



early years research at NFER





Early years today

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) has, for many years, been contributing to the evidence-base in the area of early childhood education through a range of research and evaluation projects.

Recent years have seen a great deal of change and development in the early-years sector and increasing recognition of the importance of early childhood education. The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) study demonstrated the long-term positive outcomes of a quality pre-school experience and the contribution that the provision of highly qualified staff makes to that experience. The roll out of the new Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and the Children's Workforce Strategy also increased the need for highly qualified staff working in pre-school environments.

Our research

Evaluation of the role of early years professionals

Working with the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC), NFER is evaluating the results of more than 700 interviews with early years professionals (EYPs). The findings will inform the ongoing development and evaluation of EYP status and future training and support packages.

Key fact: the Government aims to have early years professionals in all children's centres offering early years provision by 2010 and in every full day care setting by 2015.

Early years scoping studies

The Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO) published its first three scoping studies for its first theme: early years. This is the first part of the process by which C4EO will create a knowledge bank of evidence of 'what works' for each of its six themes. NFER is one of the C4EO core partners.

Key fact: children's development in the early years is crucial to their long-term development. Families play a key role in children's early learning.

Narrowing the gap in outcomes

This project reviewed the best evidence on narrowing the gap in outcomes across the five Every Child Matters (ECM) areas for vulnerable groups, within the context of improving outcomes for all.

Key facts: positive cognitive and social/behavioural outcomes from a medium or high quality pre-school can still be seen after five years of primary school and can reduce the effects of social disadvantage.

Evidence from the US and Sweden suggests that the benefits continue into adult life leading to increased academic success, employability and socio-economic status and reduced teenage pregnancy and criminal behaviour.

Transition from the foundation stage to key stage 1

This study provided an evidence base about the effectiveness of the transition from the foundation stage (which applies to children aged three to five years) and year 1 (for children aged five to six).

Key facts: while teachers said that they were able to manage the transition, they felt that some areas remained problematic. The biggest challenge was posed by the move from a play-based approach in the foundation stage to a more 'structured' curriculum in key stage 1.

The full literacy hour and the daily mathematics lesson was identified as challenging because it was difficult to get young children to sit still and listen to the teacher.

Delivering the ten-year childcare strategy: a survey of current plans

This project investigated local authorities' plans to deliver the ten-year childcare strategy and their vision 'to ensure that every child gets the best start in life and to give parents more choice about how to balance work and family life'. It is intended that the ten-year strategy will be implemented by local authorities through the framework provided by the Every Child Matters programme for reforming children's services.

Key fact: over three-quarters of respondents are expected to meet the goal of providing early years care and education for all three- and four-year-olds by September 2010, although this is dependent on government funding.



How we can help you

NFER's experienced and highly qualified early years team provides high-quality, independent research and evaluation. Clients are offered innovative and rigorous services with a vast amount of information available through published literature and data collected through research.

Early years research is conducted using a range of methods, from large-scale surveys to smaller in-depth work concentrating specifically on two broad areas – policy and initiatives and learning and teaching.

Contact and more information

This brochure contains just a selection of our work in this area. For more information about our early years work visit: www.nfer.ac.uk/early-years.

To ask about research that we can do for you and your organisation please contact: Caroline Sharp at c.sharp@nfer.ac.uk or Fiona Walker at f.walker@nfer.ac.uk

