.
4. The National Strategies' intelligence shows that, where local authority support has been delayed, ineffective, not universal or simply not undertaken by the local authority; these outcomes have not been achieved. Hence there is a need for the evaluation to explore awareness and understanding of the EYFS among practitioners, and the extent to which local authority support for EYFS has influenced this.
5. The objectives of the evaluation were to:
 - investigate the level to which EYFS is being embedded across the early years sector

- investigate how effective different practitioner groups have found local authority training on EYFS
 - explore the nature and content of the training and the processes local authorities have used to disseminate information about EYFS with practitioners across the full range of early years settings and explore the strengths and weaknesses of such processes
 - gauge the level of impact of the National Strategies on supporting preparation for the introduction of EYFS.
6. The primary methods of research deployed in the evaluation were interviews with lead Early Years Consultants in 18 local authorities, and a telephone survey of 289 early years leaders and practitioners in schools, settings and with childminders in the same 18 local authority areas. It should also be noted that the while the agreed overall sample size of 289 is enough to provide a reasonable guide to practitioners' views, it is insufficient to provide a standard error of less than +/-5%. The results throughout this evaluation therefore, should be treated as indicative rather than definitive findings.

Findings

Local authority roles and responsibilities

7. The evaluation found that all local authorities sampled had a good understanding of their obligations under the Children's Act, the wider context to EYFS and their roles and responsibilities *vis a vis* the National Strategies. The National Strategies support for local authorities was highly praised by the 18 lead Early Years Consultants involved, with only one strongly negative view. Local authorities felt the National Strategies is an effective resource and they had drawn on it extensively. The national materials were heavily used and valued by local authorities, and the National Strategies' support was welcomed, both in terms of standard monitoring and quality assurance, and the flexibility to draw in more in-depth support from advisers. The regional and national perspective provided by National Strategies was also valued.

Local authority support provided

8. Local authorities were confident that their approach to training, materials and other support was good, and many talked about changes that had already happened or were planned – such as more collaborative working, and more targeted and tailored support – to ensure that it could be even more effective in future.
9. All local authorities sampled offered a wide range of support to schools, settings and childminders to help them implement EYFS, drawing on the Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare Grant alongside other funds such as children's workforce development and the Standards Funds. Few were able to report exactly how much had been spent on providing EYFS support but it is clear that local authorities have delivered a large number of EYFS training sessions alongside other forms of support such as monitoring visits, action planning and intensive support.

10. Among the priority groups for local authority support were schools and settings in need of improvement, identified through EYFSP, 'RAG'¹ performance ratings developed by local authorities, visits or OfSTED reports. Others were out-of-school clubs, playgroups, new or returning staff, and leaders and managers in general. Particular training was frequently tailored to reception teachers dealing with EYFSP. Other specific groups for whom some training and networking was delivered separately included childminders and teaching assistants – as one interviewee put it: *“training is divided up so that the right people can get the most out of it”*, though in most places the core training to introduce EYFS was open to all. For childminders, most local authorities described their flexible approach to evening and weekend provision, designed to boost attendance.
11. Most EYFS support was provided in-house by the local authority free of charge. Some authorities favoured integrated EYFS support to schools and settings, with all staff based in the same team, while for others there was a clear demarcation with separate advisors for schools and settings.

Achievements

12. The evaluation evidence suggests that the expected practitioner and children's outcomes for the programme are being achieved – improved practitioner awareness, confidence and practice in delivering EYFS, and better outcomes for children – and that this could not have happened without support from local authorities on EYFS aided by the National Strategies. This suggests that local authority support has added considerable value to what might have been achieved simply by introducing the EYFS framework and legislation alone.
13. Overall, most local authorities and practitioners surveyed now regard practitioner awareness of the EYFS to be good across most parts of the early years sector (98% of practitioners surveyed during the evaluation were aware of the EYFS framework pack, and 94% had used it directly), but there is a continuing need to raise awareness in some areas. These include out-of-school clubs and wider professional groups working with young children (e.g. health workers), and PVI settings and childminders where awareness currently lags behind other parts of the sector. Only 2% of respondents to the practitioner survey sample (six practitioners) were not yet delivering the framework – five of these were childminders.
14. The evaluation also revealed that local authority EYFS support is improving skills levels. Eighty-one percent of survey respondents said that their knowledge and skills in early years provision had improved since September 2008, and nine out of ten of these said that local authority EYFS support had resulted in improvements to their practice.
15. Within this, head-teachers were more likely than the overall sample to say that their knowledge and skills in early years practice had improved (92% against 81% for the overall sample), and childminders were less likely to report improvements (68%). Childminders were slightly more likely than others however to say that their knowledge and skills in early years had stayed the same (19% vs. 13% of the overall sample).

¹ 'Red, amber, green' to indicate performance.

16. Local authority EYFS support appears to have had greatest impact on improving practice in three areas: improving the learning environment and outdoor provision; encouraging child-led and playful learning; and increasing the frequency and quality of observations.
17. Furthermore, and in line with national EYFSP results, survey respondents identified Communication, Language and Literacy as the area in which outcomes for children have improved most since September 2008 (51% of the 102 headteachers or setting leaders who responded to this question), though improvements were cited across all areas of learning.
18. The vast majority of survey respondents felt that the training, support and materials received by the local authority had helped increase their confidence in delivering EYFS (83%), with nearly half saying that they would not have been able to deliver the EYFS without it, and 95% of those with greater confidence saying that local authority EYFS support had resulted in improvements to their practice. The vast majority (84%) of those reporting improvements in outcomes for children felt that local authority training, materials and other support on EYFS had helped them to raise standards and achieve these outcomes.

Effectiveness

19. The EYFS framework itself is thought by local authorities to work well and to be an excellent source of material and guidance. Alongside this, local authorities welcomed the support they have received from the National Strategies. In turn, local authority support is reaching most practitioners (only 2% were not aware of any materials, training or support on EYFS) and this support seems to be working. Practitioners' need for training and support has reduced over the period since September 2008 (nearly 40% of survey respondents felt they had no further need for support on EYFS), and more than half of the practitioner survey respondents were unable to identify anything in the support they had received which had not worked well.
20. Two local authority approaches to providing EYFS support seem to have been particularly effective: targeting support at identified needs and providing tailored solutions; and involving practitioners in action research and training focusing on practical tasks. However there is room for improvement: 18% of practitioners surveyed said there are some areas in which current support is not meeting their needs, and these differ between practitioner groups. Childminders were much more likely than other practitioner groups to say their needs were not being met, for further training, materials or other support to help understand what EYFS is about (12% vs. 6% of all respondents), build confidence in their abilities to deliver EYFS (9% vs. 4%), and deliver the EYFS welfare requirements (7% vs. 3%).

Challenges and critical success factors

21. The transience of the early years workforce is a continuing challenge for local authorities providing EYFS support. In response, some have put in place a rolling programme of courses giving an introduction to EYFS and the EYFSP, whilst others had targeted their setting visits and wider support on providing support to those settings with new staff.
22. Managing the volume of national EYFS materials released around the time of the launch in September 2008 presented difficulties for some local authorities charged with designing and delivering local EYFS support for practitioners. The difficulty of embedding and improving

the quality of early years provision amidst competing information and priorities remains, and requires a coordinated national/local approach to ensure the scale, timing and content of EYFS support materials work to best effect.

23. Going forward, it is clear that local authorities are addressing these challenges whilst tackling a set of more general obstacles to the delivery of effective EYFS support. These include ensuring the sustainability of EYFS support and its effects in practice and outcomes improvements when the National Strategies support is no longer available, local authority capacity constraints and diminishing resources for supporting practitioners within schools and settings, ensuring practitioners in isolated rural areas are supported, and overcoming remaining resistance to cross-sector collaboration and culture change within some settings.
24. In doing so, local authorities may wish to refer to the critical success factors identified by lead Early Years Consultants during the evaluation, including the following:
 - having a good team and team structure with strong backing from senior officers and links to wider children's services
 - being flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances and needs/opportunities for EYFS support, and learning from experience (e.g. with practitioners through action research) to improve effectiveness
 - targeting support at priority groups and providing tailored solutions which meet their identified needs
 - encouraging take up of support by emphasising the statutory duty, encouraging childminders to join a network, delivering support at times to suit them, and offering financial support where necessary.

1: Introduction

Introduction

- 1.1 In October 2009, the National Strategies commissioned SQW Consulting, in partnership with QA Research, to evaluate the Early Years programme by the National Strategies, by conducting interviews with local authority Early Years Consultants, lead professionals, practitioners in schools and settings, and childminders.
- 1.2 The National Strategies delivers professional programmes for early years, primary school and secondary school heads, teachers, practitioners and managers. It provides a mix of resources and services that support improvements in the quality of learning and teaching in schools and early years settings. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is both the key stage (for birth to five) and the title of the statutory framework for that key stage, introduced in September 2008.
- 1.3 The National Strategies works with local authorities on the EYFS to help them support schools and other settings to raise children's standards of attainment and improve their life chances, 'by improving the quality of learning and teaching in early years settings and with childminders, and by improving the transition to ensure all children make appropriate progress'.² Local authority work on embedding the EYFS framework focuses on providing a wide range of training, materials and other support for early years lead professionals and practitioners in schools, settings and for childminders in local areas.

Embedding the Early Years Foundation Stage framework

- 1.4 Under the Childcare Act 2006, local authorities have a duty – the Early Years Outcomes Duty – to improve outcomes for and reduce inequalities between all young children. The Government later published statutory guidance, *Raising Standards – Improving Outcomes*, setting out what local authorities and their Primary Care Trust, Strategic Health Authority and Jobcentre Plus partners must do to fulfil this duty and help to deliver the statutory early years targets.
- 1.5 The EYFS framework was announced in 2005 and launched in September 2008. It replaces and combines in a single framework the following separate documents: the *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* (QCA, 2000), which covered the care and education of children aged three to five, with the *Birth to Three Matters* (Sure Start, 2002) framework for practitioners, and the *National Standards for Under Eights Day Care and Childminding* (Sure Start, 2003). It has been designed to ensure a more holistic approach to provision and greater consistency in standards and quality of education and care for children in schools, settings and with childminders.
- 1.6 The EYFS framework sets standards for learning, development and care of children from birth to five years old. Since September 2008 there has been a legal responsibility, falling on

² http://www.nationalstrategies.org.uk/what_we_do_early.html (accessed March 2010).

all schools and OfSTED-registered early years settings and childminders, to ensure that their provision meets the learning and development requirements and welfare regulations set out in the Childcare Act 2006 and outlined in the EYFS framework. The EYFS framework sits alongside other policies for young children that support local delivery the 2005 Every Child Matters outcomes through the 2007 Children's Plan, including Sure Start, extended schools and increased flexible access to free childcare places.

1.7 The DCSF asked the National Strategies to develop EYFS materials and assist with the introduction and embedding of the framework and its statutory materials. The National Strategies aims to do this through its Early Years programme in three main vehicles:

- documents, guidance and materials produced for local authority and practitioner use
- support given by National Strategies to local authorities and school improvement partners
- support and training given by local authorities to schools, and early years settings and childminders.

1.8 All local authorities now set annual statutory early years targets measured, with achievement measured by the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) results. Local authorities have responsibility for setting their own early years targets in consultation with school and setting leaders and managers. There are two key targets:

- improve the mean average EYFSP score of the lowest achieving 20% of results to narrow the gap between that average score and the median (middle score) (National Indicator 92)
- improve young children's development by increasing the percentage who achieve a total of at least 78 points across all 13 scales of the EYFSP, with at least 6 points in each of the Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED) and Communication, Language and Literacy (CLL) scales (National Indicator 72).

1.9 Children who achieve an average of six points or more across all 13 scales (i.e. 78 points across the EYFSP) and at least six points in each of the PSED and CLL scales, are deemed to have reached a good level of development. We understand that the National Strategies now have evidence that shows that there is a relationship between the EYFSP scores and attainment at Key Stage 1, with children with six points or more having a better chance of achieving 2b or higher at the end of Year 2.

1.10 Local authorities work with the National Strategies to support providers effectively to implement the EYFS and deliver improved outcomes for all children and help close the achievement gap between disadvantaged children and others. The National Strategies' Early Years Regional Advisers give advice on the level of ambition of targets and the actions that local authorities should take to achieve their targets. Working with Government Offices, they aim to ensure appropriate levels of support are available to local authorities for setting and achieving the early years targets. This includes the co-ordination of meetings where the overall strategic plans for raising standards are discussed. The National Strategies and the

DCSF challenge targets that do not meet expectations and do not show a sufficient minimum level of improvement from past results.

1.11 Where local authority support for EYFS has been successful, the National Strategies expect that:

- 80% of practitioners in schools, 80% of childminders and 80% of private, voluntary and independent sector (PVI) practitioners will have a good knowledge and understanding of EYFS
- there is good support from local authorities for head teachers and practitioners in schools, childminders and childminder networks, and PVI practitioners
- there are good links between head teachers and practitioners in schools, childminders and childminder networks, and PVI practitioners
- external communications between local authorities, schools, childminders, PVI practitioners and other partners (Health, Social Services) are good.

The evaluation

Purpose

1.12 The evaluation aimed to examine the overall effectiveness and impact of EYFS and of local authority support for practitioners in order to embed the EYFS framework in practice across all early years sectors. There is a particular focus on the needs of head teachers and of childminders, which the National Strategies anticipated were the groups that might require most support. The evaluation has explored both practitioner knowledge and understanding of EYFS in schools and in private, voluntary and independent settings including childminders, and the training and support that local authorities have provided for these groups.

1.13 The objectives of the evaluation were to:

- investigate the level to which EYFS is being embedded birth to five across all EY sectors by local authorities through interviewing head teachers, leaders, managers and practitioners (including reception and Year 1 teachers and childminders)
- investigate how effective the above groups have found local authority training on EYFS
- explore the nature and content of the training and the processes local authorities have used to disseminate information about EYFS with practitioners across the full range of early years settings and explore the strengths and weaknesses of such processes
- gauge the level of impact of the National Strategies on supporting preparation for the introduction of EYFS.

Methodology

- 1.14 The evaluation methodology involved developing a logic model to articulate the theory of change for the programme, and the manner in which activities were designed to achieve outputs, outcomes and impacts. The logic model describes the steps in the logic chain, from the context and original aims of the EYFS, through inputs, activities, direct outputs, and more indirect outcomes and long-term impact.

Table 1-1: Logic model structure for the evaluation

| Logic model steps | Key themes for the research |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Context, rationale and objectives | <p>⇓</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Context as set out in programme and policy documentation including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EYFS documents and guidance Every Child Matters Children's Plan Childcare Act |
| Inputs | <p>⇓</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What has been the direct funding of the programme? How was this spent? What other resources were made available by local authorities and delivery partners? |
| Activities | <p>⇓</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How was the programme managed and delivered? What challenges did this present and how were these overcome? What were the components of direct National Strategies support to early years providers? How did early years providers make use of this guidance and support? What support did the National Strategies provide to local authorities? How did local authorities use this support? What support was given by local authorities to early years providers? What worked well and less well? What are the lessons from this? What are the particular issues associated with implementation and rollout and what issues are more general? |
| Outputs | <p>⇓</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is early years providers' knowledge and understanding of the EYFS? How have early years providers' activities changed as a result? |
| Outcomes and Impacts | <p>⇓</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What evidence is there of effects on teaching and learning? How will these changes be sustained? What future support is needed? |

Source: SQW

- 1.15 The main benefit of adopting this approach is that it facilitates the assessment of the value added by local authority EYFS support. That is, to what extent would the outcomes have been achieved without local authority support for embedding EYFS? In considering the evaluation evidence that is available, we have focused on quantifying the extent to which
- practitioners might have become more confident and aware of EYFS, and improved practice without the support from their local authority

- children might have achieved outcomes without local authority support for practitioners on EYFS.

1.16 The primary methods of research deployed in the evaluation were interviews with lead Early Years Consultants³ in 18 local authorities, and a telephone survey of 289 early years leaders and practitioners in schools, settings and with childminders in the same 18 local authority areas. The participating local authority areas listed in Table 1-2 were selected according to the following criteria and comprise a broadly representative sample:

- nine Government Office regions
- varying levels of performance on early years according to the National Strategies management information
- urban and rural local authorities, including large shire counties
- more- and less-deprived local authorities, according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).

Table 1-2: Sample local authorities for the research

| Name | Region | Urban/rural | IMD |
|--------------------------|--------------------|-------------|---|
| Richmond-upon-Thames | London | Urban | Group 1 (least deprived 20% local authorities nationally) |
| Wokingham | South East | Urban | |
| Buckinghamshire | South East | Rural | |
| Dorset | South West | Rural | |
| York | Yorkshire & Humber | Urban | |
| Derbyshire | East Midlands | Rural | Group 2 (second-least deprived 20%) |
| Trafford | North West | Urban | |
| Warrington | North West | Urban | |
| Herefordshire, County of | West Midlands | Rural | |
| Southend-on-Sea | East of England | Urban | Group 3 (second- and third-most deprived 20%) |
| Peterborough | East of England | Urban | |
| Cornwall | South West | Rural | |
| Durham | North East | Rural | |
| Nottingham | East Midlands | Urban | Group 4 (most deprived 20%) |
| Tower Hamlets | London | Urban | |
| Sunderland | North East | Urban | |
| Stoke-on-Trent | West Midlands | Urban | |
| Bradford | Yorkshire & Humber | Urban | |
| | | | |

Source: SQW

³ Lead Early Years Consultants held a range of official job titles, including Inspector, Early Years Adviser and SENCo, but in relation to the evaluation each had a primary role in leading or co-ordinating the local authority's EYFS support to schools, settings and childminders.

1.17 Within each of these local authorities, we first undertook a depth interview with the lead Early Years Consultant before embarking on the telephone survey of leaders and practitioners in schools, settings and with childminders. The survey respondent quotas agreed with the National Strategies included the following:

- head teachers in Infant and Primary schools
- reception stage teachers
- teaching Assistants
- childminders
- other early years practitioners in PVI settings.

Table 1-3: Job title of survey respondents – achieved sample

| Position | Count | % |
|---|-------|------|
| Head teacher - Infant school | 20 | 7% |
| Head teacher - Primary school | 52 | 18% |
| Teacher | 37 | 13% |
| Teaching assistant or Classroom support (Nursery Nurse or HLTA) | 36 | 12% |
| Setting leader or manager (PVI setting only) | 31 | 11% |
| Early Years Practitioner (PVI setting only) | 5 | 2% |
| Childminder | 108 | 37% |
| Total | 289 | 100% |

Source: Telephone survey, QA Research. N=289

1.18 Inevitably this has resulted in small sample sizes for individual job titles. The sample size for infant school head-teachers in particular was smaller than might be statistically desirable because nationally there are few infant schools that still stand alone, and some of our sample local authorities had no infant schools. Because of this, we have not reported results for infant school head teachers as an independent group; instead we have combined results with primary school head teachers throughout the reporting.

1.19 It should also be noted that the while the agreed overall sample size of 289 is enough to provide a reasonable guide to practitioners' views, it is insufficient to provide a standard error of less than +/-5%. The results throughout this evaluation therefore, should be treated as indicative rather than definitive findings. We have included counts as well as percentages throughout the analysis to assist in the interpretation of results.

Report structure

1.20 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- chapter 2 discusses local authorities' understanding of the strategic context for the EYFS framework and their views on working with the National Strategies

- chapter 3 looks at the EYFS support provided by local authorities
- chapter 4 considers what the EYFS support provided by local authorities has achieved in terms of outcomes for practitioners and children
- chapter 5 assesses the effectiveness of the EYFS support provided by practitioners, including its added value over and above what might have been achieved through the EYFS framework alone, draws conclusions and outlines next steps.

2: Local authority roles and responsibilities

Introduction

- 2.1 This chapter discusses how the 18 lead Early Years Consultants understand the strategic context for the introduction of the EYFS framework, their responsibilities in relation to its implementation, and their views on working with the National Strategies.

How lead Early Years Consultants see their role

They are clear about their EYFS responsibilities ...

- 2.2 Local authority lead Early Years Consultants understand their role as being to support the implementation of the EYFS as a statutory duty under the Childcare Act 2006, by raising awareness with schools and settings and providing practitioner development and support. Their work is focused on National Indicators (NI) NI72 and NI92, and providing support and challenge to settings in order to raise quality and, as one remarked, “using EYFS as our bible for doing so.”
- 2.3 The contribution the introduction of EYFS has made to improving quality across early years settings was recognised, principally as a step towards achieving children’s attainment goals in the round rather than ‘jumping straight to’ curriculum goals, as one respondent commented:

EYFS has been a good opportunity to change focus and instead consider all the commitments. This means, for example, that we’ve had a huge push on child-directed learning.

- 2.4 Local authority consultees understood the role of the National Strategies as being twofold. As one respondent commented: “firstly to support local authorities to deliver EYFS; and secondly to lead on developing documentation and policy.”
- 2.5 Providing local support and challenge were widely cited as the main elements of the National Strategies’ relationship with local authorities, and this was welcomed. The National Strategies were viewed favourably as helping local authorities to fulfil the statutory duty, meet targets and embed good practice.

We look at the criteria and provide the National Strategies with evidence on where we think we are [with regard to targets]. They then challenge us on areas they think we need to do more on. We then negotiate what to do next to progress based on what capacity we have to do what they want us to do. They also tell us if they have any national targets e.g. associated with parents.

... and are positive about the National Strategies support received...

- 2.6 Most of the feedback local authorities offered on the support received from the National Strategies was overwhelmingly positive. They felt they had a good relationship with the National Strategies team, and could call on them for further training and support when

required. The national materials were seen as useful, as was the national perspective on local challenges. Several mentioned that the National Strategies had signposted them to other local authorities for good practice, reflecting the value of a national perspective when tackling local issues.

There are opportunities for people to get together, for example if there are barriers they are struggling with then opportunities are provided for people to discuss this with others who have similar issues.

- 2.7 One local authority reported that they had approached the National Strategies for help brokering discussions between frontline and senior staff, and that this intervention has been welcomed. The National Strategies had provided support to the delivery team in this case, discussed ways of improving relationships and practices, and helped move the dispute on.
- 2.8 More than one local authority had made use of the National Strategies' support with training. One followed the pattern of the National Strategies' training on EYFS in their own training rollout, while another stated that:

[We have] had several different regional advisers. We've had termly visits and they've helped with training ... they assisted with staff training at the beginning and since then have helped deliver training to both local authority staff and practitioners. At the start they were part of the task groups in the early stage of implementation.

- 2.9 Five local authorities raised minor concerns about the support provided by the National Strategies. These related to the number of individual contacts from EYFS advisers alongside advisers on other programmes, and the feeling that while some contacts were useful, other visits seemed to be a burden. However, all of these consultees noted that the situation had improved in the last twelve months and they were now broadly content with the current level and nature of support.
- 2.10 There were no clear differences in the responses made by local authorities performing well and less well in relation to monitoring information provided by the National Strategies. Overall, while all valued the National Strategies input, but it is apparent that outstanding authorities relied less on support from the National Strategies than good authorities and those needing improvement.

... and they value their partnership with the National Strategies.

- 2.11 Local authority lead Early Years Consultants were asked how they work with the National Strategies on EYFS and how effective partnership working in this regard is. Thirteen of the 18 case study local authorities felt it was an effective partnership, as the following examples illustrate:

...I think it's an effective partnership. We have good relationships with the regional advisor and senior regional advisor. The partnership is good for networking because National Strategies put us in touch with other local authorities if they think they could help us and vice versa.

- 2.12 Those local authorities identified as performing well were more likely to have experienced the National Strategies primarily in its monitoring role, and as a resource to call on for materials:

We have regional adviser visits termly. We haven't had any intensive intervention – they have more of a monitoring role.

Because we're a self-sustaining local authority, I welcome their national overview. We're a big local authority, self-contained with lots of us, we rely on the National Strategies for quality assurance and checking we're on track.

- 2.13 Other local authorities had experienced more intensive support:

Last year our results were very poor. There was a big response to this from the National Strategies. We had a huge involvement with them and they really helped us to progress. We have very strong links with them. National Strategies were with us for 72 days last year.

- 2.14 The interviewees welcomed the support and challenge from their National Strategies Regional Adviser, and rated the individuals highly.

Particularly as someone in a new post, I've found the support and challenge from the Regional Adviser very good. She's been there for me individually, and has also helped to challenge team performance. She's done some coaching.... She also helped us to deliver some training courses.... I'm very sad to think they're not going to be there [in future].

Access to a National Strategies consultant has been really useful, for example to test out our work and also to help us resolve things that we can't resolve within the team.

- 2.15 Just having a named adviser was also mentioned as being particularly useful given the rapid development of policy and practice for the sector.

Summary

- 2.16 Local authorities have a good understanding of their obligations under the Children's Act, the wider context to EYFS and their roles and responsibilities *vis a vis* the National Strategies. The support lead Early Years Consultants received from the National Strategies was highly praised, with very few negative views. Local authorities felt that the National Strategies is an effective resource and they had drawn on it extensively, particularly those with the greatest need to improve.
- 2.17 This chapter has shed some light on the first two vehicles for embedding the EYFS: the national materials are heavily used and valued by the local authorities; and National Strategies' support is welcomed, both in terms of standard monitoring and quality assurance, and the flexibility to draw in more in-depth support from advisers. The regional and national perspective provided by National Strategies was also praised.
- 2.18 The next chapter explores the third element in more detail: what local authorities themselves have done to support schools and settings on EYFS.

3: Local authority EYFS support provided

Introduction

- 3.1 This chapter discusses the scale and breadth of local authority EYFS support for early years lead professionals and practitioners in schools, other settings and for childminders in their area. It draws on interviews with 18 lead Early Years Consultants and telephone interviews with 289 lead professionals and practitioners.

The scale of local authority EYFS support

It is difficult to estimate the total spend on local authority EYFS support...

- 3.2 Fifteen of the eighteen local authority lead Early Years Consultants surveyed were unable to say, when asked, what the total spent on EYFS support amounted to, in their local authority. Estimates ranged from £22k for one tranche of training to over £1m in total. Some idea of the relative size of early years activity in each local authority area is offered by the Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare Grant, through which EYFS support is provided.

...but it is large in scale and draws on many funding streams.

- 3.3 Some local authorities reported additional funding for supporting EYFS implementation sourced through the close alignment of EYFS to other programmes, such as children's workforce development and the Standards Fund, as well as programmes that are specifically associated with EYFS, such as Social and Emotional Aspects of Development (SEAD) and Every Child a Talker. The increasing value of the Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare Grant from 2008/09 to 2009/10 gives an indication of the relative scale of investment in early years provision in the sample 18 local authorities.

Table 3-1: Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare Grant allocations in the sample local authorities

| Local authority | 2008/9 | 2009/10 |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|
| Richmond-upon-Thames | £458,339 | £503,645 |
| Wokingham | £374,010 | £419,897 |
| Buckinghamshire | £1,295,978 | £1,457,615 |
| Dorset | £746,629 | £846,851 |
| York | £363,181 | £415,118 |
| Derbyshire | £1,634,524 | £1,866,072 |
| Trafford | £527,095 | £601,486 |
| Warrington | £571,215 | £637,836 |
| Herefordshire, County of | £404,893 | £466,509 |
| Southend-on-Sea | £415,197 | £474,553 |

| Local authority | 2008/9 | 2009/10 |
|-----------------|------------|------------|
| Peterborough | £537,998 | £617,282 |
| Cornwall | £1,103,132 | £1,259,498 |
| Durham | £1,177,975 | £1,446,193 |
| Nottingham | £704,440 | £837,266 |
| Tower Hamlets | £804,657 | £1,019,863 |
| Sunderland | £946,131 | £1,118,767 |
| Stoke-on-Trent | £697,402 | £833,832 |
| Bradford | £1,355,935 | £1,618,517 |

Source: DCSF.

- 3.4 The lead Early Years Consultants confirmed that training has involved hundreds of practitioners in their areas, with one stating that the figure was in excess of 1,000 participants. Most were unable to provide actual figures, but estimated that between 70% and 90% of the sector workforce had received some form of EYFS training.

The range of EYFS support local authorities have provided

- 3.5 For the purposes of clarity throughout the evaluation, we classified support on EYFS as follows: training; materials; and other support (for example one to one visits, monitoring and evaluation, EYFSP moderation, planning and quality improvement).

Training

- 3.6 Within the 18 local authorities consulted, training on EYFS usually included:
- training lead professionals in each school or setting
 - training early years practitioners (sometimes including those working outside an educational or childcare setting, for example health visitors, playworkers)
 - high-level briefings on EYFS.
- 3.7 In addition, some local authorities provided briefings to wider stakeholders (e.g. local authority senior staff, School Improvement Partners, school governors, children's centre staff, further education lecturers in childcare, the local authority family learning team), conferences on EYFS focusing on particular themes (e.g. the Unique Child), and training for specific schools, settings and individuals where particular needs have been identified.

Training covered both lead professionals and early years practitioners

- 3.8 Training for lead professionals was usually intensive at the time of the EYFS launch in September 2008. More than one local authority stated that this had involved a two- or three-day course aimed at leaders in schools and other settings.

- 3.9 Most local authorities did not make training compulsory, arguing that this would have required additional funding to backfill posts. They were flexible on location and timing to try to ensure all practitioners could participate, as the following example illustrates.

For schools, we paid for heads and deputies to come for whole-day training. For the rest, we did half days and evenings and Saturdays. A lot of it was delivered in two-to-three bites – we’re continuing that as an approach, for example delivering training in two-to-three sessions over six weeks.

- 3.10 There was a large push on training when EYFS was launched, which aimed to provide comprehensive coverage across the sector.

In the year leading up to the start of the statutory EYFS we took the themes and did training based around them, linking themes together where appropriate. We focused particularly on the areas that people were less confident about, such as observation, assessment and planning; partnership with parents; and creativity and critical thinking.

Just before the September launch we did a series of events including conferences, where we looked at the EYFS pack and compared it with the Foundation Stage guidance and Birth to 3 Years Matters documents that it replaced. We also did some events in that autumn term to pick up new staff or people who had missed the events. The launch events ... included workshops on particular elements such as: Parents as Partners; Key Person; Unique Child; Learning and Development. They demystified the EYFS document. We encouraged providers to send several people.

- 3.11 Later, there had been more of a gradual rollout to cover those who might not have been trained in the first phase.

We then did some mop-up and top-up sessions. In the larger day nurseries where one or two people attending wasn’t enough, we delivered training in-house, when it was requested by the settings or if we thought they needed it.

There is separate EYFS training for Newly Qualified Teachers... We have continual change of practitioners so we continue the training. There’s a course called ‘New to EYFS’ each year for anyone new or returning to early years.

- 3.12 More than one local authority had established a rolling programme of EYFS training, and provided EYFS training to those who were new or returning to early years. One had a dedicated EYFS trainer so practitioners could access regular training.

- 3.13 The overall approach to training was usually comprehensive at the beginning, followed by more targeted training based on identified needs after the launch.

At the settings, the consultants provide or broker universal and targeted training, covering the learning and development and welfare requirements. ... Up until now, all settings have got the same deal... [but] we’re developing a RAG rating and a strategy for targeting support.

- 3.14 Some local authorities confused, or saw no distinction, between EYFS and its materials on the one hand, and the associated programmes being run by the National Strategies such as

Communication, Language and Literacy Development (CLLD) on the other.⁴ However, others had a good understanding of the distinctions between programmes and their complementarities.

As well as the core EYFS training, we also ran other courses to support EYFS implementation and help us meet our statutory targets on EYFS. These included: mark-making; SEAD; Making it Write for Boys; using puppets for SEAD at circle time; Good Childhood Inquiry – this involved 200 practitioners in a six-week action research project on interventions to make a difference; Solihull training on working with families; Letters and Sounds.

- 3.15 At least one local authority had also tried to thread EYFS material through other training being delivered concurrently.

Training was mostly delivered in-house and without cost to participants

- 3.16 Most local authorities in the sample provided the majority of training and support for EYFS in-house, but some had also called on external consultants, usually individual specialists in their field. In line with this, 94% of the respondents to the practitioner survey had attended in-house training on EYFS, while only 16% had attended external training.
- 3.17 Some local authorities had asked teachers or early education services staff to deliver training to other settings. Professional networks such as the National Daycare Association and childminder networks were also mentioned as delivery partners. One local authority had a very strong existing network of high performing nursery schools, and used these to lead training and disseminate good practice to other settings.
- 3.18 Apart from very few, most local authorities did not charge for EYFS training. In some cases schools had been asked to pay but other settings had not: here fees ranged from £12 for a one-day session (viewed as a nominal cover charge to encourage attendance from PVI and Children's Centres) to £60 (for schools). However such charging was rare and only 10% of practitioners responding to the survey had paid for any training on EYFS. Local authorities reported that cover charges were working effectively to encourage attendance, as was supply cover, which in one case was paid retrospectively in order to ensure training was taken up.

Materials

Local authorities relied mainly on the National Strategies EYFS materials...

- 3.19 Most local authorities relied on EYFS materials produced by the National Strategies, but some produced additional supporting materials including newsletters, web information and leaflets. In a number of cases such local outputs were substantial, as the following examples illustrate.

We have our own documentation, including: transition documentation called 'Changes for Children'; observation and assessment

⁴We have been careful throughout the evaluation analysis to identify where this is the case, and ensure that comments on effectiveness and impact are related only to EYFS training, materials and other support, and not to linked or supplementary programmes.

documentation called 'Signposts'; an overall document called 'Guidance on the EYFS'; and documentation on planning and on working with parents.

We publish a range of things: DVDs on outdoor learning which we sell nationally; DVDs on children's learning and development which are also sold nationally; a little document for parents on EYFS and learning at home; and we are just about to produce a guide for dads and an induction for practitioners who are new to the sector.

- 3.20 Local authorities had often made use of the National Strategies materials alongside their own in-house training and support in order to help embed messages.

We used the EYFS packs and handed these out at training. We also purchased some resource to go alongside the training. Everyone who attended received [the following materials]: Communication-friendly spaces; A Place to Talk (versions for children's centres, PVI, schools); Inclusion Development Programme (IDP) – Speech & Language document; Engaging Boys (National Strategies); Confident, Capable Boys; and an English as an Additional Language (EAL) document. Each of these related to sections in the training.

- 3.21 Most of the local authorities in the sample were also involved in associated programmes such as CLLD, SEAD and Every Child a Talker, and routinely used materials from these programmes alongside EYFS materials to add value to training. Some had used the National Strategies Buddying programme to develop further materials relating to EYFS, for example on the topic of outdoor play.

...but many had tailored these or supplemented with their own.

- 3.22 Many local authority respondents had tailored the National Strategies materials to fit local circumstances, for example by using local examples, specific guidance tailored to the local context, and case studies.

When we've adapted the National Strategies materials, we've made it more specific and involved [local] practitioners, because the National Strategies documents are quite general. For example, we have a high immigrant and Pakistani population, and some extremely deprived areas.

We refer to the National Strategies materials but personalise it... On the whole we try and make sense of things in a [local] context, bearing in mind what our settings will take on board.

- 3.23 However, others had deliberately avoided this approach.

We've used the National Strategies materials directly. We found that because [our county] is so large, if we're not careful, people in each of the districts are using different materials and saying different things. I've tried hard to get a consistent message out. I want us to get the basics right and then maybe when we're very familiar with the materials we can adapt them.

- 3.24 The National Strategies brand, in at least one case, was seen as useful in lending credibility to the overall awareness-raising programme around EYFS, helping stakeholders understand that this was a national Government initiative and not just a local scheme.

Initially we used the National Strategies materials, for example with governors. We used the National Strategies documentation with all sorts of stakeholders, like health workers, to show this wasn't something that we'd invented. When we got down to the nitty-gritty in the actual training we use our own materials, that pick out the relevant parts from the National Strategies materials and changed them to make them fit with our local authority.

Other support

Other support was provided around EYFS...

- 3.25 Most local authorities stated that they also provided more general support to schools and other settings on EYFS. In at least one case, this came as part of a wider support package established by the local authority and aimed at the 0-7 age group. In others, it came via Early Years Consultants and/or Advisory Teachers who focused on teaching and learning, pulling in specialists in specific areas where required.

We work with settings in differentiated ways and look at how they are doing, their OfSTED reports and what visitors say. Different team members provide support on different things, e.g. pedagogy or welfare standards and every child's access to EYFS.... Settings all know who to contact if they have issues around EYFS. We have helped for example with the outdoor environment in settings to help with the EYFS outside idea. It's a well-joined partnership.

We have a team of five Early Years Consultants across the local authority that are a mix of advisory teachers and consultants. They have a set of settings each. They have a set of documents (of which the EYFS document is the main one) which are the starting point for their visits to the settings.

...usually involving a mix of targeted and universal provision.

- 3.26 Most had differentiated their support based on the level of need of schools and settings.

We have a universal offer that's differentiated by need. We also have targeted projects in different subject areas – like writing. We use Foundation Stage Profile data extensively to target our interventions.

We've brought in our own quality audit. This is an annual three-to-four hour visit looking at how they have implemented the 16 commitments and welfare requirements, and what support they'd like. We've then categorised them within four levels. That then informs the support they get. Levels 1 and 2 don't get any hands-on support, although from next year, they'll get pump-priming funding to improve an area that's a priority for them. Levels 3 and 4 get an improvement plan and tailor-made support, including one-to-one consultant time over six weeks. If they're in level 4, they get reviewed every week; everyone gets reviewed annually.

- 3.27 Local authorities also mentioned using existing peer support networks to disseminate information and provide support on EYFS, for example sector forums, provider forums, childminder networks, or teacher cluster programmes. One stated that EYFS training is now part of compulsory pre-registration training for childminders, and one had established EYFS forums in each locality.

These are opportunities for multi-disciplinary 0-5 practitioners to meet, to discuss any issues, e.g. welfare requirements, OfSTED inspections, and bring up any issues. They meet termly and are facilitated at present by Development Workers – we hope Early Years Consultants will take over this role in future. Often 20 attend in one locality.

- 3.28 One local authority mentioned that there is also targeted support provided within settings, for example by organising staff meetings on an aspect of EYFS, on topics identified by practitioners and the local authority. This was thought to be very effective.
- 3.29 Larger authorities had often organised support on a locality basis. Some local authorities had divided responsibility for offering support on EYFS based on the School Improvement Service for schools, and the Early Years Service for settings, but others had a single integrated early years support offer. Termly briefings aimed at particular professional groups or networks were mentioned by several local authorities.
- 3.30 Finally, one local authority stated that in the first year after launch, it had introduced an EYFS audit for all settings.

... To make sure they had and were using the right pack, at a very minimum. This involved an in-school visit, questionnaire, and implementation support visit. We are providing free support on welfare requirements this year to anyone who needs it.

Universal versus targeted provision

The focus of support has changed over time...

- 3.31 Local authorities described support to practitioners on EYFS as very large scale around the time of EYFS launch, becoming more targeted thereafter. One local authority explained that “up until then [September 2008] we were good at providing support and afterward [post-September 2008] we went to the challenge role more than before.”
- 3.32 There has been an increasing focus on monitoring the effectiveness of training and support and ensuring that all groups have been included. There had also been a change in the tone of sessions as practitioners became more confident about working with the EYFS. It was reported that schools and settings had also become more used to accepting support and regular contact with the early years team.

Schools didn't want support before if they were doing okay, but now they expect visits and don't refuse support. We also have a focus for our visits now because schools and settings have an audit to complete.

...and was increasingly targeted at priority groups...

- 3.33 Local authority consultees were asked what their priority groups were for training and support. The general feeling was that, in line with the above discussions, the focus of support was moving away from an across-the-board approach and towards particular groups that were targeted for support because they had identified needs. These included the following:

- staff at out of school clubs

- playgroup staff
- childminders, especially those who do not belong to a childminding network
- inadequate settings (identified through EYFSP, RAG ratings, audits, visits or OfSTED reports)
- leaders and managers generally
- new staff or staff returning to early years
- schools with high proportions of Black and Minority Ethnic pupils
- Teaching Assistants.

...for whom support was tailored.

- 3.34 Most local authorities tailored their support to particular professional or sector groups. This has increasingly been the case since the introduction of the EYFS framework, when the focus has shifted from generic training on the framework to more specialist areas.

At the start, all practitioners attended the same training. It didn't really work. For example childminders thought it was geared to settings; heads and teachers thought it was not suitable to them. Delivering it was very tricky. With hindsight it should have been divided. We don't do much joint training now, unless it's something (like diversity) where the topic is suitable. Childminders have a different agenda completely. We tend to adapt the same training session for the different audiences.

We now have lots of training on planning, observation and assessment. It's divided up so that planning for schools is tailored for teachers in schools and for PVI settings. So is training for teaching assistants and nursery nurses on how to support teachers. Training is divided up so that the right people can get the most out of it. Core training is given termly – we advise all practitioners to do this.

- 3.35 Most local authorities differentiated their support offer between schools and other settings. In some cases, local institutional structures meant that schools were not supported free on EYFS training unless cause for concern (underperformance) had been identified. Some respondents felt that the presence of qualified teachers in schools meant a change in style and content of training sessions; others had grouped teaching assistants with PVI practitioners but teachers with graduate setting leaders. The EYFSP training was also usually focused on schools, where the assessments take place. Some local authorities also differentiated between sectors based on a more detailed bottom-up assessment of needs.

We try and work out which are the biggest issues for a particular group. With PVI settings, it is support with Self Evaluation Forms ratings, leadership and management, and assessment. In schools, it tends to be outdoor learning (and less so, linking sounds and words)... Mark-making is a focus across the sector, and the EYFS networks are cross-sector. All the publications and materials are cross sector. We do some courses jointly (e.g. assessment from observation, parent partnership, learning

outdoors) and others separately, where the needs are very different (e.g. of a 16 year old working in a nursery and a teacher).

- 3.36 Childminders were offered flexible times for support and training, based on need. Local authorities also opened training sessions up to any practitioner, if not oversubscribed, so that even though certain sessions may be targeted at particular groups, authorities aimed to be cost effective by filling all places.

Early Years Consultants collaborated with other professionals on support for EYFS

- 3.37 For some local authorities the School Improvement Partner (SIP) programme meant that schools had a wider range of EYFS support on offer, with SIPs also offering advice on early years provision. This approach to combining school improvement with EYFS support was reported to be effective.

We've been building relationships with schools since EYFS came in. Historically the relationship hasn't been as good as with PVI's, but now EYFS is statutory and part of the self-evaluation framework, and because we've worked with the SIPs, it's working better. For example, this term, SIPs and early years advisers have been doing visits together and doing joint reports. EYFS has increased the importance of early years in head teachers' minds. Practice in schools has improved considerably because of EYFS.

- 3.38 One local authority was introducing a pilot SIP programme for Children's Centres. Another had identified a named Early Years Consultant for schools and settings, arranged so that the same consultant covered schools and their feeder settings. This approach was less common than establishing different Early Years Consultants for schools, or relying on SIPs to cover schools and getting Early Years Consultants to focus on settings.
- 3.39 Local authorities were asked about their support to help settings and practitioners implement EYFS with special attention to children with English as Additional Language (EAL) or Special Educational Needs (SEN). Most referred to the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCo) team and in some cases the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Advisory Service (EMTAS) team to work with practitioners and children directly with SEN and EAL needs. It was not clear however from most responses to what extent this activity included embedding EYFS. Some felt that liaison with SEN and EMTAS teams had been frequent before and after EYFS was introduced, and that the relationship had not changed. However, in other local authorities SENCos held some of the Early Years Consultant posts, which helped link EYFS closely to the ongoing approach to inclusion.
- 3.40 One local authority stated that EMTAS worked closely with the Early Years Consultants, and had attended all EYFS training to ensure that there was consistency of approach. Another had distributed EAL National Strategies materials and provided a training slot on EAL issues during the EYFS core training. This local authority had also developed a training session called Inclusion on EYFS aimed at out of school clubs with SEN children. On the whole, most local authorities had invited EMTAS and SENCos to joint training on EYFS.

Summary

- 3.41 Local authorities offered a wide range of training, materials and other support to schools, settings and childminders to help them implement EYFS. To do so, they have predominantly used the Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare grant, but have also drawn on other funds such as the children's workforce development and Standards Funds.
- 3.42 But few local authorities were able to report exactly how much had been spent on providing EYFS support or quantify in simple terms the outputs (such as the number of training participants). However, it is clear that local authorities have delivered a large number of EYFS training sessions alongside other forms of support such as monitoring visits, action planning, intensive support, or even by seconding local authority staff into settings.
- 3.43 The approach to training and support had typically changed over time, beginning with a large-scale, comprehensive, universal, generic approach designed to establish the principles of EYFS framework with practitioners and leaders in preparation for the launch. It is now often moving towards a more targeted post-launch approach based on priority groups and identified needs, tailored to specific professionals or sectoral groups.
- 3.44 Among the priority groups were settings in need of improvement, identified through EYFSP, 'RAG' performance ratings, visits or OfSTED reports. Others were out-of-school clubs, playgroups, new or returning staff, and leaders and managers in general. Several local authorities described how they work in detail with priority settings to plan and deliver a package of support and training.
- 3.45 Particular training was frequently tailored to reception teachers dealing with EYFSP. Other specific groups for whom some training and networking is delivered separately include childminders and teaching assistants – as one interviewee put it: "Training is divided up so that the right people can get the most out of it", though in a few places the core training to introduce EYFS was open to all.
- 3.46 For childminders, all the authorities described their flexible approach to evening and weekend provision, designed to boost attendance.
- 3.47 Most support was provided in-house, by the local authority free of charge. Some provided supply cover. A few mentioned nominal fees designed to boost attendance, and variation in fees or supply cover according to the course taken or whether the attendant came from a school or another setting.
- 3.48 Support on EYFS appeared to be closely aligned to support on SEN; the approach to EAL varied by authority, with some in areas with large proportions of EAL students mentioning separate training on the issue, whereas for others it was sufficiently covered within a consideration of the diversity element of EYFS.
- 3.49 In delivering their support to settings, local authorities used a variety of models. For some, support to schools and childcare was very integrated, with all staff based in the same team. In others, there was a clear demarcation with separate advisors for schools and settings. One local authority talked about SIPs and Early Years Advisers making joint visits to schools,

while others discussed the benefits of having the same Early Years Consultant work with schools and their feeder settings.

- 3.50 Local authorities were usually confident that their approach to training and support was good, and many talked about changes that had already happened or were planned – through more collaborative working, more targeted, and more tailored support – to ensure that it could be even more effective in future.

4: Local authority EYFS support – achievements

Introduction

- 4.1 Following the targets set by the National Strategies in relation to knowledge and understanding of EYFS, we identified within the evaluation four key outcomes to investigate:
- awareness of EYFS among practitioners
 - confidence in delivering the elements of EYFS among practitioners
 - improved practice in the early years sector
 - developmental outcomes for children.
- 4.2 This chapter discusses the achievements of the local authority EYFS support in relation to each of these outcomes. It then goes on to consider the additionality of this local authority support, i.e. the extent to which these outcomes would have been achieved anyway. The discussion draws on the consultations with 18 local authority lead Early Years Consultants and the survey of 289 lead professionals and practitioners.

Outcomes achieved

Awareness of EYFS among practitioners is high...

- 4.3 The Early Years Consultants mostly felt that practitioners' awareness of EYFS was now very good across the whole early years sector. The only areas of continuing concern were for those working in out of school clubs (especially clubs for mixed age ranges including children over five), and wider professional groups (e.g. health workers). Voluntary providers and childminders were seen, by local authority leads, as a little behind the maintained/funded sectors, but local authorities said they were working to address this in a targeted way and did not see this as a major risk going forward.
- 4.4 This view was supported by the practitioner survey. Table 4-1 shows that two-thirds of practitioners (67%) were already aware of the EYFS framework before it was introduced in January 2007. This differed between practitioner groups however: nine out of ten head-teachers were aware of EYFS before January 2007 but less than half (45%) of childminders were.

Table 4-1: When did you first become aware of the EYFS framework?

| Response | Total | | Head teachers | | Childminders | |
|---|-------|-----|---------------|-----|--------------|-----|
| | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| Before 1 January 2007 when it was introduced | 193 | 67% | 65 | 90% | 49 | 45% |
| Between 1 January 2007 and 1 September 2008 | 75 | 26% | 7 | 10% | 42 | 39% |
| Since 1 September 2008 when it became statutory | 21 | 7% | - | | 17 | 16% |

Source: QA Research telephone survey. N=289

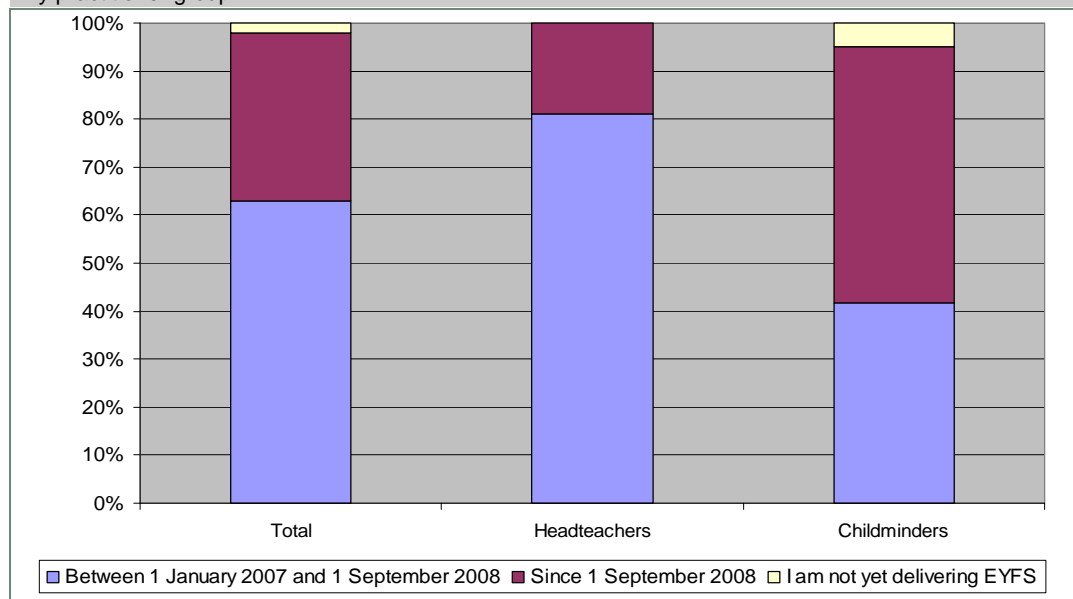
4.5 Table 4-2 shows that only 2% of respondents were not yet delivering the EYFS framework at the time of the survey in January 2010, and that nearly two-thirds (63%) had begun delivering the framework even before its launch in September 2008. Notably, five out of the six practitioners who said they were still not delivering EYFS were childminders, while four-fifths (81%) of head teachers said they had started delivering EYFS before it became statutory.

Table 4-2: When did you actually start delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework?

| Response | Count | Total | | Head teachers | | Childminders | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|---------------|-------|--------------|--|
| | | % | Count | % | Count | % | |
| Between 1 January 2007 and 1 September 2008 | 181 | 63% | 58 | 81% | 45 | 42% | |
| Since 1 September 2008 | 102 | 35% | 14 | 19% | 58 | 54% | |
| I am not yet delivering EYFS | 6 | 2% | - | - | 5 | 5% | |
| Total | 289 | 100% | 58 | 81% | 45 | 42% | |

Source: QA Research telephone survey. N=289

Figure 4-1: When did you actually start delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework? By practitioner group



Source: QA Research practitioner survey

...and practitioners have high levels of awareness and use of EYFS materials.

4.6 Survey respondents thus had very high levels of awareness of the EYFS pack and associated materials and programmes (98% were aware of the EYFS framework pack, and 94% had used it directly – there were no substantial differences in this respect between practitioner groups).

4.7 They also knew about other EYFS materials: two-thirds of practitioners overall (66%) were aware of other EYFS materials from the National Strategies either via the website or hard copy (although only 55% had actually used such materials). Headteachers had higher awareness and use of National Strategies materials than others (93% were aware and 81% had used such materials); and childminders had much lower awareness and use (32% were aware, 26% had used them). Table 4-3 below shows the differences between practitioner groups.

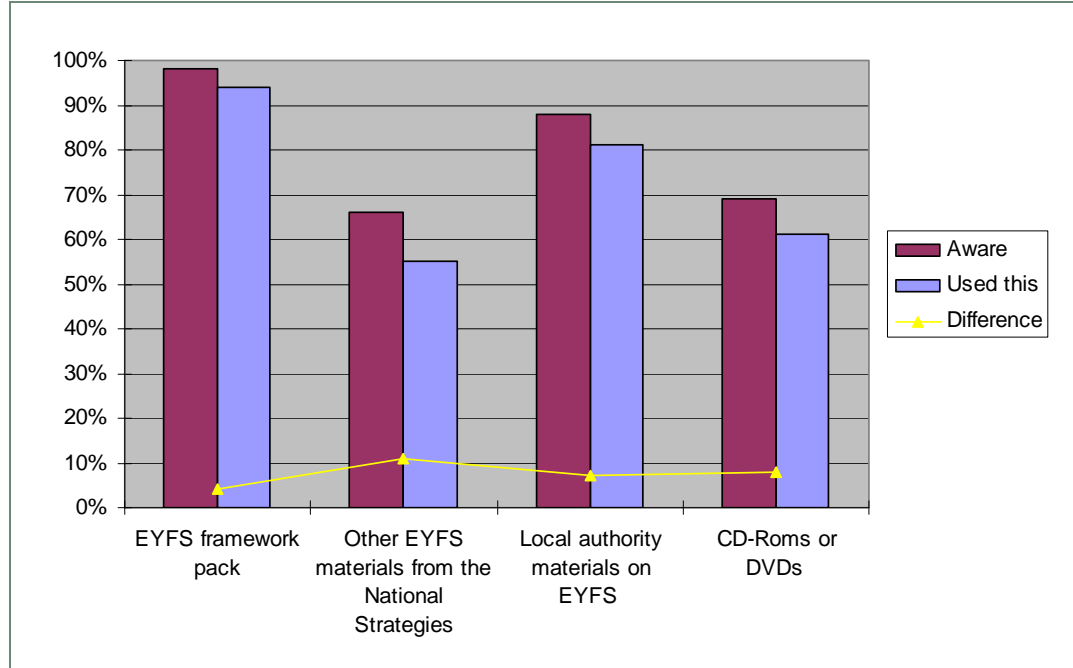
Table 4-3: Awareness and use of materials on EYFS

| | | Total | | Headteacher | | Teacher | | TA | | Setting leader (PVI) | | Other Early Years Practitioner (PVI) | | Childminder | |
|--|----------|-------|------|-------------|------|---------|------|-------|------|----------------------|------|--------------------------------------|------|-------------|------|
| | | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| | | 289 | 100% | 72 | 100% | 37 | 100% | 36 | 100% | 31 | 100% | 5 | 100% | 108 | 100% |
| EYFS Framework Pack | Aware of | 284 | 98% | 71 | 99% | 37 | 100% | 35 | 97% | 30 | 97% | 5 | 100% | 106 | 98% |
| | Used | 272 | 94% | 68 | 94% | 37 | 100% | 33 | 92% | 30 | 97% | 5 | 100% | 99 | 92% |
| Materials from the National Strategies website and hard copies | Aware of | 191 | 66% | 67 | 93% | 34 | 92% | 26 | 72% | 26 | 84% | 3 | 60% | 35 | 32% |
| | Used | 159 | 55% | 58 | 81% | 30 | 81% | 18 | 50% | 22 | 71% | 3 | 60% | 28 | 26% |
| Leaflets, literature, documents, other hard copy materials provided by the local authority | Aware of | 253 | 88% | 63 | 88% | 35 | 95% | 28 | 78% | 31 | 100% | 5 | 100% | 91 | 84% |
| | Used | 234 | 81% | 57 | 79% | 35 | 95% | 24 | 67% | 29 | 94% | 5 | 100% | 84 | 78% |
| CDs or DVDs provided by the local authority | Aware of | 198 | 69% | 50 | 69% | 29 | 78% | 25 | 69% | 26 | 84% | 3 | 60% | 65 | 60% |
| | Used | 179 | 62% | 44 | 61% | 29 | 78% | 22 | 61% | 26 | 84% | 2 | 40% | 56 | 52% |

Source: QA Research telephone survey. N=289

4.8 Eighty-eight percent of practitioners, overall, reported being aware of local authority materials on EYFS (81% had made use of them), thereby underlining the prominence of local authority support (even when some of those local materials would have been tailored versions of the National Strategies materials). Sixty-nine percent of survey respondents were aware of CD-ROMs or DVDs on EYFS made available by their local authority, and 61% of these reported using such material.

Figure 4-2: Awareness and use of EYFS materials, and gap between those aware and those using



Source: QA Research practitioner survey

4.9 Take-up of materials was good: only a small proportion of respondents did not use materials when they were aware of them.

Practitioners are highly confident in delivering the EYFS, and confidence has increased substantially since its introduction...

4.10 Many local authority interviewees felt that the introduction of the EYFS framework as a statutory requirement in September 2008 had raised the status of the workforce and helped to improve the quality of early years provision.

They feel they have something tangible and legally required that's theirs.

The quality of the environment has improved, as has the assessment of children's learning, growing practitioner confidence and also improving the quality of provision of childcare. It has raised expectations about what the job of dealing with young children entails.

4.11 Most felt that practitioner confidence had improved significantly across the sector since the introduction of the EYFS framework in September 2008, although few (apart from those illustrated below) had monitored this change systematically.

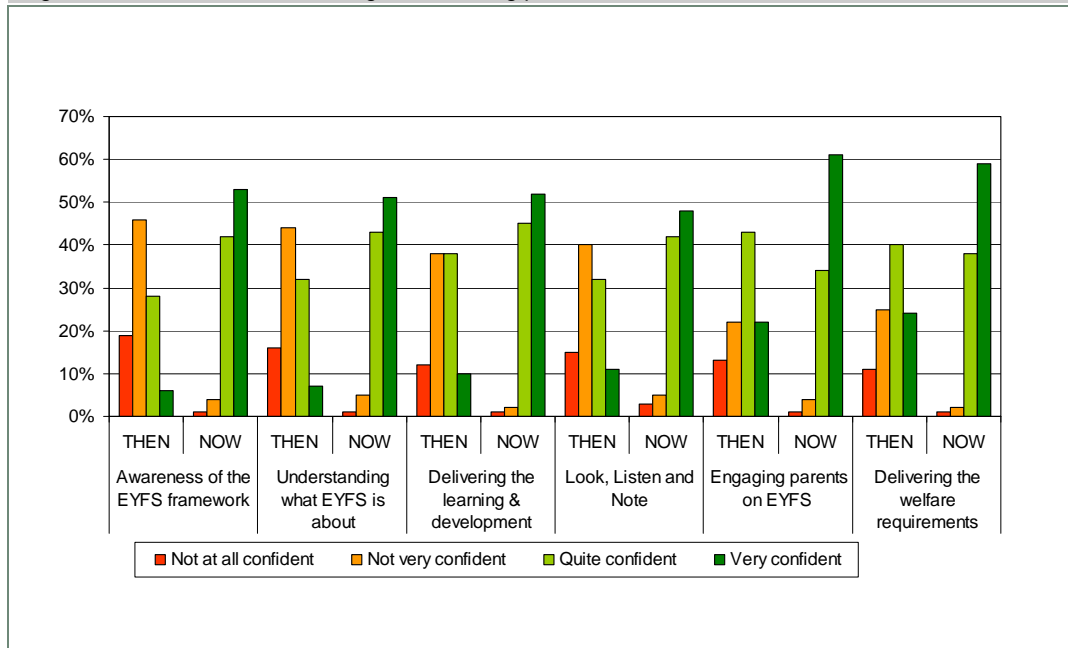
In December 2009 we carried out a survey to see how people were getting on and get a confidence rating, and fed this back through partnership

meetings. Settings/practitioners were asked to rate their confidence in their own abilities on the four themes of the EYFS, to report and give examples. Most felt quite confident.

People started at the bottom with ‘head in hands, couldn’t cope’. Now at the top working confidently in partnership – this helped show the journey that people had gone through.

4.12 These findings were supported by the practitioner survey, which found that levels of confidence in delivering all elements of the EYFS framework had improved dramatically since its launch in September 2008 (Figure 4-3). Perhaps unsurprisingly, ‘awareness of the EYFS framework’ and ‘understanding what it is about’ showed the greatest change in respondents’ confidence levels. Only 6% were ‘very confident’ in relation to their awareness of the EYFS framework at the time of its launch, but over half (53%) reported being ‘very confident’ in this respect by the time of the survey in January 2010. Only 7% said they were ‘very confident’ in ‘understanding what EYFS is about’ at launch, but 51% were by the time of the survey.

Figure 4-3: Confidence in delivering EYFS among practitioners



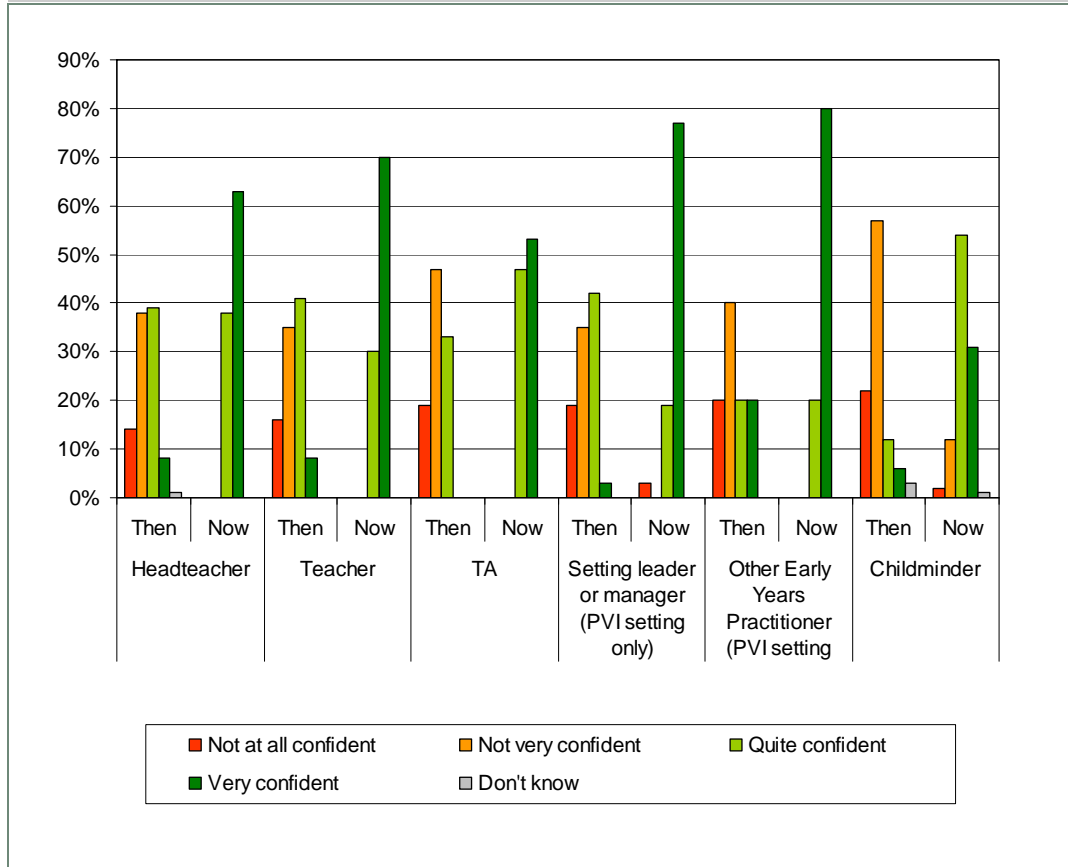
Source: QA Research telephone survey, n=289

4.13 The survey also revealed that more practitioners were ‘quite confident’ or ‘very confident’ in delivering the learning and development requirements (97% were ‘quite’ or ‘very’ confident), Look, Listen and Note (90%), engaging parents (95%) and delivering the welfare requirements (97%), compared to when the framework was first introduced. These are very positive findings, though it should be noted that some local authority interviewees said the high turnover of early years staff created difficulties for maintaining practitioner confidence at these levels, and that continuing support is required for new or returning entrants to the workforce.

...but childminders are still the least aware of EYFS.

4.14 There were some minor differences between practitioner groups, but the patterns were broadly the same. Importantly however, childminders were the most likely to say they were ‘not very’ or ‘not at all’ aware of the EYFS framework when it was first introduced (79% against 65% for all respondents), and, were more likely to say they were ‘quite aware’ rather than ‘very aware’ now, in contrast to other professional groups, indicating a need for continuing support for childminders.

Figure 4-4: Awareness of the EYFS in 2008 and now



Source: QA Research telephone survey. N=289. (Individual group sample sizes considerably smaller).

Knowledge and skills in early years practice has improved...

4.15 Local authority interviewees were very clear that support for EYFS was improving early years practice, however only two local authorities formally monitored changes to practice, as the following example illustrates.

We use an immediate evaluation form at the end of training, and then four-to-six weeks after, they have to send in a form describing how they've used the training, and what impact it's had. We use the information from those forms – for example today we're planning the training programme for the next year, and in doing so we're looking at the impact that the different training courses have had.

4.16 Others said they asked teachers and consultants to provide feedback on the training and support received, and asked leaders and managers to provide feedback on the impact of the

support provided. Termly away days for the early years; service were organised by one local authority to review the support provided and assess whether identified needs were being met. Many local authority interviewees based their view that practice is improving on site visits, which allow Early Years Consultants to witness first hand how support impacts on practice.

- 4.17 Table 4-4 shows that the vast majority (81%) of survey respondents said that their knowledge and skills in early years provision had improved ‘a little’ (36%) or ‘significantly’ (45%) since the introduction of the EYFS framework as a statutory requirement in September 2008. However, it is worth noting that less than half (45%) of all respondents reported a significant improvement, perhaps reflecting the depth of prior early years experience amongst practitioners.
- 4.18 Within this, head-teachers were slightly more likely to say that their knowledge and skills in early years practice had improved (43% said it had improved ‘a little’ and 49% ‘a lot’), and childminders were slightly less likely to report improvements. Childminders were more likely than others to say that their knowledge and skills in early years had stayed the same (19%).

Table 4-4: Compared to before EYFS was introduced to your setting have your knowledge and skills in early years practice:

| Response | Total | | Head teachers | | Childminders | |
|------------------------|-------|------|---------------|-----|--------------|-----|
| | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| Declined | 0 | 0% | - | - | - | - |
| Stayed the same | 38 | 13% | 6 | 8% | 21 | 19% |
| Improved a little | 103 | 36% | 31 | 43% | 36 | 33% |
| Improved significantly | 130 | 45% | 35 | 49% | 38 | 35% |
| I'm not sure | 18 | 6% | - | - | 13 | 12% |
| Total | 289 | 100% | - | - | - | - |

Source: QA Research telephone survey. N=289.

...in particular around observation, outdoor learning and child-led learning.

- 4.19 Local authorities were asked to identify where their EYFS support has had the greatest impact, and how it has changed practice. As the following examples illustrate, local authority leads mainly identified two key areas: changes to the learning environment and outdoor provision; and child-led and playful learning.

In a number of schools and settings, the learning environment has been transformed, as has the role of the adult and the use of outdoor areas.

This is mostly to do with the increased understanding of how people learn best – so it’s more play based, exploratory and child-led. The role of the adult has changed – it’s now facilitating as opposed to directing.

Practitioners are more aware of the needs of the individual child and will support individuals more now. More observation work is needed but it has improved and is happening more than before. Practitioners are hungry for child development knowledge. They have been able to reflect on children’s

*development stages and what is right for their next step. Getting them to be reflective practitioners is key.*⁵

- 4.20 Practitioner survey respondents who had received some form of EYFS training (92% of all responses) were asked how this had changed their practice. The results confirm the views expressed by the local authority interviewees: that outdoor learning and moves towards child-led learning were the two most important areas of impact. However, by far the single most frequent response (made by 25% of respondents) was that observation was more frequent than before their training on EYFS, or of higher quality, or both.
- 4.21 The same question was asked of practitioners who had used EYFS materials provided by the National Strategies or local authority (98%). However, their responses reveal that materials alone were less likely than training to result in changes to practice. Observation was again the most commonly-cited area of practice improvement resulting from EYFS materials (by 15% of respondents), and 12% of respondents said they were more likely after using materials to follow the EYFS framework or be aware of its aims.
- 4.22 Finally, survey respondents answered the same question in relation to other forms of support (e.g. site visits, networks, one-to-one contact, provider reviews). Again, observation featured highly, but the largest single response was that these other forms of support had helped practitioners to identify and implement new ideas to improve their practice. The full range of coded open responses across the three types of support is presented in Table 4-5 below.

Table 4-5: Could you give me some examples of how your practice has changed as a result of [EYFS] training, materials or other support?

| Response (coded from open response) | Training | | Materials | | Other support | |
|---|----------|-----|-----------|-----|---------------|-----|
| | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| Outdoor provision has developed/ more focus on outdoor learning | 48 | 18% | 16 | 6% | 13 | 5% |
| Observation is now of higher quality or more sophisticated | 39 | 14% | 33 | 12% | 18 | 7% |
| There is more observation | 31 | 11% | 8 | 3% | | |
| More child initiated learning | 31 | 11% | 15 | 5% | | |
| No real change | 28 | 10% | 23 | 8% | 22 | 9% |
| There is now more paperwork | 24 | 9% | 17 | 6% | | |
| We now focus more on the needs of the individual child | 18 | 7% | 8 | 3% | | |
| General confidence or knowledge has increased | 14 | 5% | 18 | 6% | 10 | 4% |
| Planning has changed | 14 | 5% | 18 | 6% | 7 | 3% |
| Involve parents more | 13 | 5% | 11 | 4% | 12 | 5% |
| Greater emphasis on letters and sounds | 7 | 3% | 8 | 3% | | |
| We follow the EYFS framework or are more aware of its aims | | | 33 | 12% | 7 | 3% |
| More ideas/ new ideas | | | 13 | 5% | 45 | 18% |
| More structured | | | 8 | 3% | | |

⁵ For other areas of the EYFS, there was no emerging overall consensus from the local authority interviews on the areas of greatest impact. Responses included: the welfare requirements in schools; assessment, observation and planning, especially in settings; CLL; assessment on EYFSP; child development; the key person; transitions and working with parents.

| Response (coded from open response) | Training | | Materials | | Other support | |
|--|----------|---|-----------|----|---------------|----|
| | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| Materials have helped us develop (general) | | | 8 | 3% | | |
| We have implemented some of the material | | | 8 | 3% | | |
| Up to date information | | | 8 | 3% | 13 | 5% |
| It improves the service we offer (general) | | | | | 17 | 7% |
| Good source of advice | | | | | 10 | 4% |

Source: QA Research telephone survey, n=270. Comments made by 2% or fewer of the sample also included: introduction of the key worker system, wider variety of activities undertaken, online profiles, increased networking, and changes to staff management. Totals do not sum to 100% as respondents could give more than one response, and not all those surveyed provided a relevant response.

- 4.23 Within these responses, there were few notable differences between practitioner groups. However, childminders were more likely on average to say that training had made no real change to their practice (19% stated this), and head teachers were more likely than others to say that outdoor provision had developed as a consequence of EYFS training (38% reported this).

Outcomes for children are improving over time...

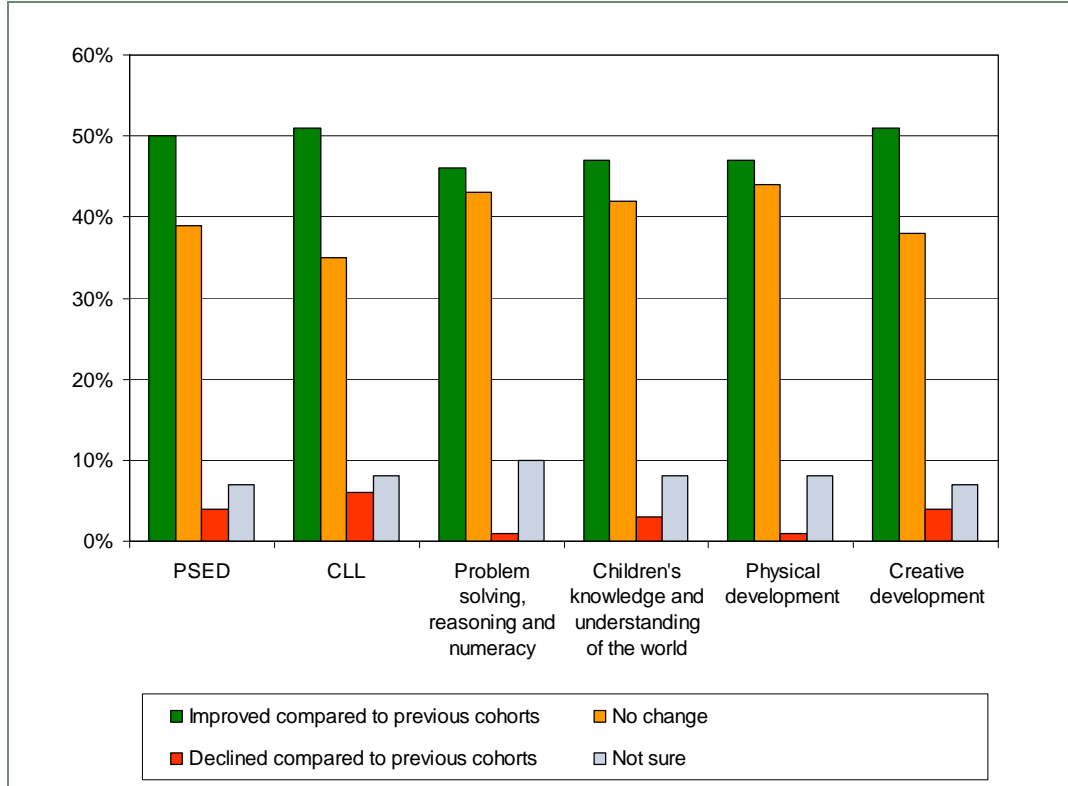
- 4.24 Most local authority interviewees reported that outcomes for children were improving over time. At least one local authority was monitoring outcomes using Early Childhood Assessments, and all were looking at results from EYFSPs. Two specifically mentioned that they were tracking EYFSP data back to settings to identify the impact of support at setting level. However, it was also recognised that there is a need to track the progress of children throughout EYFS using the principles outlined in the *Progress Matters*⁶ approach.
- 4.25 Some local authority interviewees said that the achievement of outcomes for children is apparent from observations and teacher feedback, as the following example illustrates.

It is having an impact on the transition to Year 1 – very different provision. From observations and feedback with teachers we have created very confident independent learners with EYFS.

- 4.26 One local authority also reported that boys' outcomes have improved at a faster rate than girls', due to the improved outdoor learning environment.
- 4.27 We tested these findings with survey respondents who had been in post since before the EYFS was introduced as a statutory requirement in September 2008. A total of 102 survey respondents fell into this category, and Figure 4-5 shows the results.

⁶ The National Strategies (May 2009) *Progress Matters: Reviewing and enhancing young children's development*

Figure 4-5: Have you observed any changes from previous cohorts (pre-EYFS)?



Source: QA Research telephone survey. N=102.

...especially in Communication, Language and Literacy.

4.28 Survey respondents identified CLL as the area in which outcomes for children have improved most since September 2008, followed by creative development and PSED. This is in line with 2009 national results on EYFSPs, which found that achievement across the board increased between 2008 and 2009, with the greatest gains in CLL. Improvements were reported in all other areas as well albeit to a lesser extent, so overall it can be said that overall the change has been positive. However it is worth noting that between 5% and 10% of respondents were unable to say whether outcomes had improved, and that for some areas (notably CLL, PSED and creative development), several respondents (between 1% and 6% of the sample) felt that outcomes had actually declined.

4.29 It should be noted that these results are drawn from a perception survey with a relatively small sample (102 respondents), and that we did not comprehensively assess achievement against each of the EYFSP domains for each of the schools and settings providing responses to this question.

The value added by local authority EYFS support

Support from local authorities has helped improve outcomes for practitioners...

4.30 Only three of the 18 interviewed local authorities felt that the introduction of the EYFS framework itself and practitioner support around this had not dramatically changed the

direction of early years practice. These three said that work to improve practice and outcomes for children in the areas identified in the EYFS was already underway, although the introduction of framework had strengthened the local authority's approach.

The main thing EYFS has helped with is that it has provided a statutory document which is good because it is helpful to be able to point to a page number when training practitioners. The other helpful thing EYFS has done is getting practitioners to reflect on their practice.

- 4.31 The remaining 15 interviewed local authority consultees felt that support for EYFS had helped to increase the confidence and skills of practitioners and improve practice. This view was borne out by the practitioner survey, where the vast majority of respondents (83%) felt that the training, support and materials received by the local authority had helped increase their confidence in delivering EYFS. Only 4% of survey respondents felt that the support they received had had no impact, and nearly half (48%) felt that they would not have been able to deliver EYFS without it.
- 4.32 Responses to this question for head teachers and childminders were very similar to the sample as a whole, suggesting that the impact of local authority support in terms of practitioner confidence has been felt evenly across these professions.

Table 4-6: If your confidence in delivering EYFS has increased, to what extent was the training, materials and other support you received from the local authority important in this?

| Response | Total | | Head teachers | | Childminders | |
|---|-------|-----|---------------|-----|--------------|-----|
| | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| Not important at all - it made no difference to my confidence | 11 | 4% | 3 | 4% | 5 | 5% |
| Not very important - it made little difference to my confidence | 13 | 4% | 4 | 6% | 6 | 6% |
| Quite important - it made some difference to my confidence | 100 | 35% | 24 | 33% | 32 | 30% |
| Very important - I would not be able to deliver EYFS without the support I received | 138 | 48% | 37 | 51% | 46 | 43% |
| Not applicable - I did not take up/receive any support | 8 | 3% | - | | 6 | 6% |
| Not applicable - my confidence has not increased | 19 | 7% | 4 | 6% | 13 | 12% |

Source: QA Research telephone survey. N=289.

- 4.33 For those survey respondents who stated that their knowledge and skills in early years practice had improved since the introduction of EYFS (81% of the sample), we asked them to what extent this was due to the EYFS itself, and to what extent it was due to the training, support and materials on the EYFS they had received from their local authority. Table 4-7 and Figure 4-6 show that nearly all (96%) practitioners felt that the introduction of the EYFS had helped improve their knowledge and skills in early years practice, and 89% felt that the support received from their local authority on the subject had also helped improve knowledge and skills. So both were important, but greater importance was given to the EYFS framework than to local authority support for its introduction.

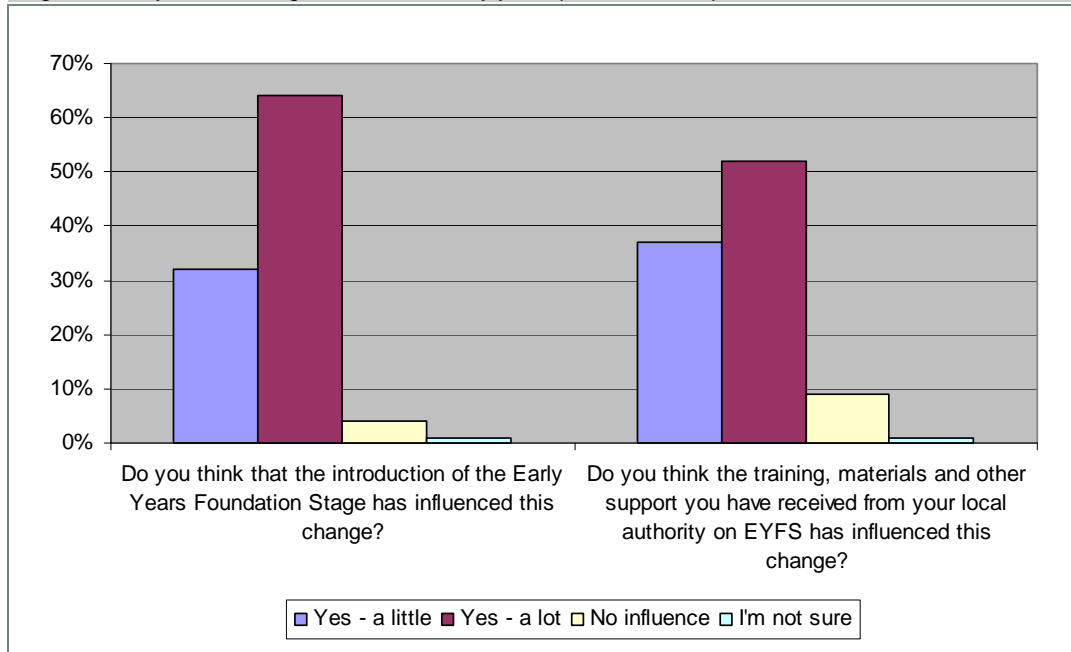
4.34 Notably, responses to these questions for head teachers and childminders were very similar to those given by the sample as a whole, again suggesting that the impact of local authority support on knowledge and skills in EYFS has been spread broadly across practitioner groups.

Table 4-7: If your knowledge and skills in early years practice has improved...

| Response | Do you think that the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage has influenced this change? | | Do you think the training, materials and other support you have received from your local authority on EYFS has influenced this change? | |
|--------------------------------------|--|-----|--|-----|
| | Count | % | Count | % |
| Yes - a little | 74 | 32% | 86 | 37% |
| Yes - a lot | 148 | 64% | 122 | 52% |
| [Subtotal – Yes (a little or a lot)] | 222 | 96% | 208 | 89% |
| No influence | 9 | 4% | 22 | 9% |
| I'm not sure | 2 | 1% | 3 | 1% |

Source: QA Research telephone survey, N=233.

Figure 4-6: If your knowledge and skills in early years practice has improved...



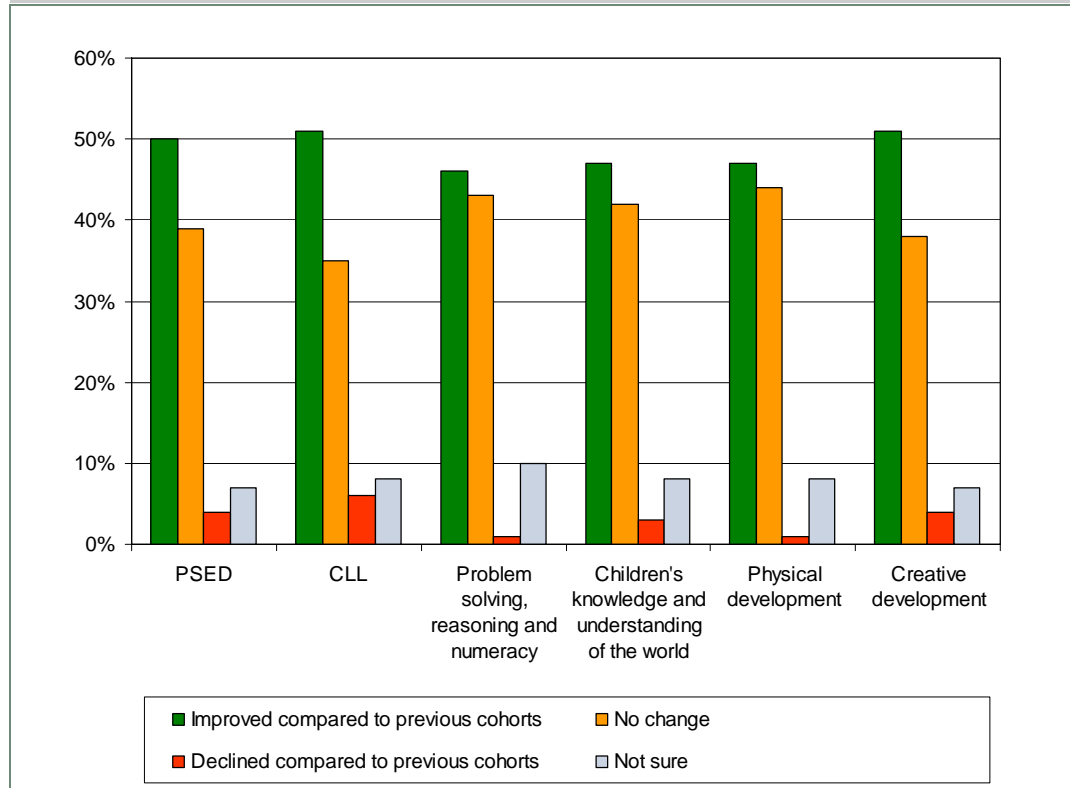
Source: QA Research practitioner survey

4.35 It is important to note that 9% of respondents felt that local authority support on EYFS had not been a factor in the improvement of their knowledge and skills in early years. This is consistent with responses to other survey questions, which show that roughly the same proportion of respondents said their practice had not changed following the EYFS training (10%), materials (8%) and other support (9%) provided by their local authority. Since 4% of respondents also said that the EYFS framework itself had brought improvements to practice, it could be argued that the difference (5%) represents the proportion of respondents who thought local authority EYFS support had no influence on practice over and above the impact of the EYFS framework itself.

...and outcomes for children.

- 4.36 Most of the interviewed local authorities used OfSTED reports and EYFSP results as the key method for measuring outcomes for children. They were asked whether their results had improved on the two early years targets (improving performance and narrowing the gap, National Indicators 92 and 72), and if so, to what extent they thought this was due to the support they had provided on EYFS. Most who had seen an improvement felt that the support was a key factor, but they acknowledged that it was hard to prove this conclusively.
- 4.37 We tested this through the survey of practitioners, which included 72 head teachers able to report on EYFSP results at school level. However there was no apparent pattern to their responses: head teachers reporting the greatest improvements did not appear to be significantly more or less likely to feel that local authority support contributed to this, compared with those who had seen less substantial improvements or a decline in outcomes for children.
- 4.38 The survey also asked head teachers and setting leaders who had been in post before the introduction of the EYFS framework in September 2008, whether they felt that outcomes for children had improved compared to previous years. One hundred and two were able to respond to this question, and the results are shown in Figure 4-7 below. Views were mixed in relation to whether outcomes for children had improved in the domains of problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy (46% believed this area had improved, 43% that it had not); knowledge and understanding of the world (47% vs. 45%); and physical development (47% vs. 45%).
- 4.39 However, in relation to CLL and (to a lesser extent) PSED and creative development, the majority of respondents reported improvements in outcomes for children, compared to past cohorts before the introduction of EYFS. Fifty-one percent of respondents cited improvements in CLL and creative development, and 50% in relation to PSED.

Figure 4-7: Have you observed any changes in outcomes for children since the introduction of EYFS, compared to previous cohorts?



Source: QA Research practitioner survey. N=102.

4.40 For those who thought an improvement had been achieved in relation to (a) CLL or (b) any other area, we asked whether they thought the introduction of the EYFS framework itself had been a factor in improving outcomes, and whether they thought that local authority support on EYFS had been a factor. The results are shown in Table 4-8 below. It should be noted that these results rely on a small sample size (52 respondents and 82 respondents respectively) and should therefore be treated with caution.

Table 4-8: Influence of EYFS and local authority support on outcomes for children

| Question | Do you think the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage has influenced this change? | | Do you think the training, materials or other support you have received from your local authority on EYFS has influenced this change? | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|
| Response | Improvements in CLL n=52 | Any improved outcomes for children n=82 | Improvements in CLL n=52 | Any improved outcomes for children n=82 |
| Yes - a little | 44% | 49% | 38% | 40% |
| Yes - a lot | 56% | 48% | 54% | 44% |
| No influence | | 2% | 6% | 12% |
| I'm not sure | | 1% | 2% | 4% |

Source: QA Research telephone survey

4.41 In this case, 12% of respondents felt local authority support on EYFS had not had any influence on outcomes for children. However, respondents were more positive about the introduction of the EYFS itself – only 2% thought this had not helped improve outcomes.

Practitioners had also had support from other sources than the local authority

4.42 Local authority interviewees also identified other support/initiatives and external factors beyond local authority support as having an impact on outcomes for practitioners and children. These included associated programmes such as CLLD, Buddying and Every Child a Talker, and others introduced by OfSTED and the Children’s Workforce Development Council.

The OfSTED Self Evaluation Form (SEF) has also been a change (though not unhelpful – we’ve linked our toolkit to SEF). As has the improved graduate leader programme and improving qualifications of staff.

4.43 Eighteen percent of practitioners surveyed had received support on EYFS (in the form of training, materials, or other support) from a provider other than their local authority. These included those shown in Table 4-9 below. Local authorities regarded such support for EYFS as almost indistinguishable from other programmes such as CLLD, and saw great value in the shared approach emerging from a range of different sources.

Table 4-9: Have you received any support on EYFS, e.g. training, materials, consultancy, visits, or other support, from any other organisation, apart from the local authority? If yes, who?

| Provider (Coded from open response) | Count | % |
|--|--------------|----------|
| NCMA | 19 | 36% |
| Consultancy | 46 | 16% |
| Early Excellence | 7 | 13% |
| OfSTED | 2 | 4% |
| Sure Start | 2 | 4% |
| College or university | 2 | 4% |
| National Strategies | 2 | 4% |
| Other childminder or childcare company | 2 | 4% |
| Play Network | 1 | 2% |
| Other local authority | 1 | 2% |
| NVQ providers (unspecified) | 1 | 2% |
| QCA | 1 | 2% |
| Company dealing in outdoor play equipment | 1 | 2% |
| Early Years Partnership | 1 | 2% |

Source: QA Research telephone survey

Summary

- 4.44 The evaluation evidence suggests that most of the outcomes achieved – improved awareness of EYFS, improved confidence in delivering EYFS, improved practice and better outcomes for children – could not have been delivered without support from local authorities on EYFS.
- 4.45 Practitioners’ awareness of the EYFS is now regarded by local authorities and practitioners to be good across most parts of the early years sector. Only 2% of respondents to the practitioner survey sample (six practitioners) were not yet delivering the framework and none were unaware of it. Notably, five out of the six practitioners who said they were still not delivering EYFS, were childminders.
- 4.46 Particular areas of continuing need for awareness raising include out-of-school clubs for mixed aged groups and wider professional groups working with young children (e.g. health workers). Sectors where EYFS awareness is currently lagging behind include voluntary sector providers and childminders, with the latter more likely than other early years practitioners to say they were now ‘quite aware’ rather than ‘very aware’ of the EYFS framework.
- 4.47 The interview and survey evidence also suggests that local authority support for the EYFS is improving early years practice, as observed by Early Years Consultants during site visits and reported by survey respondents. The vast majority of survey respondents (81%) said that their knowledge and skills in early years provision had improved since the introduction of the EYFS framework as a statutory requirement in September 2008. Within this, head-teachers were slightly more likely, on average, to say that their knowledge and skills in early years practice had improved (43% said it had improved ‘a little’ and 49% ‘a lot’), and childminders were slightly less likely to report improvements. Childminders were more likely than others to say that their knowledge and skills in early years had stayed the same (19%).
- 4.48 Local authority EYFS support appears to have had greatest impact on improving practice in two areas: improving learning environment and outdoor provision; encouraging child-led and playful learning; and increasing the frequency and quality of practice observations. Within these responses, there were few notable differences between practitioner groups. However, head teachers were especially likely to say that outdoor provision had developed as a consequence of EYFS training.
- 4.49 In line with national EYFSP results, survey respondents identified CLL as the area in which outcomes for children have improved most since September 2008, followed by creative development and PSED. Improvements were reported in all other areas as well, however it is worth noting that a significant proportion saw no change, and a small minority did not know whether outcomes for children had improved or said that they had declined since the introduction of the EYFS as a statutory requirement.
- 4.50 The vast majority of survey respondents felt that the training, support and materials received by the local authority had helped increase their confidence in delivering EYFS, with nearly half saying that they would not have been able to deliver the EYFS without it and nine out of ten saying that local authority EYFS support had resulted in improvements to their practice. This response was consistent across practitioner groups, including head teachers and childminders.

- 4.51 Respondents were divided as to whether there had been some improvement or no change in outcomes for children following the introduction of the EYFS as a statutory requirement. The main exceptions to this were in relation to CLL and (to a lesser extent) creative development, where more respondents reported improvements than for other areas. The vast majority (84%) of those reporting improvements to outcomes felt that local authority support on EYFS had helped them to raise standards and improve outcomes for children.
- 4.52 All of this indicates that local authority support has added considerable value to what might have been achieved simply by introducing the EYFS framework and legislation. Only a very small percentage of practitioners – perhaps 5-10% - felt that support had no effect.

5: Conclusions – effectiveness, good practice and next steps

Introduction

- 5.1 The chapters above showed that the objectives of local authority support have been achieved, and that net benefits have been delivered – awareness, confidence, improved practice and outcomes for children – over and above what might have otherwise been achieved. This chapter attempts to distil good practice and pull together findings on what works in local authority EYFS support and areas for improvement. It reflects upon the conclusions from the preceding sections and sets out suggestions for future work, drawing on lessons learned from consultations and more general observations on the evidence going before.

A positive headline story...

The EYFS framework is excellent, and authorities value the National Strategies

- 5.2 From local authority staff we learned that the EYFS framework itself is thought to work well and to be an excellent source of material and guidance. Alongside it, local authorities mainly welcomed the support they receive from the National Strategies. They have used the helpline and have accessed the large bank of materials – even if the sheer volume of material was felt at times to be overwhelming. Support from the National Strategies Regional Advisers and regional training events were reported to be very valuable.

Publications were excellent and to use those alongside training has been really useful. Regional training events for Early Years Consultants has been really useful with us as a new team – it has helped us get and work out our priorities – step back and reflect and hear about what others are doing – many ideas have been implemented back here.

Authority support is reaching practitioners

- 5.3 In turn, local authority support is reaching practitioners. Only seven practitioners surveyed during the evaluation (less than 3%) had not taken up *any* training they were offered on EYFS. Of these, four had not attended because they felt they did not need to – either they did not work directly with 0-5s, other staff had attended training from their session, or they felt they already had the skills. Only five respondents had not used any EYFS support materials, produced by either the National Strategies or the local authority, and only 2% had not taken up any other kind of support.

Practitioner support is working

- 5.4 Local authority support to practitioners is working, according to the survey. Practitioners' need for training and support has reduced over the period since the EYFS framework was introduced in September 2008, as support from local authorities was rolled out to good effect. Nearly 40% of survey respondents felt they had no further need for support on EYFS by

January 2010 (when the survey was carried out). When asked an open question about what worked well, several practitioners answered ‘everything’ (6%), while others pointed to ‘the training’ (21%) and the ‘information and resources’ (13%); when asked the converse question, the majority (54%) said there was nothing that worked less well.

- 5.5 Two local authority approaches seem particularly effective. The first is targeted and individualised support. Having done a large amount of universal training during the introduction of EYFS, several authorities talked positively about their move towards more targeted support. Many local authorities mentioned that one-to-one support with schools and settings and personal contact with heads, leaders and managers, was much more influential in changing practice and sustaining changes, than simply delivering training sessions. The two local authorities who had combined support for schools and settings in their organisational structure also felt this had markedly improved results (though as this was a minority approach it is difficult to assess its effectiveness compared to approaches).
- 5.6 Practitioners certainly valued individual support: when asked what worked well in the support they received from the authority, one-to-ones and visits from officers were among the most frequently mentioned features (6% each). The second local authority approach which seems to be particularly effective is action research and training involving ‘gap tasks’. Local authorities reported it to be particularly effective in developing ‘reflective practitioners’, while over a fifth of practitioners responding to the survey agreed that practical training was useful.
- 5.7 Other elements of local authority support that practitioners particularly valued, shown below, were the networking, observation training, or the overview of EYFS that training provided them with. Responses from different practitioner groups were markedly similar, with no notable differences in opinion.

Table 5-1: What worked well?

| Response (coded from open response) | Count | % |
|-------------------------------------|-------|-----|
| The training | 61 | 21% |
| Observation training | 20 | 7% |
| Practical training is useful | 11 | 4% |
| Networking | 45 | 16% |
| The information and resources | 37 | 13% |
| ‘Everything’ | 17 | 6% |
| One-to-one | 18 | 6% |
| Visits from officers | 16 | 6% |
| The overview of EYFS was useful | 11 | 4% |
| Other | 12 | 4% |

Source: QA Research telephone survey. N=289. Practitioners could give more than one answer, and not all were able to provide a relevant answer.

...with some difficulties and efforts to overcome them ...

- 5.8 Within an overall picture of good support from National Strategies to local authorities, and from local authorities to practitioners, local authorities have been working to overcome a number of challenges. These include variations in the take-up of support, staff turnover and the quality of new staff, and managing the volume of information provided.

Variations in take-up

- 5.9 While take-up among practitioners of at least some support is very high (over 97%), local authorities did report variations across the sector. Interviewees held differing views on which parts of the sector were most likely to take up EYFS training and support: some said that schools were most responsive and others PVI settings. The attitudes of leaders, managers and head teachers were seen as a critical influence on whether settings were likely to engage with EYFS support. One local authority commented that it had found

... Putting EYFS into the title of a course gets a better take-up, probably because practitioners think of it as something they legally have to do.

- 5.10 Most agreed that childminders and out-of-school clubs were the hardest to reach. In response, most had aimed to boost uptake by delivering network meetings and/or training at varied times across the week, evenings and weekends. Yet in the practitioner survey, 7% of respondents said that support could be improved by training being offered at more accessible times. This suggests greater flexibility in delivery is still required.
- 5.11 Support for out-of-school clubs remains an area identified by local authorities for further attention, since they had historically received less support.

Staff turnover and the quality of new staff

- 5.12 At setting level, one local authority identified the transience of staff as a problem, especially in the early days where an Early Years Consultant often sought to identify a single EYFS champion in a setting. It was hoped that this would be overcome with time as awareness was cascaded to all staff in the sector.
- 5.13 Other local authorities had recognised this issue, and in response had often put in place a rolling programme of courses giving an introduction to EYFS and the EYFS Profile. Some had also targeted their setting visits and wider support on providing support to those settings with new staff.
- 5.14 One local authority felt that there was an ongoing challenge relating to the quality of new staff coming into the system, and their understanding of the EYFS.

The challenges lie where the staff are trained in EYFS e.g. to NVQ standard but they don't understand a lot of the framework. The system is let down by the training that practitioners in PVIs get. We find that we need to give them new training in child development so they know what to look for [in the children]. They [the practitioners] are at a very poor standard. Therefore it's harder to increase the quality of provision in settings when this poor standard arrives in newly qualified practitioners. There is low attendance [at their original training] and a lack of

responsibility taken on in [practitioners'] practices in settings during their training courses. If EYFS is not covered properly in PGCE/ B Ed etc we have to pick it up in the NQT training. We have lots of NQTs in early years settings. I'm not sure how much the National Strategies can change this but it often comes up in lead conferences.

- 5.15 However, others already had in place measures to address this, including EYFS training in NQT induction training and briefings/training on EYFS for further education lecturers and PVI trainers. Solutions such as these should be disseminated across local authorities.

Volume of information

- 5.16 Several local authority staff described the sheer volume of material produced by the National Strategies as a problem, particularly around the time of introduction of the EYFS framework, when it became difficult to prioritise what information to give practitioners and how. More than one local authority felt that 'less can be more' in relation to training.

In the first stages we tried to do too much too soon. The amount of training nearly killed us. Because we were doing so much training we had less time to go and see what was going on in the settings. Now there's a training programme for the year and we're less reactive.

- 5.17 More widely, for schools, it was also commented that

Schools have a massive amount of information thrown at them. Sometimes new initiatives take time to filter through as new areas of importance. There is a drip-drip approach to things, they trickle through. This is due to a lack of time for schools to take things in, digest them and respond to them.

- 5.18 Much of this difficulty has been resolved as post-launch training and materials have become more targeted at specific groups and topics. Yet the difficulty of embedding and improving the quality of provision within the EYFS framework amidst competing information and priorities remains. This suggests that the National Strategies should work closely with local authorities to ensure the scale, timing and content of EYFS support materials work to best effect.

...and some continuing challenges

- 5.19 A wide range of continuing challenges were identified by local authority interviewees and surveyed practitioners during the course of the evaluation. These are discussed below under the following headings: sustainability, capacity constraints, rurality, resources within settings, and attitudes and culture.

Sustainability

- 5.20 When asked to look forward and consider how sustainable the achievements – improved practice and outcomes for children – might be, local authority views were mixed. The most optimistic interviewees felt that improvements would be sustained:

It will be sustained because it's embedded in practice. The majority of people understand it, know it, and implement it. Now it's having wider

impacts. For example when I presented [on] EYFS to some of the secondary advisers they said it should be happening 0-19. People say it's absolutely brilliant.

- 5.21 More generally, consultees felt that outcomes probably would be sustained into the future. But there was some anxiety expressed about sustaining impact with the National Strategies ceasing operations and other external shocks, such as changes to nursery provision and reductions in funding for workforce development. Local authorities argued that going forward, continuing access to a national perspective, and also external support and challenge, were valued and needed to help improve local performance.
- 5.22 Local authority consultees also commented that targets were set based on continual improvement, and they felt in some cases that this would eventually level out. Empowering schools and settings with tools for improving practice was felt to support ongoing improvement. Narrowing the gap was also a challenge for sustaining impact for some, but not all, local authorities; some felt that worsening deprivation in cities could endanger this aspiration.

Capacity constraints

- 5.23 Staff capacity within the early years service was identified by some local authority interviewees as a barrier to the rollout of EYFS support. Some reported hard-to-fill vacancies for Early Years Consultants: five posts in one local authority had been vacant for a year (but at the time of writing had been filled).
- 5.24 One potential barrier going forward was the need to recruit and/or retain high quality staff at the level of Early Years Consultant, to continue to provide support to schools and other settings after the National Strategies support had ceased. One local authority said this was difficult because it meant tempting staff away from schools and other settings (seen as counter-productive in some respects) and because of funding constraints and short-term contracts.

Rurality

- 5.25 Rurality continued to be a barrier for many local authorities. Workforce shortages in rural areas meant that at least one local authority felt that the quality of staff was an issue, and that they simply could not access the ability levels required to help implement EYFS. This was challenging, although the local authority concerned is working to upscale all the children's workforce to NVQ Level 2. Being able to organise training sessions and management-level meetings cost effectively was also an issue in large rural authorities. In open questions, 3% of practitioners said that training was inconvenient to attend, and 2% said that support could be improved through more local provision of training. These concerns are likely to be felt more strongly in rural areas, and require innovative solutions.

Resources within settings

- 5.26 For some settings, one local authority mentioned that the lack of access (or resource to get access) to outdoor spaces is still a barrier to this element of the EYFS. For schools, one local authority consultee said that large reception class sizes inhibited the full implementation of

EYFS. Some practitioners also highlighted the volume of paperwork associated with EYFS as a problem – although we understand that the National Strategies do not intend that implementing EYFS should result in additional paperwork, this remains a perception among a minority of practitioners. Nine percent of practitioners surveyed said it was something that worked less well overall, and 5% said that reducing paperwork was a way to improve support.

Attitudes and culture

5.27 Attitudes to EYFS were not perceived to be a barrier by local authorities, and we rarely encountered negative attitudes during the practitioner survey. One local authority had encountered some early hostility from non-networked childminders, but after talking through and delivering some initially difficult training and support sessions, this had begun to ease.

5.28 Getting childminders to liaise with schools was seen as a particular difficulty in another local authority. However, only one local authority reported that childminders had left the sector following EYFS, and in this case:

On further analysis we found that many were not actively minding and the introduction [of EYFS] and required training helped these childminders to make the decision about whether to continue.

5.29 Two local authority interviewees felt that there was a continued need to work with leaders, managers and head teachers to help them understand that they need to lead on EYFS and create time to cascade training and materials to other staff. However only one interviewee felt that attendance at training continued to be a barrier, particularly for

...childminders, and staff in PVI where their manager doesn't want to release them. We've offered crèche facilities, and have tried Saturday mornings, or evenings, with some success.

5.30 Most acknowledged that implementing change always encountered some resistance, but did not see this as a major barrier going forward. Interestingly, one commented that

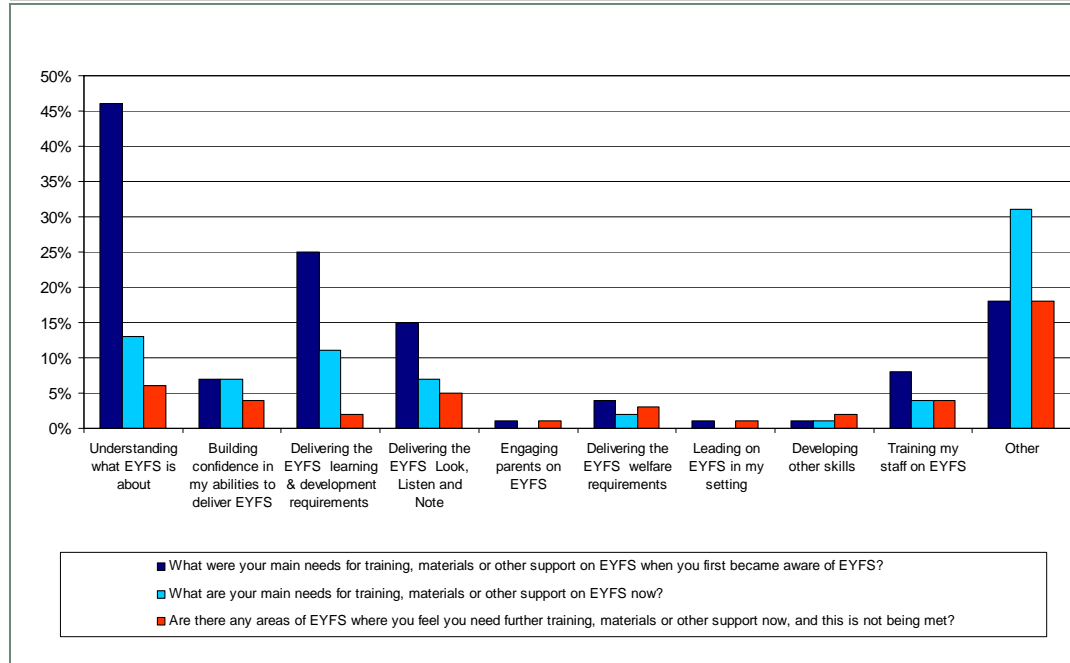
Very formal schools found it more difficult; but some private schools have changed their practice completely. We thought they'd be a barrier, but they haven't been.

5.31 Sample sizes in the practitioner survey were not sufficient to test whether this view had wider resonance.

Practitioners have ongoing support needs

5.32 Practitioners in the survey were asked about their needs for training, materials and other support, when the EYFS framework was first introduced in 2008 and in 2010 (when the survey was undertaken). They were also asked whether there were any areas where their needs were not being met by existing training and support from their local authority – these areas are flagged in red in the figure below.

Figure 5-1: Training and support needs on EYFS



Source: QA Research telephone survey

5.33 This chart shows a positive picture of declining needs over time. Notably, however:

- 13% of respondents still felt they had a need for support to help understand what EYFS is about – and around half of these (6% of the total) felt this need was not being met by current provision
- 11% still needed further support on delivering the EYFS learning and development requirements (though just one-fifth of these, or 2% of the total, felt this need was not being met by current provision)
- 18% felt they had other support needs on EYFS that were not currently being met – when probed, these mainly related to specific elements of delivering the EYFS framework such as observation and assessment, and record keeping.

These differ between practitioner groups ...

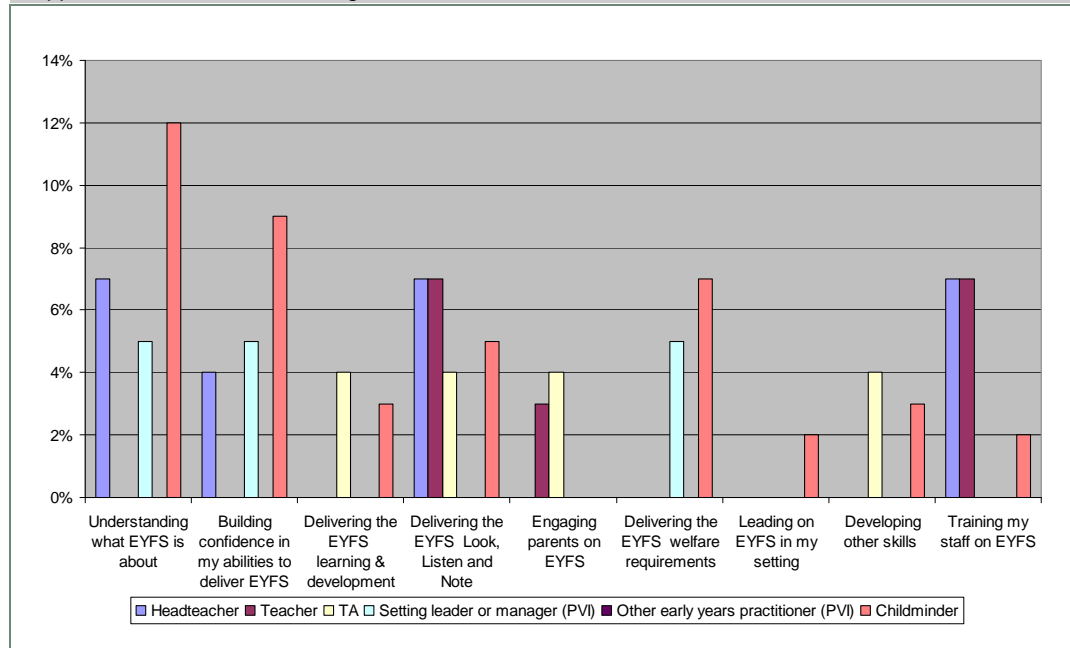
5.34 There were also notable differences between practitioner groups when it came to ongoing support needs that were not being met. Figure 5-2 shows that childminders were much more likely than other practitioner groups to say that they had needs which were not being met, for further training, materials or other support to help:

- understand what EYFS is about (12%)
- build confidence in their abilities to deliver EYFS (9%)
- deliver the EYFS welfare requirements (7%).

5.35 Perhaps unexpectedly, head teachers and teachers were most likely to say that they had unmet support needs in relation to delivering the observation requirements of EYFS – Look, Listen

and Note (7% of each). Seven percent of heads and seven percent of teachers also felt they had unmet support needs in relation to training their staff on EYFS.

Figure 5-2: Are there any areas of EYFS where you feel you need further training, materials or other support now, and this is not being met?



Source: QA Research telephone survey. N=289. (Individual group sample sizes are considerably smaller and caution should be taken in interpreting these results).

... though support was seen to have worked very well overall...

5.36 Practitioners were asked in an open question: ‘overall, what worked least well?’ The results are shown in Table 5-2 below (and many have been referred to earlier in the chapter). Most respondents (54%) felt that there were no problems with the support received. For 32%, training was highlighted (in Table 5-1 above) as something that worked well overall; when asked what worked less well, small proportions criticised the training in some way, either because it was irrelevant (7%), was done poorly (3%) or was inconvenient to attend (3%). Notably, there were no apparent differences in response to this question from different practitioner groups.

Table 5-2: What worked less well?

| Response (coded from open response) | Count | % |
|---|-------|-----|
| Nothing or no problems | 153 | 54% |
| Paperwork is an issue | 26 | 9% |
| Other issue (only cited once) | 28 | 9% |
| Content of the training is often irrelevant | 21 | 7% |
| Information or resources are poor | 11 | 4% |
| Training done poorly | 9 | 3% |
| Training often inconvenient to attend | 9 | 3% |

| Response (coded from open response) | Count | % |
|---|--------------|----------|
| Sometimes there is conflicting advice | 5 | 2% |
| Lack of support or guidance in area of respondent | 7 | 2% |
| The profile is poor | 4 | 1% |
| Access is poor | 4 | 1% |

Source: QA Research telephone survey. N=289. Since respondents could make more than one suggestion responses do not sum to 100% and irrelevant responses were excluded.

...some suggestions for improvements were offered.

5.37 Practitioners were also asked how support could be improved. Many could provide no suggestion. Suggestions from those who did respond to this question are provided in Table 5-3 below. Responses from head teachers to this question were broadly consistent with the sample as a whole, but there are some notable differences in the response from childminders. Childminders were more likely than others to suggest more accessible training (15% against 7% of the overall responses received), or more local training (five out of the six who suggested this were childminders); that paperwork should be reduced or simplified (10% vs. 5% of the total); and all four respondents who thought the EYFS framework packs needed to be made more simple, were childminders.

Table 5-3: How could support be improved?

| Response | Total | | Head teachers | | Childminders | |
|--|--------------|----------|----------------------|----------|---------------------|----------|
| | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| More training needed | 25 | 9% | 1 | 1% | 10 | 10% |
| Training offered needs to be more specific or in depth | 23 | 8% | 9 | 13% | 4 | 4% |
| More training at accessible times (weekends or evenings) | 19 | 7% | 2 | 3% | 15 | 15% |
| Communication needs improving | 19 | 7% | 3 | 4% | 9 | 9% |
| Paperwork should be reduced or simplified | 15 | 5% | 2 | 3% | 10 | 10% |
| More funding needed | 13 | 5% | 3 | 4% | 2 | 2% |
| Other | 12 | 4% | 7 | 10% | 1 | 1% |
| Teaching assistants and younger staff need more support | 10 | 4% | 2 | 3% | - | |
| Have more practical training | 6 | 2% | 3 | 4% | - | |
| Regular updates and support needed | 6 | 2% | - | | 1 | 1% |
| Training needs to be more local | 6 | 2% | - | | 5 | 5% |
| More support needed (general) | 5 | 2% | 1 | 1% | 2 | 2% |
| None applicable | 5 | 2% | - | | 4 | 4% |
| Make the packs less confusing | 4 | 1% | - | | 4 | 4% |
| Better online access | 4 | 1% | 2 | 3% | 1 | 1% |
| More consistency needed | 3 | 1% | 1 | 1% | 2 | 2% |
| More visual materials would be useful | 3 | 1% | 1 | 1% | - | |

| Response | Total | | Head teachers | | Childminders | |
|---|-------|----|---------------|----|--------------|----|
| | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| We should be allowed extra copies | 2 | 1% | 1 | 1% | - | |
| Would prefer less focus on computer based resources | 2 | 1% | 1 | 1% | - | |
| Avoid lengthy or tedious lectures | 2 | 1% | - | | 1 | 1% |
| Have more practice visits | 2 | 1% | 2 | 3% | - | |
| Increase networking | 2 | 1% | 1 | 1% | - | |

Source: QA Research telephone survey. N=289 – not all provided responses, and respondents could select more than one option.

Critical success factors

- 5.38 In response to the initial and ongoing challenges that local authorities face, the local authority staff we spoke to identified a range of critical success factors.

A good team and team structure

- 5.39 Several local authority consultees spoke positively about the effect of a good, enthusiastic team in the authority, with good leadership and strategic planning and strong backing from senior officers – ‘both practical and emotional.’
- 5.40 Others said that alignment in having one education improvement service covering both schools and other settings was helpful, or in the case of having two services responsible for support, holding joint visits to help share good practice.
- 5.41 One authority had restructured its early years team to allow more staff to deliver training, and another had a dedicated EYFS trainer, which in these cases was seen as very valuable.

Flexibility

- 5.42 One authority highlighted flexibility as a key strength and others mentioned the ability to change approach. To deal with capacity constraints, one large rural authority changed the approach of training to fewer sessions in larger venues with more people attending; another had taken the opposite tack and agreed to deliver training individually to settings if required. Another talked about developing the support model based on experience to improve effectiveness – for example making more frequent use of training with ‘gap tasks’, and a consultant follow-up visit.

A targeted approach

- 5.43 One authority was very positive about its approach of a basic universal offer alongside targeted, more intensive support for priority groups, settings or individuals. Another valued perseverance and a targeted approach to identified areas of resistance:

Where there was resistance we worked to find out who was resistant. The approach depended on whether it was a manager, a supervisor, or if we needed to talk to the parent committees. With heads, we got SIPs involved.

Encouraging uptake

- 5.44 To encourage uptake, authorities used a variety of methods including:
- being clear that EYFS is an expectation ‘and not just from us – from central Government’
 - encouraging childminders to join the network, with free training offered as a perk
 - training in the evenings for childminders, which in one authority appeared to result in higher take-up than Saturdays, or varying training times overall
 - offering financial support and supply cover for training.

Summary

- 5.45 The EYFS framework itself is thought by local authorities to work well and to be an excellent source of material and guidance. Alongside this, local authorities welcomed the support they have received from the National Strategies. In turn, local authority support is reaching practitioners (less than 3% of those surveyed had not taken up any EYFS training), and this support seems to be working. Practitioners’ need for training and support has reduced over the period since the EYFS framework was introduced as a statutory requirement in September 2008, so that by January 2010 nearly 40% of survey respondents felt they had no further need for support on EYFS. Moreover, more than half (54%) were unable to identify anything in the support they had received which had not worked well.
- 5.46 Two local authority approaches to providing EYFS support seem to have been particularly effective: targeting support at identified needs and providing tailored solutions; and involving practitioners in action research and training focusing on practical tasks. These were endorsed by local authorities and practitioners alike. However there is room for improvement: 18% of practitioners surveyed said there are some areas in which current support is not meeting their needs, and these differ between practitioner groups. Childminders were much more likely than other practitioner groups to say that they had needs which were not being met, for further training, materials or other support to help:
- understand what EYFS is about (12%)
 - build confidence in their abilities to deliver EYFS (9%)
 - deliver the EYFS welfare requirements (7%).
- 5.47 Perhaps unexpectedly, head teachers and teachers were most likely to say that they had unmet support needs in relation to delivering the observation requirements of EYFS – Look, Listen and Note (7% of each). Seven percent of heads and seven percent of other teachers also felt they had unmet support needs in relation to training their staff on EYFS.
- 5.48 Local authorities identified childminders and out-of-school clubs as being the hardest to support, alongside other priority groups for future support including teaching assistants and less experienced early years practitioners. They had responded by delivering network meetings and training at varied times across the week, evenings and weekends, and also by

tailoring support to the needs of particular schools and settings. These solutions do address practitioner requests to improve access to support, but the practitioner survey responses suggest that more could be done (7% reported accessibility of training times as a problem – this figure rose to 15% among childminders).

- 5.49 The transience of the early years workforce is a continuing challenge for local authorities providing EYFS support. In response, some have put in place a rolling programme of courses giving an introduction to EYFS and the EYFSP, whilst others had targeted their setting visits and wider support on providing support to those settings with new staff.
- 5.50 Local authorities said that the volume of material produced by the National Strategies, particularly around the time of launch of the EYFS framework, presented challenges to designing and delivering EYFS support. Much of this difficulty has been resolved as post-launch training and materials have become more targeted at specific groups and topics. Yet the difficulty of embedding and improving the quality of provision within the EYFS framework amidst competing information and priorities remains, and requires a coordinated national/local approach to ensure the scale, timing and content of EYFS support materials work to best effect.
- 5.51 Going forward, it is clear that local authorities are addressing these challenges whilst tackling a set of more general obstacles to the delivery of effective EYFS support. These include ensuring the sustainability of EYFS support and its effects in practice and outcomes improvements when the National Strategies support is no longer available, local authority capacity constraints and diminishing resources for supporting practitioners within schools and settings, ensuring practitioners in rural areas are supported, and overcoming resistance to cross-sector collaboration and also culture change within some settings.
- 5.52 In doing so, local authorities may wish to refer to the critical success factors identified by lead Early Years Consultants during the evaluation, including the following:
- having a good team and team structure with strong backing from senior officers and links to wider children's services
 - being flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances and needs/opportunities for EYFS support, and learning from experience (e.g. with practitioners through action research) to improve effectiveness
 - targeting support at priority groups and providing tailored solutions which meet their identified needs
 - encouraging take up of support by emphasising the statutory duty, encouraging childminders to join a network, and delivering support at times to suit them, and offering financial support where necessary.