

## **Daycare Trust response to Raising Standards, Improving Outcomes: Draft Statutory Guidance on the Early Years Outcomes Duty**

### **1 Does the statutory guidance make clear the roles and responsibilities of the local authority and its partners in meeting the requirements set out in sections 1-4 of the Childcare Act 2006?**

#### ***Neither agree or disagree***

Daycare Trust welcomes the focus on children's and parents views throughout the document. We also welcome the focus on integration at all levels, from top management levels downwards. There may be a need for summary guidance for different levels of working, eg managers, front line workers etc; for those who do not have the time to digest the full guidance document.

However we have some concerns that the actions may not be concrete enough to see positive outcomes in all areas, particularly if there are no pooled budgets to provide funding for joint working. There may be a need for further information for local authorities on how they should approach achieving the stated outcomes, and what sanctions there will be if local authorities are not successful in improving outcomes, or do not take forward the guidance.

The document also contains a lot of acronyms and jargon used throughout the document. Although many people using the document will be familiar with the language used, we recommend that a glossary at least be provided.

We also recommend that some good practice examples are included in the final document, to give further clarification on how the guidance should work in practice.

### **2 Is the guidance clear about what constitutes effective partnerships between local authorities, Strategic Health Authorities or Primary Care Trusts and Jobcentres Plus, and how these fit within wider local strategic partnerships?**

#### ***Neither agree or disagree***

These services are essential in providing a holistic service to children and families. As stated above, concrete targets and pooled budgets may be required to make the partnership working effective.

There also need to be effective partnerships with childcare settings (both those run by the local authority and private, voluntary and independent sector settings), schools and parents, all of whom are crucial in achieving improved outcomes for children.

Will there be consultation with parents and settings to decide what improved outcomes for children would mean to them? This could be a very valuable and important exercise.

What work will be done to train Jobcentre Plus about how to recognise quality childcare and prioritise child outcomes?

**3 Is the guidance sufficiently clear on how analysis of data and research can enable service delivery to be effective in targeting those most in need of services, and the best ways of delivering services to overcome obstacles?**

***Disagree***

Daycare Trust agrees that the research and guidance should build on what already exists, including the sufficiency assessments and the information included in paragraph 44. We would be particularly interested to know if the research in paragraph 44 is publicly available and where this information is available from.

While using existing research is important, this will also need to be supplemented with additional and new research to make sure evidence is up to date and covers any gaps.

Daycare Trust has some concerns about using EYFSP as a quantifiable and objective measure – as we understand, the EYFSP was not meant to be used in a quantifiable way, to compare children against each other, but to provide qualitative judgements about children’s progress. Therefore the development charts used in the EYFS should be used subjectively, taking into account the differences between young children, rather than being used to judge the differences between them and against a ‘norm’.

Although the EYFS is a holistic framework for children’s development, we are concerned that using the EYFSP will give, overall, an educational success indicator, and child outcomes must be seen as much broader than this.

We also believe that there can sometimes be a conflict between the different aims of the outcomes duty – particularly in terms of getting parents back to work vs ensuring the best outcomes for children. For some families it will be best for the parent to stay at home, and this should be an option for them. There needs to be real choice for parents in balancing work and family life.

**4 Does the guidance clearly set out the role of the local authority and the steps it should take to improve quality in the early years?**

***Disagree***

Daycare Trust does not think it is appropriate to state, as in paragraph 99, that 'early years is a sector in which quality improvement has not been pushed hard'. Many early years providers take quality improvement very seriously, but there has not been the investment or standards in place from the government to make this a reality in all settings. We do agree that there is a need for further emphasis on, and funding for, improving quality in early years settings, particularly with regard to staff qualifications, but do not think it is fair to say that early years settings do not strive for the highest possible quality.

In order to achieve quality across the board, as stated above there needs to be further investment in staff qualifications, training, and continual professional development, as well as to raise the pay of the early years workforce. This will need government intervention (in terms of Ofsted national standards) and financial investment. Many providers consider Ofsted inspection as their key quality measure, and until qualification levels expected by Ofsted are raised, it will be difficult to obtain quality improvement across the board.

We agree with the quality improvement steps set out in paragraph 104. This should also mention staff training and qualifications, and continual professional development.

It may not be appropriate to refer to the Transformation Fund, as this will end in 2008. This will need to at least be clarified in the guidance, with reference to the forthcoming Graduate Leader Fund and Quality, Outcomes and Inclusion funding block.

In addition, in paragraph 42 there is mention made of the co-location of services. According to the recent evaluation of sure start, co-location of services will need effective management and buy-in from all levels of the organisation if it is to work successfully.

**5 Is the guidance clear on how to meet the needs of those most at risk of poor outcomes for example from low income families, disabled children, BME groups, SEN etc?**

***Neither agree or disagree***

The guidance on these points is relatively clear, but could do with some further additions and clarifications. We agree that outreach will be key to these families.

Daycare Trust has been carrying out a series of focus groups with families as part of its Listening to Families project, funded by the DCSF, with additional funding from the London Development Agency to look at the needs of children and special educational needs.

Evidence from Listening to Families indicates that for BME families, outreach services, which help them make their first step into childcare, are crucial. Stay

and play sessions, play buses, cookery lessons and English lessons with childcare attached were important stepping stones to using 'formal' childcare. Outreach and face-to-face information was identified as the most appropriate way of providing information about childcare.

Different groups within the BME community will have different needs, and they must not be treated as a homogenous group. For example our Listening to Families work found that new migrants were particularly concerned about having staff that spoke their community language, so they could trust the provider, but second or third generation black families were more concerned that their culture was represented in the setting. Others felt strongly that English should be the spoken language at the setting and that it should be ethnically mixed.

For families of disabled children, as stated in the guidance, it is essential to ensure there are accessible places, and staff with appropriate training. Parents of disabled children are often more isolated and face additional barriers to using childcare. Daycare Trust will also shortly be carrying out some research with providers, funded by the LDA, on how they currently make their services accessible and how they could be supported to improve this further. When complete, this will be useful information for the DCSF.

Furthermore, In paragraph 94, accessibility should not only be seen in terms of premises, but all activities and policies the setting undertakes, for example staff training and trips.

The use of community organisations will, as the guidance states, be important to reach these groups. However, it should not be assumed that these groups will be able to do the work with no funding.

## **6 Does the guidance explain what local authorities should be doing to involve parents, and listen to children in the planning, commissioning and delivery of service for young children?**

### ***Agree***

Daycare Trust welcomes the emphasis on involving and listening to parents and children in the guidance. We particularly like paragraph 77 which talks about the importance of involving parents in their children's learning. This is shown through research to be important for children's outcomes. Involving parents in settings, as mentioned in paragraph 80, often points to high quality settings, as mentioned in the Ofsted review of the Foundation Stage.

As mentioned above, our Listening to Families project has involved focus groups and a questionnaire with parents. We found that parents were keen to be consulted and involved in discussions about their childcare options. One of the recommendations arising from the report was that parents should be more involved in their childcare provision, perhaps through parents' forums.

However, we believe that some changes and clarifications should be made to these sections. In paragraph 68, we believe that the first two bullet points, and the associated paragraphs, should be put in the opposite order. We believe the emphasis should be firstly on supporting parents in their parental role, and secondly about giving parents the choice to work.

With regard to work on Listening to children, Daycare Trust is just starting the second phase of its Listening to Families research, which will involve working with older children (age five upwards) to find out what they want from childcare services. In addition, Daycare Trust has a publication 'RAMPS: A framework for listening to children' which was written last year by Penny Lancaster, and is available on our website at [www.daycaretrust.org.uk](http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk).

**7 Is the guidance clear about how to include Private Voluntary and Independent providers in partnership working?**

***Disagree***

Daycare Trust believes that there could be more mention of how to include PVI providers in partnership working. For third sector organisations, local authorities must bear in mind that funding will be an issue. Full cost recovery, as outlined in the voluntary sector compact, will be required.

**8 Does the guidance demonstrate how statutory targets support the outcomes duty, and how local authorities will meet these targets?**

**9 Do you believe that local authorities and their partners require any further information than currently exists to support them in meeting the requirements set out in the guidance?**

***Agree***

Daycare Trust believes that the guidance is aspirational, but does not have sufficient guidance on how to achieve the desired outcomes in practice. In particular, we recommend that good practice examples throughout the text would be useful to put the guidance in context.

In addition, Paragraph 27, which explains the definition of parents, should be placed nearer the beginning of the document.

Please note that we found it quite difficult to respond to the consultation, as in many cases the questions do not seem to relate well to the different elements and sections of the consultation.

**Daycare Trust  
September 2007**