

## BRIEFING PAPER TRANSFORMATION FUND FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

**FACT:** in Northern Ireland there is no training and development strategy for people working with young children. In England and Wales £200 million was allocated for this type of training.

**WE NEED:** An initial investment of £5million per year to give people working with young children here the same training and development opportunities, and to address the disparity in salaries between the community and statutory sectors.

### Early Years Vision is that ...

All children are strong, competent and visible in their communities.

All children are physically and psychologically healthy, eager to learn and respect those that are different.

Early Years want children in Northern Ireland to have the best possible start in life. Recent research<sup>1</sup> have reinforced the importance of the education of early childhood teachers as the study found that children fare significantly better in language skills development with teachers who have achieved a higher level of education.

Currently in Northern Ireland staff working in community or voluntary pre-schools have to pay for their own training and professional development and on-going training, and face a significant disparity in levels of pay with the statutory sector. If the Assembly's vision of early childhood services is for the sector to become world class, then it is essential that we equip the child care and early education workforce in Northern Ireland to match these developments and contribute to an overall strategy for children's services in terms of delivering positive and better outcomes for children and families and reducing inequalities for children, young people, families and communities.

Early Years strongly believes that a properly remunerated graduate-led workforce will improve the quality of the care and education our children receive, and that this investment in the future of our children will reap financial and educational benefits for children throughout their lives.

**Department of Employment and Learning (NI) "Success through Skills, a skills strategy for Northern Ireland: a programme for implementation"** sets out a rationale for putting in place an overarching framework for the development of skills of the workforce in general and highlights the need to focus on:

- Raising the skills of the current workforce;
- Enhancing the 'knowledge base' of those entering the workforce; and
- Addressing the employability skills of those not in employment.

---

<sup>1</sup> The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement Preprimary Project

## **Strategy for Progression**

**Existing workforce:** formal recognition of prior knowledge and experience and the opportunity to build a career in and across a range of settings in the sector is invaluable to ensure that individuals embrace a culture of continuous professional development. This will promote an understanding that although you may enter the child care/early education workforce at Level 3 you will have a professional responsibility to continually improve your practice and qualification status.

Approximately 12% of the workforce are currently at Level 2 therefore it is important that provision be made to enable this section of the workforce to progress to at least Level 3 using both modules of continuous professional development and accredited prior learning.

## **Recruitment and Retention**

At present in Northern Ireland, childcare/early years workers pay and conditions are low and not appropriately linked to levels of skills, knowledge and competences, job role and responsibility. This lack of status and financial recognition goes against the important role the early childhood workforce plays in ensuring positive outcomes for children and the promotion of work with young children as an important and valuable career choice. Early Years wants there to be parity between the voluntary and statutory sector in terms of levels of pay.

## **BACKGROUND**

**April 05 – Children’s Workforce Strategy in England/Wales was developed. Aimed to:**

- **Support the development of local workforce strategies through networking;**
- **Improve recruitment, retention and quality of practice and develop an integrated qualifications framework;**
- **Strengthen leadership, management and supervision;**
- **Establish a more professional workforce: by developing a new Early Years Professional role and through “significant new investment through the Transformation Fund to improve the qualification levels of both those leading settings and the workforce as a whole, without passing the cost to parents.”**

In England and Wales the **Transformation Fund** has provided £250m for the period from April 2006 until August 2008.

The fund supports the transformation of PVI<sup>2</sup> childcare settings by:

- Establishing, and providing financial support for, training routes towards a new graduate-level status for early years professionals.
- Supporting the government's objective to ensure that all full-day childcare settings employ a graduate with early year's professional status by 2015. The fund does this by providing a recruitment incentive and a quality premium for eligible full daycare providers.
- Investing in level 3-5 training and development to increase the skills and qualifications of staff employed in PVI childcare settings, in particular by increasing the numbers with a Level 3 qualification.
- Training more staff in the PVI childcare sectors to work with disabled children and those with SEN.

**By 2007...**

**£16 million was made available for the transformation fund in England and Wales**

**It paid candidates fees, bursaries, supply cover and mentor costs**

**Local Authority allocated funding to private, voluntary and independent settings with funding (£64million) to increase workforce gaining qualifications to level 3-5 and for staff training in supporting children with additional needs**

---

<sup>2</sup> Private, voluntary, independent

