

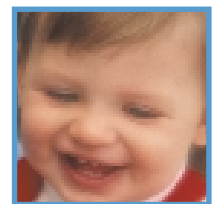
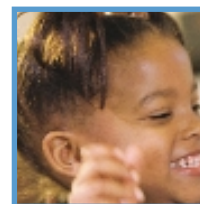
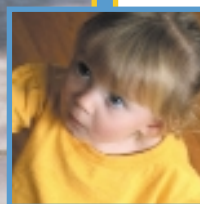
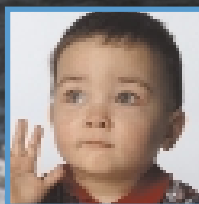


Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
The National Assembly for Wales



Education and Life-Long
Learning Committee
Final Report:

Laying the Foundation: Early Years Provision for Three Year Olds





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Foreword

This review was started by the Pre 16 Education, Schools and Early Learning Committee and completed by the Education and Life-Long Learning Committee. It is an important review as it looks at the start that the youngest members of our community have in the education process. Their first experiences of learning must be happy ones. This is paramount as it will influence many aspects of their future. To the child, what they learn is incidental to that essential experience and that is where we as the adults must take responsibility. It is important that we create an environment where children are able to have as many experiences as possible and be allowed to explore those with support and encouragement.

In Wales we are fortunate to have a strong and vibrant culture. We must capitalise on this in developing our children, our future, into confident, knowledgeable and skilled young people. It is the start that we give them in life that will help them become keystones of our future community.

This strategy should be seen as part of the continuum of education. It starts when a child is born and continues throughout their lives. It must sit firmly within the provision of childcare and education for 0 to 6 year olds. The Pre 16 Education, Schools and Early Learning Committee supported the then Assembly Secretary for Education's proposal that a study be undertaken to explore alternative modes of learning and development to the current curriculum arrangements for 5 year olds in schools. We would look to Jane Davidson to take this forward, building on the recommendations in this report for provision for 3 year olds. We must not overlook the current provision on 4 year olds, many of whom are already in our schools. The provision for these children should be reviewed so that it fits with the provision for 3 year olds envisaged in this strategy.

To deliver this strategy will be a challenge but it is one that we must deliver. To fail will be to fail our children and our future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cynog Dafis'.

Cynog Dafis A.M

Chair, Education and Life-Long Learning Committee



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Introduction

The Education and Life-Long Learning Committee is established under the Government of Wales Act 1998 and Standing Order 9. Its remit covers education and life-long learning, this includes, amongst other things, the national curriculum and qualifications, all aspects of schools administration and organisation, further and higher education, supply side employment policy, including the New Deal and the work of the employment service, career services and work related training. The Committee took over this policy review from the previously established Pre 16 Education, Schools and Early Learning Committee in November 2000.

The Assembly Minister who has responsibility for this area of work is Jane Davidson A.M

The Committee's membership is:

Lorraine Barrett	Labour	Cardiff South and Penarth
Cynog Dafis (Chair)	Plaid Cymru	Mid and West Wales
Jane Davidson (Assembly Minister)	Labour	Pontypridd
Janice Gregory	Labour	Ogmore
Christine Humphreys	Liberal Democrat	North Wales
Pauline Jarman	Plaid Cymru	South Wales Central
Gareth Jones	Plaid Cymru	Conwy
Huw Lewis	Labour	Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney
Jonathan Morgan	Conservative	South Wales Central
Alun Pugh	Labour	Clwyd West

Chapter 1: Background to Report

Remit of Policy Review

- To consider the current pattern of educational provision for 3 year olds;
- To assess whether its expansion would be in the educational and developmental interests of such children;
- To assess the costs of such expansion which would place a new burden on local authorities and would need to be recognised in their funding;
- To assess the impact of expansion on the ability of playgroups and private providers to provide childcare for children below compulsory school age; and
- To make recommendations to the Assembly Minister for Education and Life-Long Learning as to future policy.

Interim Report

The Pre 16 Education, Schools and Early Learning Committee presented to the National Assembly for Wales an interim report on 4th April 2000, a copy of which can be accessed at www.wales.gov.uk. This interim report considered the information provided to it, both oral and written, and led to its conclusion that it wished to appoint an expert adviser to evaluate the information and advise the Committee in its considerations.

Expert Adviser

Mrs Margaret Hanney was appointed as the Committee's Expert Adviser and remitted to consider the outcome of the consultation responses and to draw on best practice in Wales and elsewhere in the world in formulating her advice to the Committee. Mrs Hanney is employed as Senior Lecturer in Early Years Education at the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC).

Expert Adviser's Report

Mrs Hanney presented her initial report to the Pre 16 Education, Schools and Early Learning Committee in June 2000, a copy of which can be accessed at www.wales.gov.uk. Her report considered the current position in Wales, what kind of provision would be best for three year olds, why change was needed, how early years provision in Wales could be developed to become a model of international best practice, the implications of expanding provision and the way forward. It offered two models of provision and a number of detailed recommendations on staffing implications, training and qualifications, the curriculum, infrastructure, co-ordination and monitoring, and implementation in local authorities.

The Committee considered this report and was impressed by the breadth and detail of the analysis it contained. The general thrust of the report was accepted but it was felt that the stakeholders in early year provision for three year olds should be consulted on the detail of the recommendations.

Consultation on Report

Consultation was carried out with those who had contributed to the Committee's earlier deliberations and to others who had indicated an interest during the Committee's consideration of the issue.

Mrs Hanney analysed the responses to the consultation on her initial report and produced a report to Committee summarising the responses and presenting her final advice and recommendations to the Committee. A copy of this report is available on the Committee's website at www.wales.gov.uk on the Education and Life-Long Learning Committee page.

Principles on which provision should be founded

The Pre 16 Education, Schools and Early Learning Committee had agreed a set of principles which should underpin the future pattern of any expanded early years provision. The principles were set out in that Committee's interim report to Plenary and endorsed by it. These principles have been the foundation for the Expert Adviser's advice to the Committee and the basis of her recommendations.

The Education and Life-Long Learning Committee has reconfirmed these principles and they underpin the recommendations made in this report. The principles are that early years provision should:

- ❖ provide a sound foundation for future learning and achievement through an appropriate, developmental curriculum which is in harmony with the child's particular needs and interests;
- ❖ achieve equal access of educational opportunity for all to reach their potential and take their full place in society;
- ❖ provide 'wrap around care' by developing partnerships between parents, families, childminders, nurseries, playgroups and schools in both the maintained and non maintained sectors; and
- ❖ ensure that the delivery of early education is guided and nurtured by suitably qualified early years educators who care as well as educate.

Chapter 2: Committee's Consideration and Recommendations

The Committee agreed that central to its deliberations and to any recommendations that it made were the needs of the child. This was paramount and whatever provision was finally decided upon it was essential that the needs of the child should be central to any decisions.

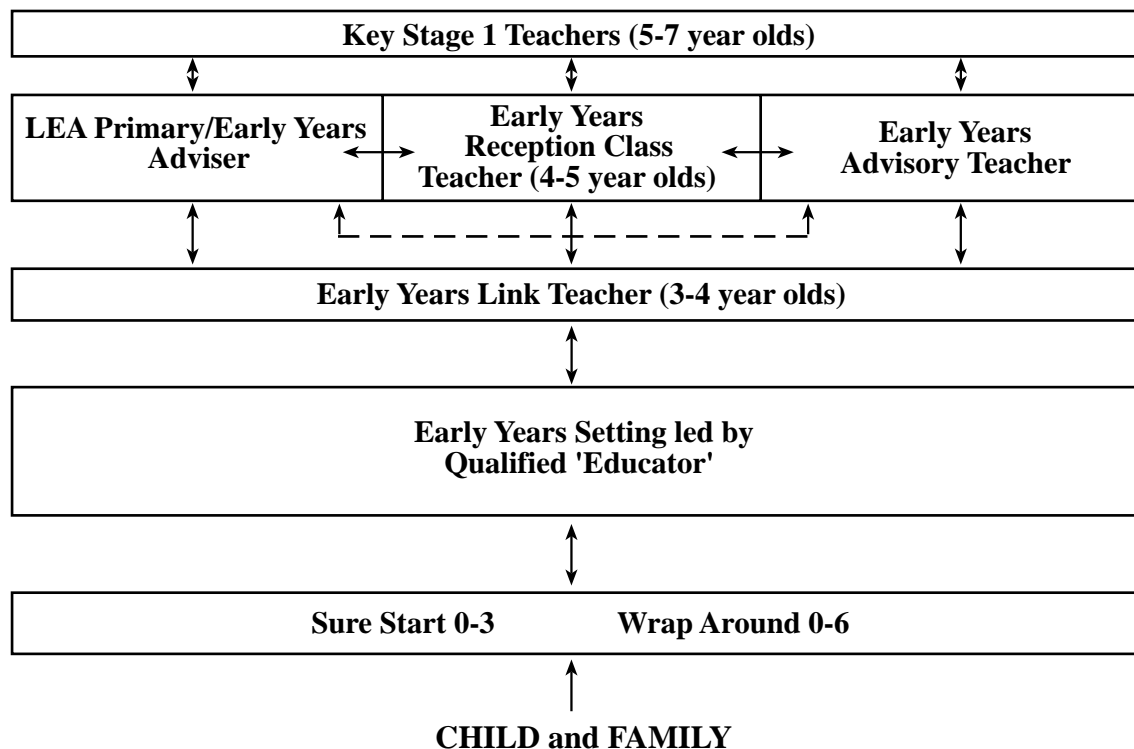
Before considering in detail Mrs Hanney's recommendations the Committee noted the lack of robust statistical information about the current level of provision for three year olds in all settings in Wales. This coupled with the lack of information about potential demand meant that it was impossible to give any detailed estimates of the size of the development challenge facing Wales. **It therefore recommends that the Minister should commission a survey of the current level of provision and estimates of future demand which will form the basis for planning the development needs and cost implications.** The audit will need to be very broad based and take account of issues such as parental choice, social deprivation and rurality amongst others. This is essential work and is key to a number of decisions, therefore the Committee agreed at its meeting on 13th December 2000 to invite the Minister to start the work on the audit as soon as possible with a view to having the information available by May 2001.

Mrs Hanney's final report contained some 39 recommendations grouped into discrete but key areas that needed to be developed in order to provide high quality early years provision in Wales. The task of delivering this strategy will be a major one, the **Committee therefore recommends that the Minister considers establishing an Early Years Advisory Panel to advise her on the development of the strategy and its implementation plan.** The advisory panel should consist of organisations and individuals with expertise in each area of early years education and childcare.

The Committee does not envisage such an advisory panel having a role that extends beyond the first three years of the strategy. The Committee invites the Minister to commence work on establishing this advisory panel so that it is in place to advise her when the results of the audit are received in May 2001. In advising the Minister, the advisory panel should be invited to provide advice on the role to be played by all sectors in delivering a true partnership approach to early years provision. The Minister should bring this report to the Education and Life-Long Learning Committee by summer 2001.

The Infrastructure of Provision

Mrs Hanney had put forward two possible models for development. The outcome of the consultation was that there was overwhelming support for Model 1.

Model 1 EARLY YEARS EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE

The Committee supported this model as in its view the needs of the child and parental choice could best be delivered through effective partnership working. It noted that local education authorities and Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships already made a valuable contribution and agreed that this should be built upon.

In Mrs Hanney's initial report she considered the development of integrated Early Years Centres which could bring together the education and care elements of early years provision. Members considered that these centres should become centres of excellence and used to support other providers and settings. They noted the possibility of funding these centres from European monies and also by bringing together different strands of childcare and education monies already provided by the National Assembly. The number and location of such centres is, however, a matter for further consideration.

The Committee recommends that the partnership model for Early Years Education and Childcare is adopted and that local education authorities be supported to create integrated Early Years Centres.

The Committee recognises that in making this recommendation there is an absence of real data about how much it would cost to implement Model 1 and the integrated centres. **It therefore recommends that local education authorities and Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships are invited to submit plans for the development of the infrastructure as set out in Model 1 with details of costs involved in terms of provision and capital expenditure.**

The Committee spent some considerable time in considering the age at which it would be appropriate for a child to have free provision. Many respondents commented upon this and the Committee also received oral submissions. Mrs Hanney distilled all this information and her advice to the Committee was that the most appropriate provision which would have the greatest benefits

for the child was to provide free half time education in an approved setting for every child from the term following his/her third birthday. **The Committee accepts this advice and recommends that the long-term strategy should be to provide free half time education in an approved setting for every child from the term following their third birthday.**

It also concluded that parental choice should play an important part in determining a best setting for their child whilst recognising the need for local education authorities and Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships to plan strategically for the expansion and delivery of early years provision in their areas.

The Committee recognised that for a number of reasons the level of existing provision for three year olds in Wales differed considerably. It was therefore reluctant to place any target for achieving 100% provision in a set period. **Instead it recommends that local education authorities plan to increase as a minimum provision by 10% per annum until the 100% provision is reached.** They should be asked to provide their plans on this basis. The Committee had noted the announcement by David Blunkett, Minister for Education and Employment for the United Kingdom, that in England there would be full provision for all three year olds by September 2004. It would not, however, wish to see the deadline for achieving a 100% provision in Wales extending beyond September 2004.

Key players in the successful provision of early years education will be the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships who will have to work closely with local education authorities to develop provision, set standards and ensure that they are achieved. The Committee recognised the importance of these Partnerships and their relationships with local education authorities. **It therefore recommends that the National Assembly clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the Partnerships and the local education authorities.** The composition of the current Partnerships should be reviewed to ensure that they represent the breadth of providers in the authority areas and that no one provider dominates the partnership.

Staffing

There was much discussion of the appropriate staff to child ratios in early years settings. The consensus of consultees considered that a ratio of one adult to 10 children should be the standard. The Committee accepts that this is not the ratio that currently exists for four year olds in reception classes. **It recommends that local education authorities should continue to review staff ratios in mixed age classes such as reception classes and demonstrate that these settings meet the needs of all children involved. In setting ratios local education authorities should work towards employing qualified assistants to support all early years teachers.**

The Committee recognises the role of the Health and Social Services Committee and the Care Standards Inspectorate in regulating and monitoring day care standards for the under 8's. The advisory panel should be asked to consider staffing ratios and the opportunities for these to be compatible across the childcare and education sectors and to make representations on the forthcoming consultation exercise on the introduction of regulations and national standards under the Care Standards Act 2000.

In order to deliver the required standard of educational input and meet the benchmarks contained in the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority (ACCAC) framework 'Desirable Learning Outcomes' **it is recommended that a qualified early years teacher should be employed to work in every approved setting for 10% of the week.** This should be regarded as the minimum time commitment required.

Training and Qualifications

One of the areas for improvement identified in Margaret Hanney's initial report was early years training for teachers, the disparity of qualifications and training of other staff in early years settings and the apparent lack of co-ordination of different types of training across Wales. In particular it was noted that there was a need to increase the Welsh language training opportunities for early year teachers and staff. **The Committee recommends that approved training schemes to attract students to train as early years teachers and qualified staff through the medium of Welsh should be encouraged** so that there is a sufficient supply of qualified staff to meet the increasing demand for Welsh medium provision by parents.

In order to ensure that early years education is provided in a professional manner there is a need to improve the delivery of training and to restructure the qualifications framework. The Committee recognised the achievements ACCAC had already made in this area.

It is recommend that ACCAC should be asked to complete their work and extend it to include work on an early years qualifications framework which should include progression above NVQ/VRQ level 4 to degree and higher degree levels which could underpin a clearly defined training structure across all sectors of early years and enable progression to the highest levels. Future training needs will also need to reflect the introduction of revised regulation and national standards in day care under the Care Standards Act.

It is recommended that higher education institutions should be encouraged to develop in service courses which offer specialist early years training to degree and higher degree level.

It is recommended that initial teacher training courses be extended to enable trainees to cover additional advanced study of early years as their specialised subject.

It is recommended that all staff working in approved settings should be encouraged to gain relevant minimum qualifications as group leaders (NVQ level 3) or assistants (NVQ level 2). The development of joint in-service training courses for all staff should be encouraged. Providers in the non-maintained sector may wish to consider the benefits of introducing a salary structure in order to attract and retain staff who will have achieved these qualifications.

The lack of a co-ordinated approach to training and development was identified as a weakness in the current system by a majority of the respondents. **The Committee recommends that the Minister considers establishing as a sub committee of the advisory panel, an early years training group to identify training needs, set targets and inform the development of an early years training strategy in line with future regulation and national standards.** This group should be established on a task and finish basis and take no longer than 12 months to complete its task.

In order to ensure co-ordination at local education authority level and to work with the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships the Committee recommends that each local education authority appoint an early years co-ordinator with responsibility for monitoring and supporting training. It may be that such a post already exists in a number of local authorities in kind if not by name. Such posts should be re-designated and given a clear remit to support the development of the strategy in their local authorities.

In order to assist co-ordinators with their role with regard to training and to support staff who are undertaking training it is recommended that an early years website be established to facilitate the exchange of information, support training and promote new developments. The Committee is currently reviewing information and communication technology in education and **recommends that this website should be incorporated into the development remit for the National Grid for Learning Cymru.**

Curriculum

The Committee concluded early on in its deliberations that the emphasis in early years provision should be on learning through play. It heard much evidence based on research both in the United Kingdom and abroad that starting formal education at an early age, which was generally accepted as being before 6 years of age, was detrimental to the development of the child. The Committee was therefore very keen that any curriculum that was adopted reflected in particular its first principle that the foundation for future learning should be provided through an appropriate developmental curriculum that is in harmony with the child's particular needs and interests.

Both maintained and non maintained settings funded publicly under Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships work towards a common standards benchmark set out in the ACCAC framework of 'Desirable Learning Outcomes' drawn up in 1996 and reviewed in 1999. The Committee commends ACCAC on this work which received broad recognition from those consulted. **The Committee recommends that all approved settings be required to work toward the common standard and benchmarks in 'Desirable Learning Outcomes'.**

The Committee also recommends that ACCAC provide more guidance to supplement 'Desirable Learning Outcomes' with regard to the development progress of children of 3 and 4 years of age, together with exemplar material to assist in curriculum planning across all settings.

The Committee heard much about the importance of creative and cultural education in raising educational standards by boosting a child's self-confidence and self-esteem. **It therefore recommends that ACCAC give consideration to the re-ordering of its six areas of learning so as to give higher prominence to personal and social development when 'Desirable Learning Outcomes' is next reviewed.** Within this, issues of emotional development and gender relating to the learning patterns of girls and boys should be considered.

Standards of Provision and Inspection

The Committee recognises that, in order to ensure that young children get the best start, the pattern of provision needs to be both sustainable, and of the highest quality. In order to deliver the quality, it believes that particular attention needs to be paid to the system for assuring quality of provision and inspection.

There are a number of mechanisms and organisations already in place and their good work can be built upon. A number of the recommendations made on staffing ratios, qualifications and training will underpin the standards of provision.

It is recommended that the Care Standards Inspectorate and Estyn should be asked to develop national standards to promote consistency in the standards of provision and in the inspection process.

It is recommended that criteria for approval of eligible settings as providers of education for three year olds should be established on a national basis.

It is recommended that the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships should be involved with local education authorities in considering the inclusion of approved providers and within Early Year Development and Childcare Plans.

It is recommended that the proposed All Wales Early Years Advisors should monitor the provision of early years education on a national basis and report on a regular basis to the local education authorities and Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships. This would support the work of Estyn and the Care Standards Inspectorate and should ensure a more consistent approach to provision across Wales.

Special Educational Needs

The Committee is anxious that the needs of children with special needs are addressed from the outset and that they are afforded the same opportunities as all other children. It also recognises the fact that early identification and intervention is a priority for all children with special educational needs. **The Committee recommends that when provision is planned that it should incorporate the needs of children with special needs.** It recognises that this may place additional burdens on some local education authorities. The Committee understands that the draft revised Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (SEN) includes specific guidance covering SEN provision in early years settings. **It recommends that when producing their early years plans, Partnerships should have regard to the Code of Practice to identify the levels of provision and associated costs for special educational needs within their area.** The Committee would also wish for the special educational needs advisors and groups to continue to play an active role in supporting Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships in drawing up their Plans.

Welsh Medium Education

The remit given to Margaret Hanney did not ask her to consider the provision of Welsh medium provision separately to the total provision for three year olds. Therefore she took an integrated approach to provision in her report. She based her report on the four principles agreed by the Committee and that they should be applied equally to all children irrespective of whether they received the provision in English or in Welsh. The Committee had concluded in its interim report that it wished to continue to promote bilingual provision to the highest standards.

The Committee accepted and agreed with the view expressed by the Welsh Affairs Committee's report 'Childcare in Wales' which stated that:

'Early years education is crucial to the future of the Welsh language.'

This view was argued most persuasively by the Welsh Language Board and the Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin. The Committee wishes to reinforce its view that the good work accomplished by the Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin should not be jeopardised by this strategy; rather it should seek to build on the good practice that is evident. The Committee would look to Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin continuing to take an active role in the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership and influence policy and standards from the beginning. A key strategic aim of the National Assembly for

Wales is the creation of a bilingual society and one of the most fundamental cornerstones to achieving this is the provision of early years education. The Committee believes that parental choice to have children educated bilingually or through the medium of Welsh should be actively supported and provision is integrated into the strategy at both national and local levels.

Training and qualifications should be available to staff in both English and Welsh. The audit recommended by the Committee to establish current provision will include Welsh medium provision. Funding of Welsh medium provision should be reviewed to ensure that it is integrated throughout the early years provision for three year olds and is at the heart of that provision and not at the margins. The level of need for Welsh medium provision will be identified during the audit and will provide local education authorities with data upon which to strategically plan how they propose to meet future demand. **The Committee recommends that following the outcome of the audit and identification of future demand the Minister reviews the funding of Welsh medium early years education provision.**

Chapter 3: Funding

The Committee noted that without data on the current level of provision for three year olds in Wales, which also identified the settings in which provision was made, detailed costings could not be established. It has already recommended earlier in this report that an audit of provision be undertaken and that a review of the funding of Welsh medium early years provision be considered.

This information, together with the detailed costed plans local education authorities and Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships should provide, will give a sound basis to calculating costs and planning the 10% per annum increase that is recommended. Children and Young People - A Framework for Partnership proposes the rationalisation of a number of plans, for example Sure Start and the Childcare Strategy, and their associated funding into a single Children and Young People's Support Fund. The Committee supports this proposal and suggests that local education authorities and the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships should consider how they could rationalise Sure Start, childcare and early years education initiatives to facilitate the development of integrated provision for children from age 0 to 6.

Within this budget it is recommended that provision should be made for funding innovative developments which incorporate integrated early years services. The possibility of attracting European funding to such developments should also be explored.

In relation to training it is important that in order to ensure a supply of qualified staff they are supported to undertake assessment for nationally recognised qualifications, **it is recommended that funding be provided centrally to support this.**

The Committee has noted that the Minister in the budget has provided sufficient funds for 2001-2002 to support this data gathering exercise. This information should be obtained within the time-scale required to inform the next National Assembly budget round so that proper plans for taking forward the strategy can be budgeted for in both central funds and in the local government revenue settlement.

Chapter 4: Monitoring and Evaluation

In order to monitor this policy, the Committee wishes to have the following information:

- the data from the audit so that a baseline can be established; and
- a detailed implementation plan with targets and time-scales.

It will then, as part of the Committee's annual scrutiny of expenditure and performance, include an item on progress on the implementation plan.

The areas to be examined in the scrutiny session will reflect the key areas and targets identified in this report. The Committee may also invite comments from local education authorities and Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships on their local perception of progress. Estyn and ACCAC will also be asked for their views when they report to the Committee in the normal course of business.

This strategy will for the first time provide for three year olds in an education setting in Wales, the Minister may therefore wish to consider whether such an innovation should be the subject of detailed research study. Such research could provide evidence of the intermediate impact of the policy on the development of children in terms of confidence, investigatory skills and communication skills, amongst others. On a longer-term basis it should be possible to evaluate provision with reference to academic and vocational achievements taking into account Estyn inspection reports. The contextual impact of the policy needs to be understood in terms of how it impacts on the education provision of children aged between 0 and 6 and such research could aid that analysis and provide lessons for improving over time. Comparisons with best practice elsewhere could be drawn so that progress in Wales can be benchmarked. The Committee should in subsequent years be able to assess policy in this area with reference to evidence from such research.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The Committee has found this a challenging area but a very rewarding one, the impact of a good start to life for children can not be under-estimated. It is important that the Strategy is taken forward in a constructive manner with the full involvement of all parties, the role of local education authorities working together with the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships is crucial to the successful delivery of the Strategy. In looking at the best pattern of delivery for Wales the Committee considered examples from across the world and was very impressed with what it had heard about New Zealand and Italy. It wishes to ensure that the provision in Wales will be as highly regarded world wide in terms of quality of provision and curriculum in a very short time.

The ultimate test of the success of the policy is the young children who will experience the system and who, as they go through the education process, will demonstrate the importance of a good start in life. The Committee hopes that this strategy will lead the Minister to consider the appropriateness of the statutory school age for children in Wales and look at education provision as a continuum from 3 to 16 years.

The Committee commends its report to the National Assembly and the Minister for Education and Life-Long Learning and invites the Minister to develop an action plan for taking this forward within the time-scale specified in the recommendations made.

December 2000

ANNEX

Summary of Recommendations

- ❖ the Minister should commission a survey of the current level of provision and estimates of future demand which will form the basis for planning the development needs and cost implications; and
- ❖ that the Minister considers establishing an Early Years Advisory Panel to advise her on the development of the strategy and its implementation plan.

Infrastructure and Models for Development

- ❖ that the partnership model for early years education and childcare is adopted and that local education authorities be supported to create integrated early years centres;
- ❖ that local education authorities and Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships are invited to submit plans for the development of the infrastructure as set out in Model 1 with details of costs involved in terms of provision and capital expenditure;
- ❖ the long term strategy should be to provide free half time education in an approved setting for every child from the term following their third birthday;
- ❖ local education authorities should plan to increase as a minimum provision by 10% per annum until the 100% provision is reached; and
- ❖ the National Assembly clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the Partnerships and local education authorities.

Staffing

- ❖ local education authorities should continue to review staff ratios in mixed age classes such as reception classes and demonstrates that these settings meet the needs of all children involved. In setting ratios local education authorities should work towards employing qualified assistants to support all early years teachers; and
- ❖ that a qualified early years teacher should be employed to work in every approved setting for 10% of the week.

Training and Qualifications

- ❖ approved training schemes to attract students to train as early years teachers and qualified staff through the medium of Welsh should be encouraged;
- ❖ that ACCAC should be asked to complete their work and extend it to include work on early years qualifications framework which should include progression above NVQ/VRQ level 4 to degree and higher degree levels which could underpin a clearly defined training structure across all sectors of early years and enable progression to the highest levels;

- ❖ that higher education institutions should be encouraged to develop in service courses which offer specialist early years training to degree and higher degree level;
- ❖ that initial teacher training courses be extended to enable trainees to cover additional advanced study of early years as their specialised subject;
- ❖ all staff working in approved settings should be encouraged to gain relevant minimum qualifications as group leaders (NVQ level 3) or assistants (NVQ level 2). The development of joint in-service training courses for all staff should be encouraged;
- ❖ the Minister considers establishing as a sub committee of the advisory group, an early years training group to identify training needs, set targets and inform the development of an early years training strategy in line with future regulation and national standards;
- ❖ in order to ensure co-ordination at local education authority level and to work with the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships, that each local education authority appoint an early years co-ordinator with responsibility for monitoring and supporting training;
- ❖ in order to assist co-ordinators with their role with regard to training and to support staff who are undertaking training, an early years website be established to facilitate the exchange of information, support training and promote new developments; and
- ❖ that this website should be incorporated into the development remit for the National Grid for Learning, Cymru.

Curriculum

- ❖ that all approved settings be required to work toward the common standard and benchmarks in 'Desirable Learning Outcomes';
- ❖ that ACCAC provide more guidance to supplement 'Desirable Learning Outcomes' with regard to the development progress of children of 3 and 4 years of age, together with exemplar material to assist in curriculum planning across all settings; and
- ❖ that ACCAC give consideration to the re-ordering of its six areas of learning so as to give higher prominence to personal and social development when 'Desirable Learning Outcomes' is next reviewed.

Standards of Provision and Inspection

- ❖ the Care Standards Inspectorate and Estyn should be asked to develop national standards to promote consistency in the standards of provision and in the inspection process;
- ❖ criteria for approval of eligible settings as providers of education for three year olds should be established on a national basis;
- ❖ the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships should be involved with local education authorities in considering the inclusion of approved providers and within Early Years Development and Childcare Plans; and

- ❖ the All Wales Early Years Advisors should monitor the provision of early years education on a national basis and report on a regular basis to the local education authorities and Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships.

Special Education Needs

- ❖ that when provision is planned that it should incorporate the needs of children with Special Educational Needs; and
- ❖ that when producing their early years plans, Partnerships should have regard to the Code of Practice to identify the levels of provision and associated costs for special educational needs within their area.

Welsh Medium Education

- ❖ that following the outcome of the audit and identification of future demand the Minister reviews the funding of Welsh medium early years education provision.

Funding

- ❖ that provision should be made for funding of innovative developments which incorporate integrated early years services. The possibility of attracting European funding to such developments should also be explored; and
- ❖ that funding be provided centrally to support staff to undertake assessment for nationally recognised qualifications.