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Early Years Professional Status Impact Study – Final Report

Achieving outcomes in Essex

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March 2013



Essex County Council

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Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who supported this study.

Special thanks are given to:

- All the EYPs who agreed to take part in the interviews, focus groups and surveys and to their colleagues who took part in the surveys.
- Mpowernet for supporting the Phase 3 survey and to Anglia Ruskin IT services for providing fast access to supporting software.
- Essex County Council for their support in access to information and for funding the study.

1 Summary

This study took place between 2010 and 2013. It was commissioned and funded by Essex County Council in England. The study used a combination of methods, within a case study design, to assess whether Early Years Professionals (EYPs) in Essex are enabling outcomes in each of the five Every Child Matters (ECM) areas of being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic wellbeing.

Overall, the findings are extremely positive indicating that EYPs are enabling outcomes for children in all five areas. The evidence that EYPs are making an impact is supported by their work with parents and staff, especially in the area of economic wellbeing.

What is clear is that the Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) has given EYPs a real depth of knowledge and understanding of how to achieve outcomes, and the confidence to do this, but it is the access to continued professional development organised and provided by Essex County Council (ECC) Early Years and Childcare services that has given EYPs the tools to make this knowledge a reality. Many EYPs had already gained substantial experience in the field and hoped the EYPS would give them a new level of recognition. Many EYPs were surprised by what they learned from the programme to achieve EYPS and could see real benefits in terms of their reflective practice and confidence and ability to enact change. EYPs consider that they do not always get the recognition they deserve from schools, parents or other members of the inter-professional team, nor do they consider they are rewarded financially. Some EYPs have challenging roles which include their role as leader of practice, and their role as manager within the setting, and this impacts on their ability to achieve the requirements of contractual grants from the local authority. Those that do achieve the requirements may be burdened with additional responsibility in supporting other settings.

Recommendations:

EYPS is a very valuable mechanism for improving outcomes for children. Its imminent recognition as a status equivalent in academic terms to qualified teacher status in the Early Years sector is welcome (Truss, 2013). However the unique knowledge and skills of the EYP should be acknowledged as positively contributing to the holistic development of the child and the gains made through investment in EYPS should not be ignored.

The status of EYPS in the eyes of the public and other professionals needs to be addressed, so that there is greater awareness of the significant role these professionals have in improving outcomes for children. Changing the name of EYPS is likely to have a positive effect on status. Recognition through agreed pay and conditions for the sector is also required.

Investment in continuing professional development for EYPs by the local authority is extremely valuable for individual practitioners, for settings and for children and families and should be continued. The EYPs in this study benefit from substantial support from the local authority in which they work.

While this is not the norm in other local authorities, the study seems to indicate that such support is essential and should be considered at a national level.

This study suggests that EYPs lead practice not only by working directly with children, but also by working with parents, families and staff. Research is needed to determine the relative value of time spent with parents, families and staff in indirectly improving outcomes for children.

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

In 2004 the Effective Provision of Pre School Education (EPPE) Project (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2004) highlighted the importance of Early Years provision and implicated the educational level of those working in the sector as key in high quality provision. This national study was of a longitudinal design and compared those settings with specific Early Years provision to those without. Better educational and emotional development of the child was linked to the child's earlier engagement with Early Years provision and to accessing this provision before the child was aged 3 years. In 2006 the government invested £250 million in the professionalisation of the Early Years workforce, resulting in the creation of Early Years Professional Status (EYPS). Following this was the introduction of the graduate leader fund (GLF) in 2007, providing a further £305 million to support settings to employ graduates with EYPS. Its implementation has been overseen by local authorities who have supported settings to employ graduates or to develop existing staff to gain EYPS.

Since the introduction of EYPS the evidence base for improved quality and outcomes in settings with an EYP has started to develop. Specifically, in 2011 Hadfield, Jopling, Royle and Waller released the first findings from a three year longitudinal study, which showed the impact of EYPS on the individual in role in a range of early years settings. The study specifically examined aspects of professional development for the EYP, development of professional identity, and some of the challenges for EYPs of being change agents in their settings. The first report from this study also indicated a development of personal confidence in the individuals in role. Another study undertaken by Mathers, Ranns, Karemaker, Moody, Sylva, Graham and Siraj-Blatchford (2011) evaluating the implementation of the GLF showed clear evidence that the EYPS training gave practitioners the knowledge and confidence to challenge practice, insight into effective ways of implementation, insight into the organisational challenges (both positive and negative) and some insight into how improved outcomes in children are realised (Ranns, Newmark, Rahim and Penfold). Further to this Mathers et al. (2011) presented findings from the final three components of the GLF evaluation: the literature review, the impact study and the qualitative case studies. The impact study used three rating scales to assess quality of 238 settings visited at two time points: the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised Edition (ECERS-R), designed to assess provision for children from 30 months to 5 years; the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Extension (ECERS-E), designed to assess curricular provision for children

aged 3 to 5 years; and the Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R), Edition which assesses provision for children from birth to 30 months. Qualitative case studies in 12 settings were undertaken to complement the impact assessment by describing the nature of improvements made and identifying the levers, barriers and facilitators to quality improvement.

In 2012 Hadfield, Jopling, Needham, Waller, Coleyshaw, Emira and Royle published final findings from their longitudinal study of EYPS, which has provided insight into the mechanisms for change, assessed the impact of the EYP on process quality, identified when improvement in quality is best enabled and when impact has been maximised by embedded leadership.

The above studies have provided detailed understandings at a national level of the impact EYPs are having on quality and the facilitators, logistics and barriers for change. A recent review of early education and childcare qualifications by Nutbrown (2012) for the Minister for Children and Families acknowledged the work achieved by EYPs. Nutbrown further highlighted the importance of having highly qualified staff and even went as far as saying there was a need for Early Years staff to have a level 3 qualification as a minimum. Nutbrown also made the recommendation to offer EYPs a fast track to specialised Qualified Teacher Status in order to raise status of the Early Years and address the concerns raised by EYPs. Furthermore Nutbrown highlighted inconsistencies in the quality of EYP training between providers and made a number of recommendations on how to overcome these differences.

The evidence that graduate leaders or EYPs are contributing to the achievement of outcomes is still in development as most evidence has focused on the quality of the setting itself rather than the practice of the EYP. Evidence on a local scale is needed in order to determine whether the findings of Nutbrown have resonance with the Early Years workforce. The current study provides a comprehensive picture of how outcomes are being achieved in one county of England (Essex) and thus demonstrates the impact of EYPs in settings.

The current study, undertaken by Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) and funded and commissioned by Essex County Council (ECC), aimed to explore whether EYPs are making a difference to children and sought to determine any difference related to the five areas of outcomes specified in Every Child Matters (DfES, 2004, HM Government, 2004). Initial findings from Phase 1 of the study were on the whole positive and demonstrated that EYPs and the people they worked with considered the EYPs to positively impact on outcomes for children (Davis and Barry, 2013). This report from Phase 1 was based on a small sample. Data gathered in Phases 2 and 3 are now reported and thus this report highlights whether the findings from Phase 1 are reflective of wider EYP practice. The main focus has been to consider the evidence in support of the five Every Child Matters outcomes. The findings indicate the progress that has been made and provide a greater depth of understanding of how EYPs enable outcomes.

2.2 Context

The findings are assessed against the five Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes of: Being Healthy; Staying Safe; Enjoying and Achieving; Making a Positive Contribution; and Achieving Economic Wellbeing (DfES, 2004; HM Government; 2004, DCSF, 2008), which were originally designed to underpin the Early Years settings (Beckley, Elvidge & Hendry, 2009).

The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework (EYFS) was established in 2007 and is an extension of Every Child Matters, providing guidance and extension on key areas and specific actions. A new EYFS framework came into effect in September 2012 (DfE, 2012) and is still reflective of the original Every Child Matters outcomes.

Since 2006, the local authority in Essex has invested considerable resources into the professional development of the early years workforce. This included supporting individuals to undertake EYPS, and the organisation and provision of continuing professional development (CPD) programmes designed at the level of the EYP. The local authority also established an EYP network within the county. Essex County Council continues to fund and support these initiatives.

In 2009, a joint venture between ECC and ARU resulted in the development of a Masters degree for those members of the early years workforce who held EYPS, the MA Early Years Professional Practice. This is an applied MA, which includes modules on leadership, inclusive practice, pedagogy and developing research. Enrolment on this MA occurred from 2010 onwards and represents further CPD in leadership of early years.

2.2.1 Conventions

Participants often referred to the ECM or EYFS when providing examples of or discussing how outcomes were being achieved. Findings are therefore discussed in relation to both the ECM and the EYFS.

3 Methods

Data was collected through surveys, interviews and focus groups at different periods during 2010, 2011 and 2012. Full details are given below but are summarised in table 3.0.

Phase	Method	Sample
1	On line survey	52 responses
1	MA focus group	6
2	Face to face qualitative interviews	9
3	Follow up interviews/focus group	7 (of above)
3	Focus group new MA cohort	4
3	Desktop analysis of Ofsted reports	30 settings
3	On line survey	101 responses

Table 3.0 Summary of Methods

3.1 Phase 1 survey

A detailed account of the methods used in the Phase 1 survey, and the findings from this Phase, have been reported by Davis and Barry (2013). The survey gained responses from 17 EYPs and 35 early years practitioners who worked with the EYPs. The results indicated that EYPs were effective in making positive changes to practice which impacted across all five aspects of Every Child Matters outcomes. The results indicated that the EYP was effective in leading change, whether or not they were the manager of the setting. Their knowledge, experience and confidence was shown to be greater than that of the early years practitioners who did not have EYPS. These initial results informed the further data collection within Phase 1, 2 and 3 of the study.

3.2 Phase 1 MA focus group

Following completion of the EYPS, some practitioners continued their development and undertook the MA in Early Years Professional Practice. The first cohort of students were one of the first group of EYPs in England to undertake further post graduate training in early years professional practice. All students were invited to take part in a focus group to explore their experiences of achieving EYPS and to gain a deeper understanding of how they were enabling outcomes. Six students, on the Masters degree agreed to take part in this focus group.

The focus group was recorded and transcribed verbatim. The findings were later synthesised under the five Every Child Matters outcomes along with the phase 2 interviews.

3.3 Phase 2 Interviews

Participants in the Phase 1 survey who had expressed an interest in being interviewed were contacted. Qualitative semi-structured interviews took place with EYP practitioners either in settings or at Anglia Ruskin University and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Summaries of each were then prepared and organised into themes. These themes were informed by the original interview guide and by any additional themes that appeared in the data, for example, the role of the local authority CPD programmes and EYP networks in enabling EYPs, and the impact of CPD on reflective practice. All summaries were then organised under headings representing the same themes.

The data were examined in detail for evidence of achieving the five Every Child Matters outcomes. Content analysis was also carried out on the data to gain insight into the magnitude of experiences.

Original audio and written transcripts were referred to throughout the process to ensure interpretations were accurate and reflected the emphasis and experience expressed by participants.

3.3.1 Sample, Phase 2 interviews

There were nine interviews made up of participants from a mixture of day nurseries (4) pre-schools (4) and a Children’s Centre.

3.4 Review of Ofsted reports

To determine whether the EYP was acknowledged or made an impact on ratings, a selection of Ofsted reports were assessed at two time points once before 2007 or before EYPS had been achieved and once after EYPS had been achieved or the EYFS had been introduced. A comprehensive list of settings and childminders with an Ofsted report was accessed from the 2012 inspection data (as of March 2012). Achievement of outcomes was assessed in terms of Ofsted scoring and qualitative analysis of Ofsted inspector reports. Qualitative analysis involved systematic assessment of documents for affirmative comments, which indicated the EYP was the facilitator of impact.

3.4.1 Sample Phase 3 - Ofsted Reports

Ofsted reports from 30 settings, including 13 childminders were assessed in more detail for evidence of outcomes being achieved as a result of EYPS. Eight of the settings were purposefully selected based on knowledge that at least one member of staff had EYPS (as took part in Phase 2 interviews) and a random sample was selected for the other settings and the childminders. Extra settings were included due to the limited provision of some settings (after school, or low numbers of 0-5/0-3 on the roll).

Table 3.4 below shows that there were 30 reports in the ‘before’ period and 21 in the ‘after period. Where there was only one report available, the ability to assess before and after was reduced. There was at least one report for each childminder and each setting but there was no ‘before’ report for six settings and one childminder, there was no ‘after’ report for three settings and six childminders; one childminder and two settings had two reports in the ‘before’ period and one setting had two reports in the ‘after’ period.

		Before ¹	After ²	Total
Setting	N	17	15	32
	%	57	71	63
Childminder	N	13	6	19
	%	43	29	37
Total Settings	N	30	21	51
	%	100	100	100
¹ Before = before or soon after EYFS introduction (2006-2008)				
² After = after EYFS had taken effect or EYPS had been achieved (2009/10-2012) See text for explanation				

Table 3.4 Type of setting by number of reports before and after EYPS/EYFS

3.5 Phase 3 Follow up focus group, interviews and MA focus group.

In Phase 3, due to availability of EYPs it was not possible to carry out face to face interviews with all the Phase 2 cohort so a number of methods were used. Four of the EYPs took part in a focus group, two took part in a telephone interview and one took part in a face to face interview. Each interview lasted for approximately 45 minutes and was recorded and transcribed verbatim. The focus group and follow up interviews intended to provide the research with new information about the development of the role and any progress made a year after the original interviews.

Following initial analysis the findings were shared with participants, participants were asked to validate the interpretations made by the researcher and where possible provide indications of whether there were any developments in terms of demonstrating outcomes

A focus group was also arranged with EYPs currently in the first or second year of the Masters in Early Years Professional practice. Only four MA students were able to attend, all of which were in the first year. Current third year students took part in a focus group during phase 1.

3.5.1 Sample for follow up interviews and focus groups

- 2 Telephone Interviews, 1 face to face interview
- 2 Group Interview/ focus groups (4 in follow up and 4 in new MA cohort, all female)

3.6 Phase 3 Questionnaires

Follow up surveys were prepared based on the initial surveys undertaken at the beginning of this three year study (Davis and Barry, 2013). The survey was in two forms, and administered to existing EYPs and those who were currently on EYP programmes to become an EYP. These surveys followed the same methodology as in Phase 1. The surveys were created in Survey Monkey and sent via an email link. The survey in this Phase was not sent to those who worked with EYPs.

The original Phase 1 survey included a number of open ended questions, the responses to which were used to create response categories for the current survey, specifically; the setting in which they worked and the leadership skills demonstrated by EYPs. Questions on 'how' outcomes might be achieved were kept as open questions. A few additional questions were added, for example, whether an EYP inspired them to complete the course (current students). Full details of the changes made can be seen in appendix A.

The sample of current students was accessed via Mpowernet, the unit which recruits students to the EYP programme, and the sample for those who had completed EYPS was gained from Alumni records. Both samples were checked for duplications and errors, any students already involved in the focus groups or interviews were removed from the sample. In total 184 EYPs and 97 students currently on the EYPS course were sent the survey. There were 101 responses, 47 were those who had completed the EYPS and 54 were currently on the EYPS course.

Full findings from the Phase 3 surveys were compared to findings from the Phase 1 survey, a summary of the main questions can be found in Appendix B. Where appropriate, findings are reported in the detailed findings section of this report.

3.7 Ethical approval

This was obtained through the university ethics procedure at the commencement of the study in 2010. The participant information sheets and invitations to participate clearly stated that there was no obligation to take part, and that participants were free to withdraw at any time. Participants were advised that their decision whether or not to take part was completely unrelated to any programme of study the participant may undertake within the University. No identifiable risks to participants or researcher were foreseen. All data were coded so that no data could be attributed to participants and were saved in password protected files. Ethical guidelines from the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) were followed.

4 Detailed Findings

The data from Phase 2 and 3 represent the majority of findings presented in this report. There are some references to the Phase 1 MA focus group and some comparisons to the Phase 1 survey.

4.1 Measuring Outcomes

The EYPs in this study generally viewed the quantitative measurement of outcomes as a challenge. This is because sometimes they could not find tangible measures.

"That's what I'm trying hard to do. The Children's Centres, it's all about measurement and achieving outcomes, so yes, I'm trying very hard to measure that...it's all Children Centre, generally it's soft outcomes, isn't it?" (Phase 2 interview)

"That's very hard, coz I was trying to think about how I would show to you that things are improving. There's nothing really (sighs) measurable there" (Phase 2 interview)

The huge scale of the changes and the impact that they were having on a larger scale were expressed by some EYP participants.

"I think it's very hard because if you look at a single setting for one day, how many times you effect those outcomes for children is huge ...I think concrete examples is really hard cause ...you could list hundreds of them really, everything that you do, every day that children do..." (Phase 3 MA EYPP focus group)

"I feel like each step I've made it's had an impact on more children ...what I put in place ...it's almost like that pebble effect isn't it, you drop a pebble and it's the ripples..." (Phase 3 MA EYPP focus group)

This was partly due to viewing outcomes as longer term and thus a difficulty in determining a cut off point.

"what nurseries do, will say, 'well how does that impact on their reception year' and actually we should be saying, how does that impact on them as a thirty year old (p4: as a thirty yeh yeh) when they're parenting themselves" (Phase 3 MA EYPP)

Some participants could not be sure that the changes they brought about were directly as a result of becoming an EYP and thus could not be sure that it was the EYPS that improved outcomes.

"I signed up ...we've got an allotment and we go over there (pause), but to be fair, whether I would have done that with or without the EYP status, you know ...it's impossible to say" (Phase 2 Interview)

"you see it's so hard, so hard to measure, would I, would I still have that knowledge if I'd say done the degree, done the foundation degree, probably not, erm because I've learnt so much more since then, erm how you would measure that" (Phase 3 follow up interview)

Despite these initial reactions there were some suggestions of how outcomes could be measured and demonstrated long term. There was also an indication that the EYPs were making an impact on children which had benefits for their future lives.

"I've never done research, but a lot of them get to the grammar schools. A lot of them do well in the comprehensives. I could have kept a database and I could know where all my children are, couldn't I?" (Phase 2 interview)

"yes schools have fed back that the children from our setting settle into school and the learning environment much easier" (Phase 3 follow up)

There were powerful examples of how outcomes were being achieved in each of the Every Child Matters outcomes, which are discussed further in section 4.3.

One way practitioners considered they could evidence the impact they were having was from Ofsted Inspections. Some EYPs stated that the setting got a better Ofsted report (outstanding in their Ofsted inspection) because of their EYP status or changes they made.

"Yeah, we got 'outstanding' for our Ofsted and I really think partly that is because of my EYP" (Phase 2 interview)

When practitioners faced difficulties in implementing changes due to staff knowledge and understanding they also related the Ofsted outcome of the setting to this.

"She said 'what we want is the children to have a nice time!' And I said 'we need more than that!' and that's why and I put my hand up to it, probably the only one in this room, we got a good and not an outstanding in our last one" (Phase 3 Follow up focus group)

4.2 Ofsted measurement

An inspection of Ofsted reports was undertaken to assess whether EYPs were indeed making an impact in the way the participants had reported and whether the role of an EYP was acknowledged in Ofsted reports. Closer inspection of the selected case study settings and a selection of other settings revealed a clear distinction between settings known to have an EYP at the time of the last inspection and settings without an EYP.

Generally, settings with an EYP received 'good' or 'outstanding' for each of the ECM outcomes. Interestingly the settings with an EYP did not receive any satisfactory ratings.

Figure 4.2a shows that all of the settings with an EYP achieved 'outstanding' or 'good' for the staying safe outcome, with the majority (n=6) achieving outstanding for this outcome compared to only one of the settings without an EYP.

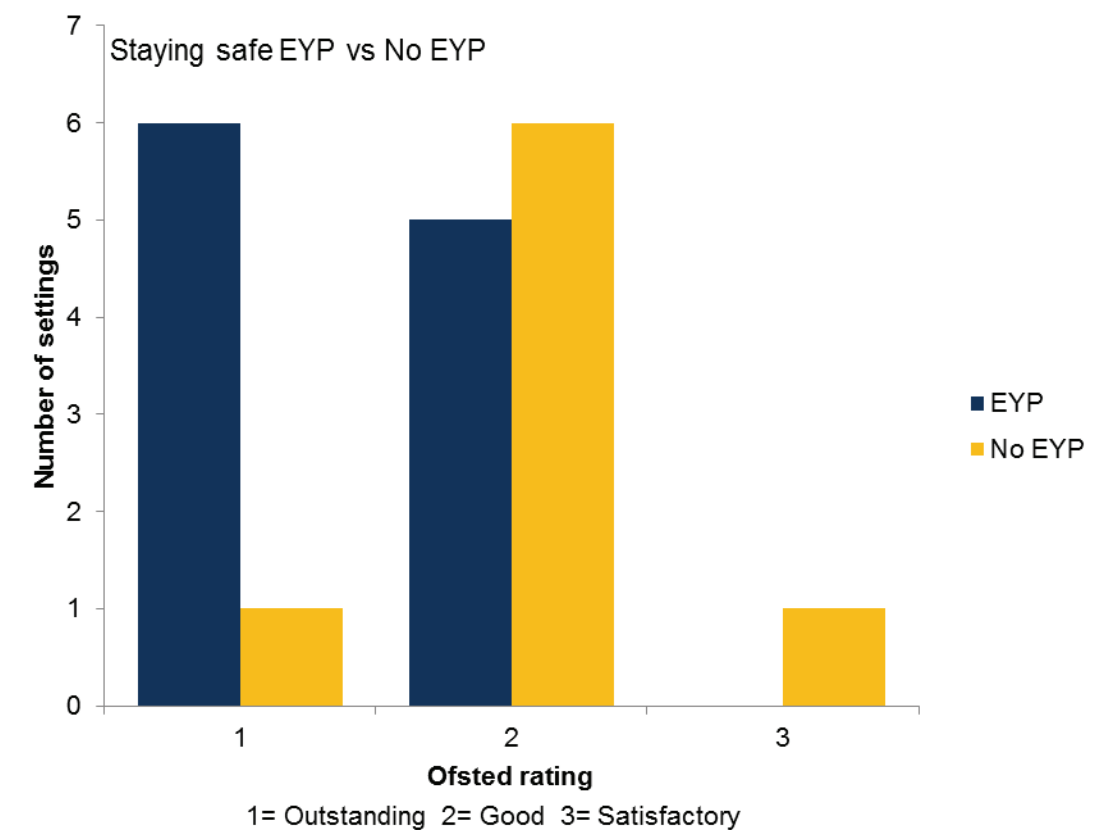


Figure 4.2a Staying Safe

Figure 4.2b below shows that all of the settings with an EYP achieved 'outstanding' or 'good' for the staying healthy outcome, with the majority (n=7) achieving outstanding for this outcome compared to only one of the settings without an EYP

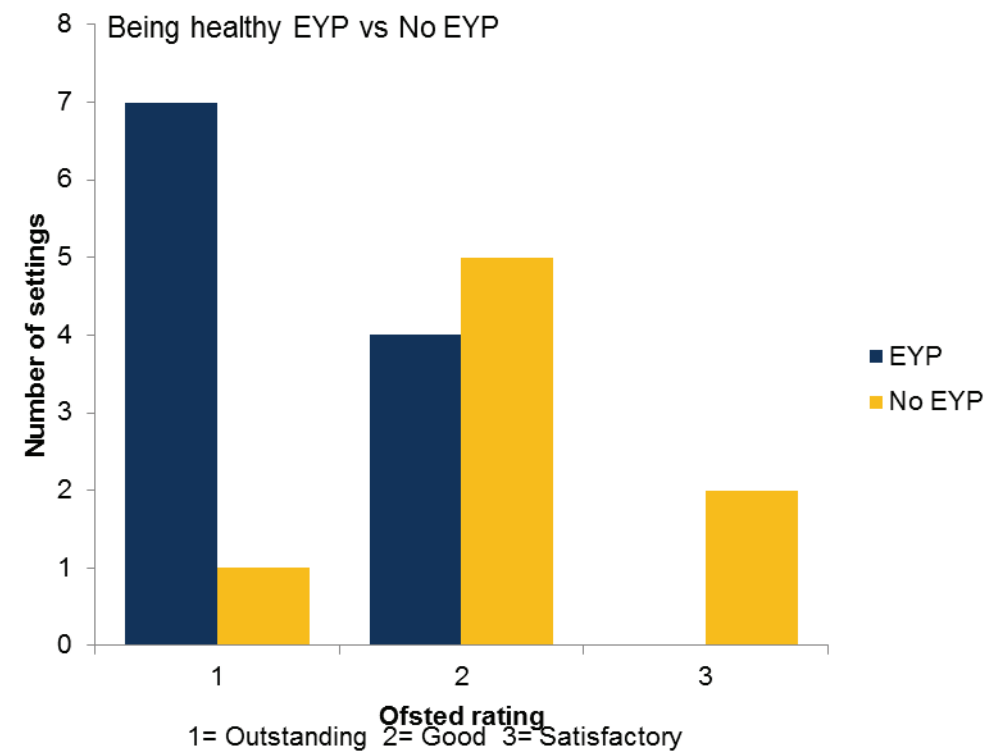


Figure 4.2b Being Healthy

Figure 4.2c below shows that all of the settings with an EYP achieved 'outstanding' or 'good' for the enjoying and achieving outcomes, with the majority (n=6) achieving outstanding for this outcome compared to only two of the settings without an EYP.

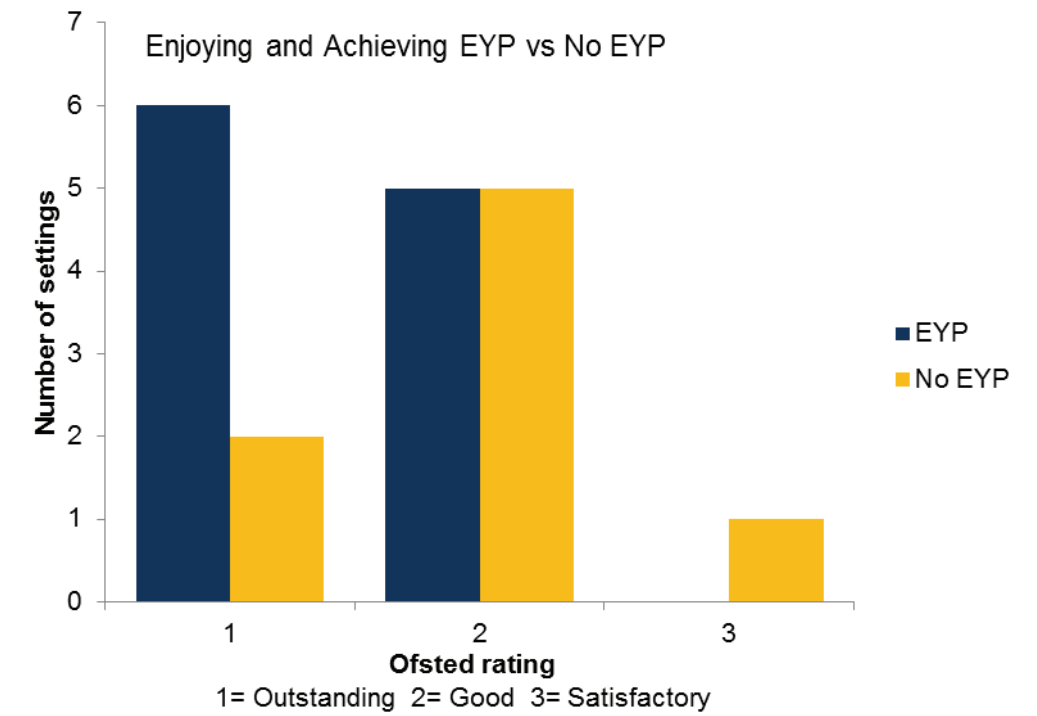


Figure 4.2c Enjoying and Achieving

Figure 4.2d below shows that all of the settings with an EYP achieved 'outstanding' or 'good' for the making a positive contribution outcome, with the majority (n=7) achieving outstanding for this outcome compared to only one of the settings without an EYP.

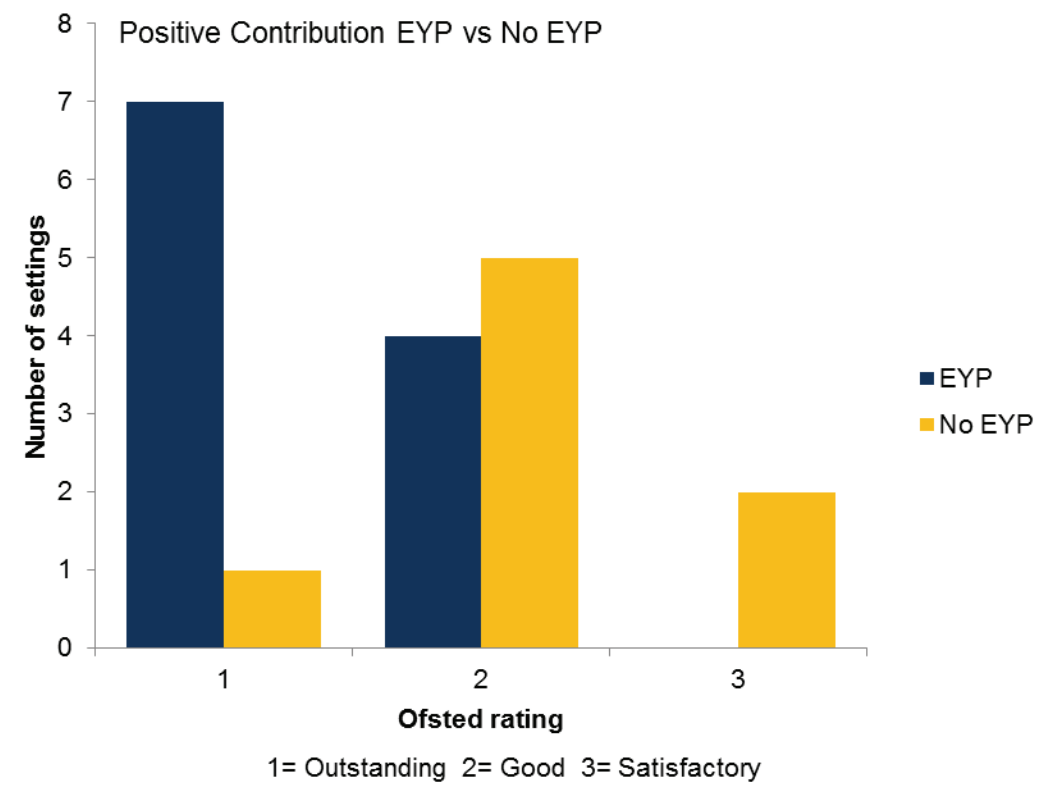


Figure 4.2d Positive Contribution

Figure 4.2e below shows that all of the settings with an EYP achieved 'outstanding' or 'good' for the achieving economic wellbeing outcome, with the majority (n=7) achieving outstanding for this outcome compared to only two of the settings without an EYP.

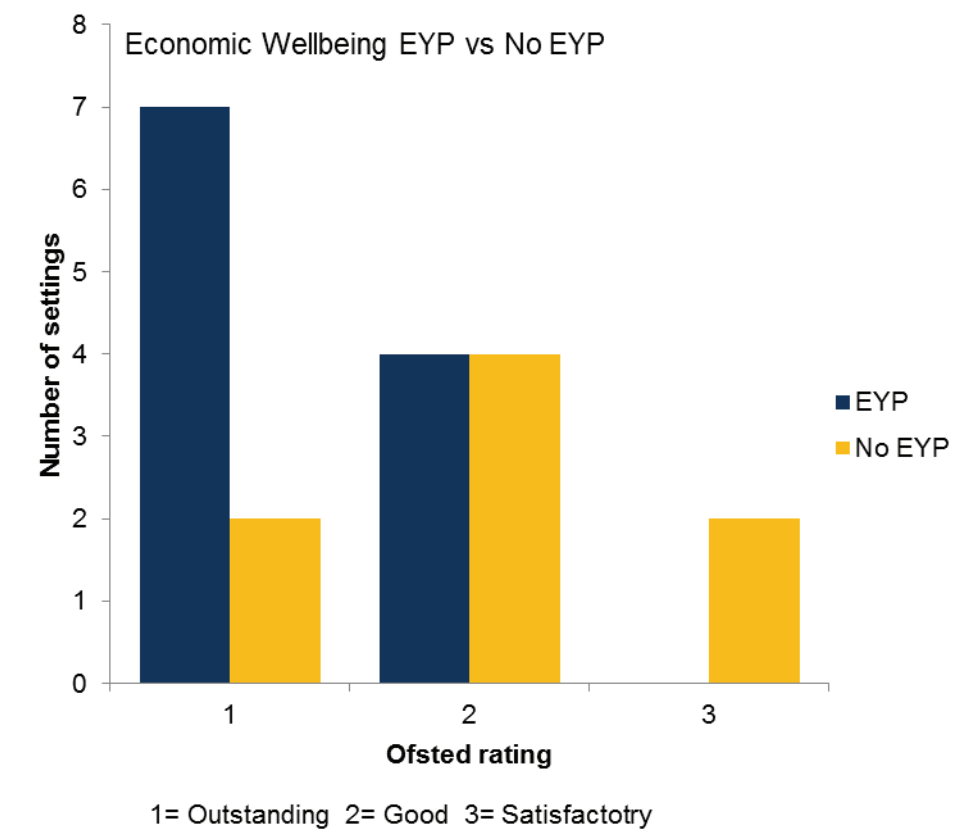


Figure 4.2e Economic Wellbeing

In general for all the settings assessed further, outcomes were higher when inspection had been completed in the period after EYPS had been achieved or EYFS implemented. For example, Figure 4.2f clearly shows that before EYPS/EYFS 27% of the assessed settings/childminders received outstanding for the economic wellbeing outcome. This rose to 48% after the achievement of EYPS/implementation of EYFS.

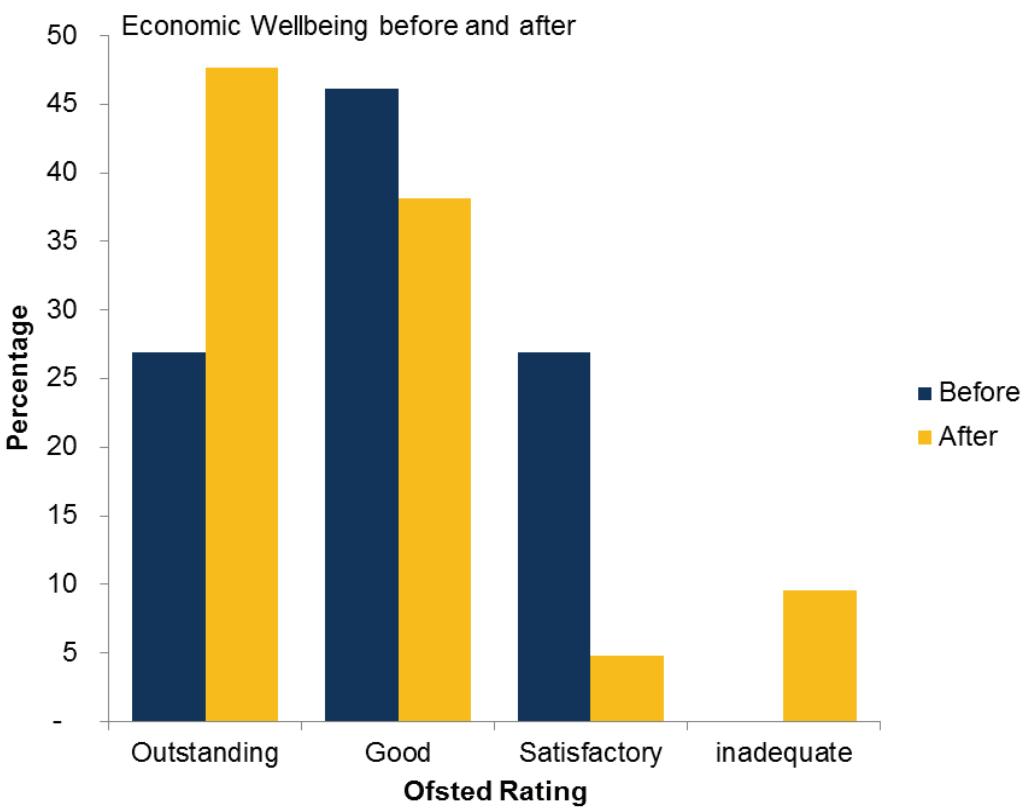


Figure 4.2f Economic Wellbeing before and after EYFS/EYPS

When looking for evidence to implicate practitioner education level in the level of achievement there was little reference to the EYPS or to EYPs. This may indicate that Ofsted inspectors were not aware of the EYP or that they did not see their role as significant.

The following comments from EYPs indicate that this was sometimes the case.

“But even in my inspection recently, OFSTED weren’t interested” (Phase 1 MA EYPP focus group)

“in a staff meeting in front of her teachers, she said to one of my other members of staff, who isn’t EYP erm, ‘well you know soon the children will be coming up to proper school and being taught by real teachers’...and she’s an NHMI inspector, she’s Ofsted, she oversees Ofsted inspectors and she had that opinion and when I spoke to her about it afterwards she said oh it’s just a status that they’re trying to give people ...” (Phase 3 follow up)

Despite this there was clear evidence that effective utilization of the EYFS (which should be led by EYPs where there was one) did result in improved outcomes and that Ofsted assessed settings by how well they addressed the EYFS.

For example, Ofsted made the following observations in settings that achieved ‘Outstanding’ the same was true for childminders that achieved ‘outstanding’.

“Staff have embraced the Early Years Foundation Stage with enthusiasm...”

“Children are extremely well cared for by the friendly, reassuring childminder who effectively uses her excellent knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework to provide an exciting range of meaningful play experiences which significantly support each child in reaching their full potential...”

Similarly when Ofsted observed inadequate provision in settings this was related to poor implementation of the EYFS.

“Children’s welfare, learning and development needs are not being effectively met as the childminder demonstrates limited understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage”

4.3 Understanding how to achieve outcomes

When asked whether EYPs made a difference to the achievement of outcomes, survey responses from nearly all practitioners were positive. There was stronger agreement between current EYPS students for the outcomes ‘Make a positive contribution’ and ‘Enjoy and achieve’, and stronger agreement for those who had achieved EYPS on the outcomes ‘staying safe’ and ‘enjoy and achieve’.

As can be seen in figure 4.3, there was strongest agreement overall for ‘Enjoy and achieve’ at above 90% for both current and completed students. The amount of agreement was consistent but lower for ‘achieving economic wellbeing’ at approximately 82%.

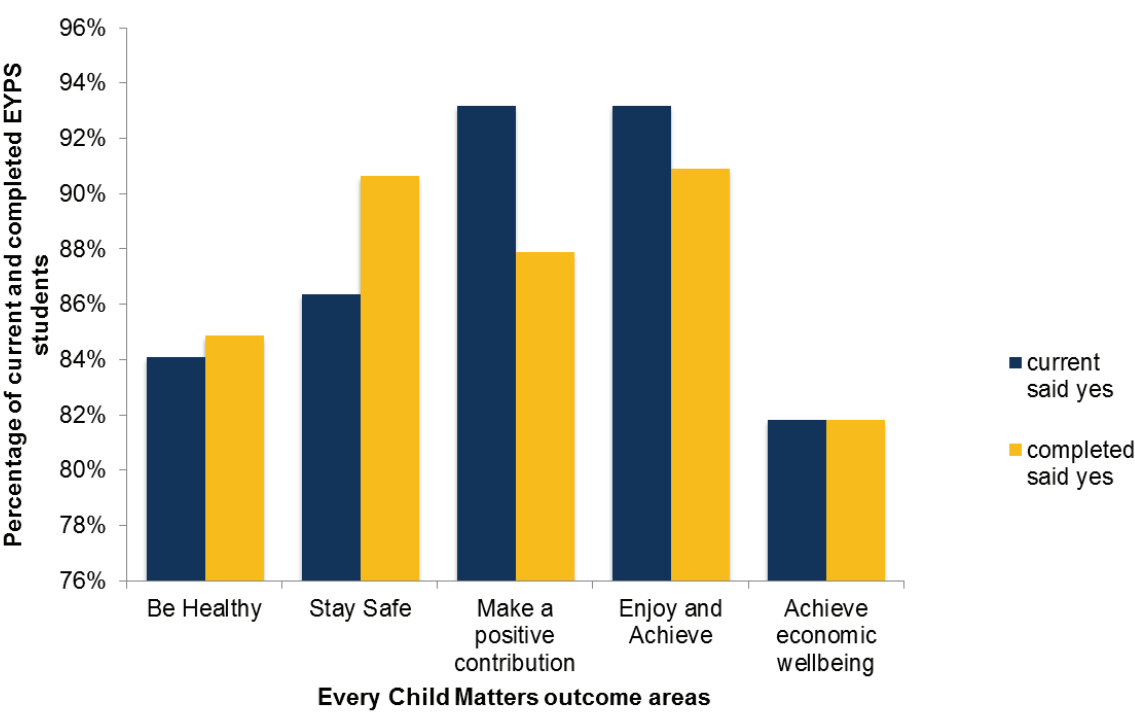


Figure 4.3 EYP views of whether they could achieve outcomes

Achievement of outcomes was clearly linked to new or extended knowledge by many EYPs and those training to be EYPs.

“Having a greater understanding of how a range of practice can support children to achieve outcomes (Phase 3 survey)

“making sure that we are aware of, taking into consideration, child developmental theory and the planes of development and being able to put the children in a suitable space for their developmental plane” (Phase 3 follow up focus group)

“ I suppose erm my knowledge as an EYP erm has supported those children that are perhaps most in need (int: ok) erm so we’ve got a lot of children erm on the child protection register, we’ve got a lot of children with special education needs (int: hm mm) so I suppose my experience, my knowledge and understanding that I’ve gained over the years has definitely had a positive impact in supporting children and their families and the other practitioners ... (Phase 3 follow up)”

4.3.1 CPD - having the right tools

It was clear that the EYPS had given EYPs the knowledge, confidence and understanding to start making changes in their settings. However, what became overwhelmingly clear throughout the study was that in order to maintain, build and reflect on this understanding EYPs needed to access ongoing continued professional development (CPD). Furthermore it was the access to CPD that enabled them to try new things and that the EYPS alone was not sufficient.

“She did two terms of teaching them different ball skills and that kind of thing, which was great, but I would only have been able to do that because of the funding that was there” (Phase2 interview)

“I’ve implemented some great stuff like ‘cosy dens’, erm from communication friendly spaces, we.. there was a routine from er xxx (named training provider) that I’ve implemented erm within the setting as well that’s worked particularly well erm so it’s really been a case of that networking after becoming an EYP has been invaluable” (Phase 3, follow up)

It was also clear that it was important for EYPs to access CPD at the right level so that they could share their experiences.

“ EYP enables me to get that CPD at that level” (Phase 2 interview)

“well it’s the drive, the moti, everybody in the room has some serious underpinning, developmental knowledge about children and how to improve quality and how to really reflect on practice, motivate and (pause) flying a flag as it were“ (Phase 3 follow up)

“...it opened my eyes and I’ve been on lots of networking courses with other EYPs, so you get ideas; you also see their problems as well...” (Phase 2 interview)

Thus the provision of higher level CPD by ECC was both valued and meaningful and impacted positively on leadership of practice. The sharing and networking was also essential for keeping up to date with what was going on, for reflection, and for validating the EYPs own understanding. The local authority organised and supported a formal EYP network, which was clearly valuable, but networking also occurred informally, for example, attending CPD events acted as a support network for some participants.

“It’s like you’re standing on quicksand, it’s sort of always moving so you do have to keep really, really up to date with what’s going on” (Phase 2 interview)

“So that talking with other professionals, sharing ideas, because that’s another good thing about these CPD courses, you mix with other people from other settings and you get ideas of good practice and you hear what doesn’t work as well” (Phase 2 interview)

A number of courses were mentioned on more than one occasion and it was obvious that EYPs were grateful for the opportunities provided to them by ECC, some of which had included exploring settings overseas.

“I think the biggest impact in it was only as an EYP that I was able to go to Northern Italy. XXXX funded that. I think the biggest impact was...going there...to be honest, but that was as I say...I couldn’t have done that if I hadn’t been an EYP, so in that sense, it...impacted...” (Phase 2 interview)

“get it out, leave it out’ (CPD) that was a significant shift , its about challenging originally how you learn” (Phase 3 follow up, explaining a change to the availability of activities in the setting)

“I know that I am where I am today erm with my EYP and this masters because of the opportunity Essex have provided (P3mm). You know going to Italy, going to Sweden, going to xxxx (company named), going to the community paid things” (Phase 3 MA EYPP)

Of particular note were providers of developmental movement play and other movement play techniques, the Forest School training and persona doll training. For example, practitioners could clearly link theory to practice when discussing developmental movement play.

“The whole idea of children needing movement, which I knew anyway, but how can we facilitate moving indoors as well as outdoors? And we came to the conclusion that the course is brilliantly put together. You have two days, then you have a month off, where you’ve got to go and do some research and look at your practice. Then you’ve got another two days and then you’ve got a year to put this action research into place” (Phase 2 interview)

“I think everybody in the world should have XXXX (provider of developmental movement play) training (laughs). Because it makes you feel so good about yourself and you’re practicing what you’re going to do, so it makes you understand it from the inside out. Plus there’s all the theory to back it up.” (Phase 2 interview)

Another practitioner provides a powerful example of how the persona doll training really pushed the boundaries as well as achieving surprising outcomes in a challenging and sensitive situation.

I did the persona doll training ... and I loved it, I absolutely loved it, ... and a completely by mistake we had a little girl in one of the settings that has ... she has real sleep issues ... and then suddenly ‘XXX (name of doll)’ the persona doll came into the classroom for a completely different reason, ..and just suddenly, completely out of the blue she started talking about what happens at night ... and that was a really big journey for me to make because it’s so contradictory to a lot of the perceptions of Montessori. Well actually since doing that I’ve read and I think actually it’s misinterpretation rather than you know, ... (Phase 3 MA EYPP)

There was some evidence to suggest that when non EYPs were able to attend EYP CPD it was easier to implement changes.

“...(p4) yeh and that really really worked because both of us took it back (p3) yes so your then both on fire” (Phase 3 follow up)

“...a couple of times, erm it’s been possible for my deputy who’s not EYP to engage in some of the EYP training ‘cause there’s been space or you know however it’s worked and she’s gone on a couple of those days and that is the catalyst for her to doing her Early Years degree because in the difference in quality, of individuals within the room... (int: yeh)” phase 3 follow up

There was also evidence that if the EYP status and opportunities to network were withdrawn then people would go back to the old ways of doing things. Networking appeared to reinforce confidence and the motivation for improvement.

“If the EYP was to go, I think that then you would go back into everybody’s own boxes, I think divergence of practice would become greater and I think there wouldn’t be that common drive to improve outcomes for children.” (Phase 2 interview)

“the problem we have, or they have is actually keeping them in place, you know you have all these ideas and move things on and then suddenly you find you know actually ‘why aren’t we doing that anymore’ ” (Phase 3 follow up)

Some EYPs considered that they benefited from the additional leadership skills training they had been able to access through CPD, and the leadership development which was part of the MA programme (especially when not in a management position). This finding was supported by current MA students who had already benefitted from the leadership module available on the MA.

(PD) *“I think a couple of things are impacting straight away... The first one we did, that leadership one we did, and that keyed straight into the way that we organised our work”* (PB) *“I would agree with that... whatever you do it’s the vision, and it’s NOT about your vision, it’s about the workplace’s vision, it’s about the people in the staff having a vision of what they want and you might be supporting why they might want that vision, but it’s their ownership of that vision and how you’re going to support them to achieve their vision is the way that changed me.”*

(Phase 1 MA EYPP focus group)

“yeh I think it’s made us reflect more, I mean obviously being a leader and a manager in the setting anyway but because this first module has been about leadership and management it’s sort of, even now I’m thinking about how I do things in the nursery rather than thinking well actually this is how it’s got to be done, and it’s my way or the high way type of thing, I, I’m rethinking things a lot more now .” (Phase 3 MA EYPP)

“ what’s interesting for me doing this first module is making me, cause it’s making me stop, it’s giving me the time, this day out once a week, is making me reflect and time out talking to colleagues so I know that I’m benefitting from being here, whilst it’s hard being out of the work place for a day, actually it’s about having that time again reflecting on what’s happening ... I’m becoming a better leader and manager as a result of it”. (Phase 3 MA EYPP, p4)

4.4 Evidence for the Every Child Matters Outcomes

Evidence for each of the five ECM outcomes is presented below with examples of how outcomes were being achieved. Generally the evidence for achievement of outcomes was through engagement with parents, staff, schools and partners, this was most convincing for achievement of economic wellbeing.

4.4.1 Being Healthy

When asked to provide examples of how they were enabling, or could enable, children to be healthy, practitioners often spoke about healthy eating , physical exercise, movement play and outdoor activities.

“We have actually just got permission to put some raised flower beds out there and / or vegetable plots and the logs... so yes I’ve been much more proactive in the outdoor- bought lots of outdoor equipment... we’ve got a whole range of different outside stuff, so yes, that’s probably the main thing that’s come out” (Phase 2 interview)

“Yes, definitely as of ‘Being Healthy’, (developmental movement play) is that” (Phase 2 interview)

“Promoting outdoors and encouraging healthy eating by being a role model during snack and lunch times” (Phase 3 survey)

The findings are generally consistent with Phase 1 in that they demonstrate how EYPs are supporting children to be healthy. However, there was some difference in opinion as to whether this was due to them becoming an EYP.

“Being Healthy, you know there’s the bowl, there’s all the fruit there, there’s the healthy snack so, but to be honest, you’re doing that anyway” (Phase 2 interview, int 11)

“you could have walked in here this morning and seen a big plastic sheet on the floor and babies rolling around in paint. I don’t think that was happening in my settings before 2007 in such a big way...” (Phase 2 interview)

4.4.2 Staying safe

As with the being healthy outcome, EYPs could not always implicate the EYPS in the achievement of the staying safe outcome as they considered much of the groundwork to already be in place. Despite this view, there were powerful examples of how the EYP had improved safety as a result of changes they had made. In the Phase 3 survey many EYPs said staying safe could be achieved if risk assessments, safeguarding legislation and policies and procedures were in place. The examples given below from the surveys and interviews demonstrate that EYPs have a holistic understanding of how to achieve this, which go further than simply following procedures. These findings are similar to the Phase 1 findings and thus provide further support for this outcome.

For example, the introduction of more outdoor play actually reduced the number of accidents.

“ the accident book was just constantly out, because they used to have a large muscle activity right at the end of the hall... there is now an outdoors area and I’d said to the team, ‘Well that is your large muscle play’ ” (Phase 2 interview)

There was an indication that EYPs would enable this outcome by encouraging children to be aware of their surroundings and to create rules themselves.

“...ensure that they are given opportunities to make informed choices so that they are able to build resilience and confidence in themselves. Take them out on trips and encourage them to contribute to rules for ensuring that they are safe. Equally they should contribute to rules within the setting and pictorial displays to relay the rules should also be put up...”
(Phase 3 survey respondent)

There was also an indication that there was increased sharing of information between the setting and other people involved in their care which has consequences for safeguarding.

“We’ve always had links with the primary schools, but we’re now fostering more links with the childminders and the other people that look after them as well so, ...” (Phase 2 interview)

Strategies to improve behaviour also helped children to be safer.

“we’ve got one particular child who has behavioural issues and I went on a behavioural course and changed the whole (pause)...er, the whole way of thinking about how he was dealt with; introduced new rules, behaviour goals, rules song... this is all tied up with safe, because he wasn’t safe, he was a loose cannon and the other children weren’t safe” (Phase 2 interview)

4.4.3 Enjoying and achieving

Data for this outcome indicated that it was EYPS which had influenced the EYP to make changes. There were many indications that children were enjoying and achieving.

“they’re engrossed, they’re engaged you know and I think you can measure it that way” (Phase 2 interview)

“It’s almost as if you can measure the happiness as it were and the engagement” (Phase 2 interview)

“you know they’re encouraged to learn, they’re excited to learn” (Phase 3 follow up)

And examples of how this was being measured/monitored.

“...you look at the children’s learning journals and see that they’re enjoying and achieving” (Phase 2 interview)

When asked how children were able to enjoy and achieve practitioners indicated that speaking and listening to what children wanted and extending children’s learning was essential for enabling children to enjoy and achieve. The evidence is strong and provides further support for the findings from Phase 1.

“Started a children’s choice folder... we’re taking pictures of all the resources so that...I noticed they planned a whole week with the same activities, so I noticed had it Monday, had it Tuesday, by Wednesday...they’re bored... and I’ve actually put that on the planning” (Phase 2 interview)

“For the first half-hour of the session, we are all in the same place together, so that they find their own level as they come in. Then we have what we call ‘Topsy-Turvy’, where they can choose two of the three areas; they can go outside or in the front hall and then we stop for snack and then they can go outside and in the back hall and that is our session.” (Phase 2 interview)

“to follow the children’s interests, to plan for them using these interests, to ensure they move through their next steps using a balance of adult led and child initiated activities” (Phase 3 survey)

“an EYP will listen and consider what the children enjoy and implement props, materials and equipment to support and develop children’s learning experiences” (Phase 3 survey)

There was also an indication that the introduction of more outdoor play and outdoor activities improved children’s abilities to enjoy and achieve.

“I think it has a big effect on certain children to be able to go out. They tend to play in a different way outside. It is much better” (Phase 2 interview)

“ We went into the forest and we did some of these things and it was fabulous and again, reiterated to me the need to get out, to use our park, to...what you could do when you got to the park, that kind of thing. That was...that was fantastic” (Phase 2 interview)

As with the outcome of staying safe, managing behaviour had consequences for children’s ability to enjoy and achieve:

“He’s enjoying more, he’s certainly achieving more, because he’s more settled. I think now he’s got better boundaries here. He was very wobbly.” (Phase 2 interview)

4.4.4 Making a positive contribution

Despite the lower percentage of EYPs believing they could make an impact on this outcome it is clear that the opportunity to make a positive contribution had increased because of new practice introduced by the EYP. This new practice often involved innovative ways of building on existing provision and activities by developing child initiated activities through schema building and sustained shared thinking. There is further support for this outcome, which adds to the findings from Phase 1.

“we started with junk modelling, because we were doing 3D shapes and structures and because I happened to ask a question and someone said, “Would this be a good one?” and it was a cardboard box and I said (whispers) “Shall we have a look?” and got a bowl of water and that went soggy and then we looked in the junk box to see what else we could find and it went on from there, that kind of thing” (Phase 2 interview)

“...the children were fitting large bricks together to make a giant’s house and as an EYP and I can only think that this has happened as a result, I was thinking, ‘How can I scaffold that? How can I take it further?’ So I got out clipboards and said, ‘Why don’t we make a sign saying ‘No baddies?’” and they all went off writing” (Phase 2 Interview)

Practitioners most commonly reported improved confidence in the children as a result of having child initiated activities.

“so by working with the children and parents you can definitely see, you know the children’s confidence coming along and trying stuff” (Phase 3 MA EYPP)

“The children can then look at and reflect on what they have done themselves seeing the children’s involvement in that process... Before, there was no involvement” (Phase 2 interview)

“I think the children are more confident. I think their confidence comes through, even the quiet ones are quietly confident to when they first came...” (Phase 2 interview)

“so I think we have made a lot of choices, like in the less adult-directed, more child-initiated, erm (pause). I think we’ve made quite a big difference there” (Phase 3 follow up)

In some cases EYPs made changes to the whole provision so that children could develop in an environment suitable for their developmental plane.

“Having two year olds in that space who are completely different development levels, caused challenges, (int: ok) so we’ve now given them their own space where they can be in constant perpetual motion and that’s ok. (laugh) and they don’t have to and they have got equipment that’s appropriate for their age, rather than them being tempted to equipment, which is much more for a four year old” (Phase 3 follow up)

The improvement in children’s problem solving abilities enabled more positive contributions to be made in relationships.

“instead of saying, ‘Come on, you need to share,’ I often say to staff, It’s very difficult to share one baby (doll) or one bike, so what we often do now is we do a lot of talking on, ‘Use your talking, ask her then,’ and so she then says, ‘Can I have a go in five minutes?’” (Phase 2 interview)

“Child with sensory perception disorder (needing sensory input)...I came back with ideas... now he is sitting ... with a key person. This is a child who wouldn’t sit down for twenty seconds” (Phase 2 interview)

Practitioners also engaged children in activities which would enable them to make positive contributions in their communities and in society.

“I have been able to alter practice to enable my team and children to work with the wider community to build relations and improve children’s perspective of themselves as a member in that community” (Phase 3 survey)

“we have something that we call ‘Morning Meeting’ in our settings, which involves all the children in that particular room and all the staff coming together and we are trying to build communities in some way, by say...singing a ‘welcome’ song, saying “Good morning”, to everyone and looking them in the eye...” (Phase 2 interview)

4.4.5 Economic Wellbeing

When assessing the evidence for economic wellbeing it became clear that this outcome was strongly related to engagement with parents and staff and that feedback from schools was indicative that this outcome was being achieved. There was also some evidence that EYPs were working with partners but overwhelmingly it was the work with parents that had the biggest impact. EYPS was implicated in giving confidence to the practitioner to work with parents and other members of the team. The finding in Phase 1 that this outcome was less well understood by non EYPs is evident in the challenges of working with staff. Despite this, the evidence in support of this outcome being achieved is equally strong.

“we work closely with speech and language therapists and they send us things that they are doing with those children, so that we can build upon them, we work with the parents at home, giving them resources that we make within the setting erm and that’s something that’s been really successful and we’ve seen huge changes” (Phase 3 follow up)

“I also get feedback from all the schools our children attend, because it’s important for me to know they are going in with the right skills to help them.” (Phase 2 interview)

“Yes, so if they are going in with a high level of personal, social skills with a love of literature, a good phonic knowledge and an interest in numeracy / problem-solving and simple maths (pause). I’ve always felt that the focus should be on those three and I know that XXXX feels the same now.” (Phase 2 interview)

“Involving all concerned- parents, school authorities, governors, key workers, funders, alumni and the local community” (Phase 3 survey)

“(Interviewer prompt): Sometimes that’s working with parents isn’t it? Or working with other agencies...” (EYP): “Yeh we do loads of that” (Phase 2 interview)

“If you do a combination of what you think as your ‘triangle’ of where you’re required to be, sitting up here leading; you are leading your practitioners, you are leading the kids, because you are looking at practice, but you’re leading parents. The role isn’t as simple as being with kids anymore.” (Phase 2 interview)

“I’m doing all the planning, I’m liaising with parents, I’m trying to direct the staff. I’m aware of the staff, I need to get round to erm...the staff appraisals so it’s really... it is...so much” (Phase 2 interview)

4.4.5.1 Achieving economic wellbeing with Parents

Engaging with parents was not always easy as parents did not always have the time or the desire to get involved.

“Parents: I offer information evenings, attendance is very very small (interviewer: oh ok) yes very small” (Phase 3 follow up)

“We definitely wouldn’t get their (parents)..., well we can seek it but it’s a real ‘right I’ve come to collect my child and I’m off ” (Phase 3 follow up)

There were however many examples of working with parents to achieve outcomes. One way was through parental involvement in the setting.

“I chose to replicate some research that was done in XXXX previously, which I found fascinating, which was about boys and reading and having the book corner open... so I again passed that onto parents, told them of the importance of that and would periodically say, “If there are any dads or granddads who can come in to read with children...” just to read stories with them, that would be great, so occasionally that happens” (Phase 2 interview)

Role modelling to parents was another way EYPs would enable the achievement of outcomes.

“role-modelling all the time, being careful about what you are saying and how you’re saying it.” (Phase 2 interview)

“We’re doing work with settings and my own staff in the setting on getting children talking, well more; getting parents talking to children, because all of our sessions, we have the parents

with the children. That’s the main difference really between the sessions I do. So we do have that unique opportunity really, to really role-model for parents” (Phase 2 interview)

“they are...they do sometimes just chat to each other, but then you would say, ‘Oh why don’t you come and play with little Jonny and see what he’s doing. Isn’t it amazing that he is doing this?’ So you are pointing out what the child might be achieving or ‘...If he could do some more of this at home, it would be great,’ that sort of thing” (Phase 2 interview)

“you know mark making isn’t just about being with, having a pencil and marking the paper, it’s the educating parents, we did a project there about mark making in sand, glitter, you name it, rice, erm they’re as valuable as the other opportunities that are there” (Phase 3, MA EYPP focus group)

“I then put on an adult craft session ...they learnt because it was hands on so whilst I wasn’t directly working with the children at that stage, it then had a knock on effect on those children that were in the creche, which all helped with like the attachment and parents, it was the first time they were leaving the children.....I think actually what ended up coming out of it was that whole thing around erm emotional wellbeing, you know actually for parents it had become a support network” (Phase 3 MA EYPP)

EYPs took opportunities to reinforce attachments, which (according to theory) has consequences for later economic wellbeing (Beckley, Elvidge & Hendry, 2009). For example, one practitioner used their knowledge of primary and secondary attachments with an adopted child, they talked about how they did this in some detail:

“I was able to say ‘You are his primary attachment and we want to make sure that works really well. Can I suggest that you come in twice a week for the next month, so that he can get used to us?’ ...you are almost, in the nicest way, tricking the child and they said ‘Yeah, sounds a good idea.’ So when they came the next day, we were able to give each other a hug ... So now the key person will do that and give them a hug when they come in as if they were friends” (Phase 2 interview)

Sibling attachments were also acknowledged and reinforced:

“Get younger babies and children to visit with a sibling attending nursery – helps babies settle better” (Phase 2 survey)

It was also important to get parents' views on their children's development and thus some EYPs introduced parent interest sheets:

"I started....erm...a parent's interest sheet, so they can share more about their child's interests at home with us, so we can incorporate into play and planning" (Phase 2 interview)

EYPs understood the importance of continuing learning and development at home, and thus started flyers and information leaflets for parents.

"also as well another thing that erm I initiated was erm support leaflets for parents erm with regards to say dummies, you know having dummies, which has impacted their speech and language, erm weaning, erm, er potty training things like that and health requirements, things like nits" (Phase 3 follow up)

"I've been able to give parents ideas of how to incorporate learning and outcomes at home, by doing everyday small tasks like washing and matching up pairs of socks and things like that and I'm finding that some parents are taking that on board" (Phase 3 follow up)

Some of the work EYPs were doing had quite profound effects on parents, the following comments demonstrate the wide view EYPs had of outcomes and how economic wellbeing was enabled in parents as well as children.

"Many of the parents using my setting are also beginning training in childcare too." (Phase 3 survey)

"so I think sometimes the work that we're doing, and I think obviously it depends on the setting environment you're in, erm what starts off as you know what your planned outcome is and the journey you can actually be on are significantly, you know I would never have predicted, you know, well I didn't see it, even with reflection I sit there and I think you know, that parent set up their own business and now you know has opened a shop, you know it is absolutely incredible.." (Phase 3 MA EYPP)

"not just the children but I think with the parents we've got a really good relationship with our Children's Centre and so by sort of working closely with them the adults have been able to access so many other resources erm you know such as erm maths and English erm you know courses, point them in the right direction for parenting classes erm you know things like that, so it's not only a case of economic wellbeing for the children, but for the adults" (Phase 3 follow up)

4.4.5.2 Achieving outcomes with staff

In order to achieve such an impact with parents and children, EYPs stated that they needed to gain the support of staff. In Phase 1 there was evidence to suggest that engagement from staff was sometimes difficult if they were not the manager. Further evidence was found in Phase 2 and in the Phase 3 survey 19 participants suggested this may be a difficulty for implementing change.

"I think if you're not in a position of (pause) some kind of...management, some kind of authority figure, you could be saying to your manager, "Can we do this?" and "I read this..." and they say "No, no we're fine," and find reasons not to." (Phase 2 interview)

"I had brought a lot of changes to the setting...but all the way along, it was quite difficult to (pause) get the manager and the staff fully on board with changes" (Phase 2 interview)

"A lack of understanding from other staff with regards to the higher level of knowledge and support EYP's are able to give" (Phase 3 survey)

However, being a manager did not always guarantee success.

"... I read and it opened my mind,... so I went back and I wanted to put this in place...And because I'm the manager I can, I'm the visionary if you like, that is my role. But I have staff who want to do just enough and it's actually quite hard, I am still banging on about that with staff, I am still saying we need to be extending children's learning." (Phase 3 follow up)

There were other difficulties getting staff to support changes, especially if the staff did not have an understanding of how to improve learning and development and it was not always possible to overcome these challenges.

"the two people that buy into it, get it, see it... want to do it,...but staff who have been there for several years want to come in at this time and go at this time, they don't want to do five minutes extra and they just, they don't want anything to change!..." (Phase 3 follow up)

"when you're trying to talk to people and they just don't get it, and that, and it is disappointing isn't it, I mean I'm lucky I've got one girl who's a teacher so I've got you know a lot going, you know my deputy's really good, she's very very clued up, sometimes you talk to others and you think, ooh god!" (Phase 3 follow up)

"I've had people come in and do training, I've taken people out on training and I cannot get people to understand that their needs, it's about extending children's learning. You start from where they're

at, what can you do with XXXX there, and what can you do with XXXX there? How can you extend their learning with what they're doing, rather than, just having a nice time (Int: mmm) and I find that quite hard.” (Phase 3 follow up)

Faced with these challenges it was important that EYPs encouraged shared ownership and supported what they were doing with evidence. What was clear is that the EYPS gave practitioners access to the evidence and the confidence to make use of this when they needed to implement changes.

“Well I think, for example, if you give a staff more say in what happens they have more owner ship of it they're more enthusiastic and then they can implement things and they in turn affect the children and the way they are developing” (Phase 1 MA EYPP)

“but what we've done is professionalised it and we're evidencing what we're doing and we're looking for ways to increase that confidence in our staff teams to have that confidence in what they do naturally” (MA EYPP Phase 3).

“so I can now say, when a parent, a parent came to visit today, they do free play because research shows that children, when their able to make choices, they are able to persevere in their learning. I know that now, my staff might know but they know because I've told them” (Phase 3 follow up)

“I think your just more aware of what you're doing and how you're doing it and so your more sensitive or whatever erm but you've also got things, research stuff, whatever you wanna call it at your fingertips as well and to be able to back it up, I think, so that makes you more confident and if your confident with the parent then they've got confidence in you erm and I think that's, that's really important too.”

In some cases staff were so engaged that they were inspired to professionalise themselves, which in turn had consequences for children and the setting.

“you know I've sold the EYP to staff and actually had four members of staff go through the EYPS as a result (int: wow!), so I think I have, my own passion and enthusiasm is then going to encourage other people” (Phase 3 MA EYPP focus group)

When discussing outcomes in relation to staff, most practitioners mentioned role modelling, passing on information through CPD and regular reflection during team meetings as major factors in enabling change.

“It's made me set up a mentoring system for the staff, so if they're more well informed then the children get more from the staff. So yes.” (Phase 2 interview)

“I'm trying to bring in now a peer review, which is a bit harder as people think you are criticizing, but we are trying to bring that in as well”. (Phase 2 interview)

“Supporting a team allows them to feel safe to speak their ideas from their own observations and ensure a learning environment based on the children's interests to take place, that cannot be fully achieved with only one person's ideas” (Phase 3 survey)

“Have weekly staff meetings on a Friday, full staff, I personally conduct CPD training of which all members of staff are compulsory, five days annually, with me and three Friday afternoons (pause) (Int: ok) every term, so that's 9 Friday afternoons per a year” (Phase 3 follow up)

“we reflect on whether an activity went well, was it too hard? Was it too easy? What did the children get out of it? Did they get anything out of it? And if they didn't, how can we improve it for next time.” (Phase 2 interview)

4.5 Motivation, expectations and recognition

The main motivation for undertaking the EYPS was to continue personal development, to gain a higher qualification or because there was a need or requirement to have an EYP in a setting. There was also an indication that having EYP status was important for validation of knowledge and that the qualification would result in recognition of their expertise in Early Years with increased status.

“You were absolutely the bottom of the educational pile, nobody was interested in you, it was a horrible building it had no natural daylight, it was falling to pieces, you were only there, you were there, ...and nobody respected you. And you went on an EYP course and actually people were interested in your knowledge and thought you had skills” (Phase 1 MA EYPP)

The majority of practitioners that took part in the interviews and focus groups were in some kind of management or supervisory position or owner of a setting. They had either been in the Early Years arena for some years, had retrained from being teachers and thus already held QTS or a combination of both. It was unsurprising then that some did not expect to learn much from the EYPS and did it only to tick a box.

“Not with my eyes closed, but it’s just part of...it was fine, but to be very honest, I did it to tick the boxes” (Phase 2 interview)

However, once they had completed the EYPS many practitioners were actually surprised by what they learned.

“...I would say it opened my eyes to the fascination to the world of children and what we don’t know...I loved it” (Phase 2 interview)

“It’s probably been one of the best things I’ve ever done.” (Phase 2 interview)

The EYPS gave them the right focus, tools and confidence to implement change and question what was taking place on a daily basis.

“I was reflecting before, but I think it was a case of not knowing or reflecting on the right things” (Phase 2 interview)

From achieving EYPS practitioners expected recognition both professionally and financially. In some cases this was not realised as either the EYP status itself was not understood, or the pay and conditions equivalent to qualified teacher status were not available.

“unfortunately what happens after, erm, because you have a degree, because you have EYP status, erm the money does not reflect erm the amount of study, the amount of commitment, the amount of hard work that you put in” (Phase 3 follow up)

“when I got my EYP and I said to people well that this is equivalent to them, well she just laughed at me, and she didn’t know anything about the EYP but the idea to her, she’s a very kind of mainstream, the most mainstream of mainstream teachers, the idea that anyone that was working in Early Years would have equal status with a teacher was just laughable to her (p3: I think that’s quite common actually)” (Phase 3 follow up)

“In maintained nurseries, EYPS is considered just an additional qualification but not appointed as EYP” (Phase 3 survey)

For others the EYPS gave them the recognition and credibility they needed to make an impact.

“...when I went in as a children’s centre teacher there was a sort of ‘phtt what would a teacher know about this’ kind of attitude but also being able to say I’m an Early Years Professional, having the Early Years bit in there means that they thought I knew what I was talking about. That was really useful” (Phase 1 MA EYPP)

Some participants expressed frustration between their own professionalism and the direction from the local authority, indicating a conflict between requirements and how these might be realised in practice:

“Early Years is different...and that is irritating, because they come in and they tell you to do all these really impractical things...(pause) and, you know...because of this erm...the new partnership agreement you sign with the local authority, Some of it’s okay, some of it’s quite good...but some of it you know is not practical, it’s not going to work” (Phase 2 interview)

There were differing views from participants of how the role should be undertaken. For example, some EYPs found it difficult to spend one to one time with children, for others becoming an EYP actually increased opportunities to be with children and others felt all their time should be spent with children.

“I think for me undertaking the EYP gave me the opportunity to get back with children ... for me having this you know title I suppose erm has enabled me to say well actually I need to go back in there and that’s part of my description for that position, so that’s been really good” (Phase 3 MAEYPP)

“Yes, on the ‘shop floor’, all the time. I tend to do my deputy manager role at home. I only work four sessions a week though at the moment, ‘cause we’re only open six anyway”

“there was no place for me as a key person, because if I was carrying out the key person role in the way it’s intended to be carried out, I couldn’t be running into other rooms and being with the children in other rooms and observe what was going on in those places. It would have meant that I wasn’t fulfilling my role as a key practitioner to a high quality standard.” (Phase 2 interview)

“I would prefer not to manage the day to day setting at the same time to allow me to focus 100% on my time with the children rather than the additional paperwork and commitments” (Phase 3 survey)

“I think being in with the children, I think you should be ... but I also think that being so prescriptive and saying you have to be in that room with the children for, is it, eighteen hours? ...I would like to be able to go up to the primary schools ... improve our links. I would like to do home visits to the new parents and all the stuff that you should be doing, but don’t have time to” (Phase 2 interview)

“I’m not saying that I should just turn into an admin person, I shouldn’t and I love being with the children. But to be that prescriptive about how many hours a week you spend in the room with the children (int:mm) I think you’re not getting the best out of your EYPs” (Phase 3 follow up)

The above examples indicate that the EYPs understood their responsibilities in ensuring that they spent enough hours directly with children, and enjoyed doing so. They also seemed to be aware of the research indicating that spending more time with children results in higher quality education (Mathers et al., 2011). EYPs were aware, and generally supportive, of the need to spend time with children and why the local authority required this. However, the EYPs expressed that this was sometimes very challenging. The conflict between leading practice and managing the setting was something many EYPs struggled with in terms of time.

Pay or pay related issues were mentioned many times in the survey, focus groups and interviews. There were some indications that EYPs would or were leaving the Early Years sector as a result of comparatively low pay, but this was not always a negative thing.

“if she came back and did her Early Years degree, finished it off and then got EYP she would totally and utterly skew all my salary structure. (int: mmm) it would be completely and utterly inappropriate but right here, right now, I’m not motivated to do that (hah laughter) cause I can’t cope with the financial fallout (int: yeh) of them getting loads of money and it not working within my (pause) structure” (Phase 3 follow up)

“I teach sixteen year olds on the BTEC erm and the money is a lot better erm you get a lot more recognition for what you do, there is a lot more benefits and I feel incredibly lucky to have all of my experience and my EYPdum erm and I can then share that with the sort of young workforce that are just starting, in childcare, so. (int: yeh) I think I’ve made a huge difference that way” (Phase 3 follow up)

There was also a danger that those coming into the sector would have unrealistic expectations of pay.

“I also question whether students straight out of uni with this qualification are going to come into the profession with unrealistic expectations of position and pay. Certainly in the private pre-school sector the money just isn’t there” (Phase 3 survey)

EYPs also thought that the lack of national pay and conditions for the early years workforce and lack of investment compared to other countries and sectors was poor. Participants highlighted that settings in the UK predominately rely on parents for funding.

“the people we had over from SwedenThey were horrified weren’t they that there were whole settings where there was nobody that they considered (P1: Yeh) you know qualified (Int: mm P4: mm Int: yeh) ...p1: Which is weird in early years, we, well we think it is but lots of people don’t and yet if you went into a school and nobody was trained as a teacher, they’d all be up in arms wouldn’t they” (Phase 3 follow up)

“Extremely uneven pay scale and lack of holiday pay, pension or sickness pay unlike newly qualified teachers” (Phase 3 survey)

“Certainly in the private pre-school sector the money just isn’t there, not least because of the top up restrictions put on us by the government, who do not pay enough per child to cover outgoing costs” (Phase 3 survey)

Despite the negative reporting of financial recognition in terms of pay, some EYPs who managed private provision were creative in how they were using their supplement and were clearly grateful for what it had enabled them to do.

“that six thousand pounds has gone (into resources) for the settings and that’s meant we could (use some of our income to) pay, we did a bigger pay increase for all our staff two years ago” (Phase 3 MA)

The pressure of continuously proving themselves was sometimes perceived as detrimental and resulted in decisions to not seek financial recognition for the work they were doing. Time pressure appeared to be the main issue, but there was also concern about the number of different ways in which they were monitored.

“I now have to keep a daily diary, so when do I write that? ...I’m not prepared to do it in my working hours, sit and write a diary so they can tick a box. I know of two others who have not applied for the subsidy, because they feel the same as me. Both outstanding and both, sadly, can’t jump through those hoops” (Phase 2 interview)

“Yeh we do have to be RAG rated,... ECERs,... ITESR,... Ofsted, why can’t we just have one thing, that would probably help actually. (P2: ..yeh) do you know what I mean? trust their arm more, ... we now have to have our unannounced visit, you know from XXXX’ ... (Phase 3 follow up, indicating the number of checks on quality which occur)

It was clear that the County was recognising, valuing, and using the expertise of EYPs both in their own setting and in other settings but it was also clear that the substantial knowledge, training and

experience these EYPs had previously gained was not considered by them to be recognised at national level, especially in light of the new policy move to fast track EYPs to QTS. There was also evidence in the data to suggest that EYPs consider there should be some flexibility in how EYPs are monitored and what evidence should be taken into account in recognising existing knowledge and experience.

“As a practitioner with a level 4 qualification and many years experience, owning my own nursery that is consistently outstanding and green RAG rated, I feel it has been unnecessary that I have had to complete the last 5 years studying (including redoing level 4 and maths & English GCSE’s). The time and energy this has taken has meant I have had to work 10-11 hour days, 7 days a week and with very few breaks and the impact has taken its toll on my health, enthusiasm and energy for my work with the children and my family.” (Phase 3 survey)

“I mean like next week ...I have to do the health and safety course, well that’s three days! And then I’ve got a day here, I’ve got to try and squeeze eighteen hours in with the children on Friday (laughter). Stop the clock!” (Phase 3 MA EYPP)

“erm the definition of the EYP, erm funding definition is that I have to work with the children for eighteen hours a week (int: mm hm) and be in the room with them for that amount of time. Now I don’t feel that that is a good use of my EYP skills and I’ve actually, I’m not doing that and have lost my funding” (Phase 3 follow up)

“so I’m now mentoring four nurseries for them, which I get paid no money for and I have the managers on the phone constantly, how do I do this, how do I do that, you know which is fine and happy to open our doors to them. I said to XXXX you can’t keep giving me nurseries to mentor and sending me people to mentor and then moaning at me if I’m not on the ground with the children as much as you like” (Phase 3 MA EYPP)

Thus the EYPs experienced conflict between their roles. The EYP role was beneficial and highly regarded, but could also be in conflict with their role as a manager of a setting or as an adviser across settings.

Despite these comments, the participants valued the opportunities for CPD very highly and were very positive about the way in which the local authority had invested in Early Years and the drive there had been to improve standards. The participants recognised that without the support of the local authority, they would not have experienced the professional development opportunities before, during or after obtaining EYPS.

Nutbrown (2012) identified that the more time EYPs spent directly in rooms with children, the greater their impact on quality in that room. The data in this study suggest that the EYPs are now working

very effectively with staff and parents to improve quality, and there is now a need to consider the impact that the EYPs are having with staff and parents in influencing quality of outcomes for children. The EYPs have identified that there have been developments in practice since the 2012 report which have improved quality through improving other ways of working.

5 Summary and Conclusions

This research was undertaken in one county of England between 2010 and 2013. During this time, policy changes have occurred and new priorities identified. However, there is still an emphasis on improving outcomes for children so that children can reach their potential. The impact of Early Years Professional Status has been explored through this research project and it is very clear that those practitioners who undertake EYPS value it, and consider that it has made a difference to their practice so that children have improved opportunities to develop to their potential. These improvements are not easy to measure, but the rich data provided by the participants demonstrates that EYPs are motivated, energetic and fully engaged in driving forward changes to improve outcomes for children. They do this through engaging with their staff, with parents and with the wider interprofessional team. The commitment of the local authority to improving the early years workforce to improve outcomes for children was clearly evident in the data, and this was highly valued by the EYPs. Hadfield et al. (2012) demonstrated that such impact was most effective when the EYP was supported by managers. The findings from this study seemed to confirm this but there were exceptions to the rule and there can be additional challenges for EYPs when they are also managers of the setting.

Individual EYPs have examples of measures which indicate improvements in outcomes, and have suggestions as to how to measure outcomes in the longer term at the setting level. Where it is possible to measure improvement, for example through the Ofsted inspection reports, it is very clear that the presence of an EYP in a setting is linked to higher achievement of that setting against measured outcomes, and that this achievement applies across all five outcome areas. The findings presented from this study provide rich detail which adds to the existing research undertaken by Sylva et al. (2004), Hadfield et al. (2012) and Mathers et al. (2011). Specific examples of the ways in which the EYPs are making a difference to children across all five outcomes of Every Child Matters provide evidence of the diversity and importance of the work of these leaders.

EYPS was seen by participants in this study as a starting point. EYPS gave the individual practitioners knowledge and the confidence to use that knowledge. Becoming an EYP gave access to a range of professional development opportunities organised and funded by the local authority, both for the EYP themselves and for their staff. These CPD opportunities were well used, and ideas were taken back to settings to effect change. Opportunities for CPD with EYPs were considered to be at a higher level, more engaging and useful, than more routine CPD opportunities. The CPD opportunities provided

additional networking opportunities for the EYPs, so that they could both share good practice and provide a support network. Examples of CPD which had been very positive were learning about movement play, and learning more about leadership. This continued development, following EYPS, was seen by all participants to have a very positive impact on outcomes for children. It was considered by the participants that removing this facility for networking would have a detrimental effect on the motivation and confidence of the EYP to implement change. Thus the way in which the local authority has funded and organised the CPD is clearly highly regarded.

All five outcome areas of Every Child Matters were considered in this research. Rich and detailed examples are included of the range and depth of good practice which EYPs have implemented in their settings across all five areas. It could be argued that obtaining EYPS did not necessarily make a difference to achievement of the 'Being Healthy' outcome; however obtaining EYPS had a major impact on achievement of the other outcomes. Of particular note are the examples given of achievement of 'Economic Well-being'. EYPs were clearly including the family in this, not just considering the future of the individual child but of the family as a whole. The findings seem to support previous findings in that EYPs can make more notable impact on economic wellbeing with parents when there is a greater need to do so and that EYP impact may be less noticeable in economically thriving areas (Hadfield et al., 2012).

It may be that there are other factors influencing the achievement of outcomes which have not been identified in this study. This study did not measure the strength of the impact or the factors that may have influenced greater impact. Further research in this area may be of value.

Although some practitioners had undertaken EYPS because they felt obliged to do so, they were surprised at the positive experience they had. All practitioners considered that EYPS had empowered them, giving them confidence in their ability to initiate and carry through changes in their settings. EYPs did not, however, consider that the work they were doing was recognised by other professionals. The status of EYPS was not understood by those outside the settings, for example school teachers. Gaining the EYPS had meant that some practitioners were acting as mentors to other settings, and while they enjoyed doing this it added to their existing workload without any financial reward. Some EYPs explained that accessing additional funding was difficult in relation to their role, so that there was in effect no direct financial reward for the individual through gaining EYPS. EYPs also considered that the amount of monitoring they were subjected to was too great, and often duplicated.

There are clear lessons to be learnt with regards to the development of the workforce and there needs to be recognition for the substantial education and training that EYPs have undertaken, and the academic level of this education. The Nutbrown review (2012) and the Truss report (2013) acknowledge this through the introduction of fast track to QTS but this study seems to suggest that EYPs already have substantial training which in some cases places them at an educational

level already above QTS and with skills and knowledge which focus on the holistic development of the child. In light of the move to QTS there needs to be a change in how the sector is funded and organised if professionals are to remain in the sector, as professional recognition is not enough. Remuneration is identified as a significant factor in equity of status with teachers. The Truss report (2013) addresses the issue of the name of EYPS, and the move to the title of Early Years Teacher and QTS, which is expected to be valued and recognised by other professionals as well as parents and families and the general public. It has not yet identified issues of funding to support pay and conditions for this sector.

6 Recommendations

EYPS is a very valuable mechanism for improving outcomes for children. Its imminent recognition as a status equivalent in academic terms to qualified teacher status in the Early Years sector is welcome (Truss, 2013). However the unique knowledge and skills of the EYP should be acknowledged as positively contributing to the holistic development of the child and the gains made through investment in EYPS should not be ignored.

The status of EYPS in the eyes of the public and other professionals needs to be addressed, so that there is greater awareness of the significant role these professionals have in improving outcomes for children. Changing the name is likely to have a positive effect on status. Recognition through agreed pay and conditions for the sector is also required.

Investment in continuing professional development for EYPs by the local authority is extremely valuable for individual practitioners, for settings and for children and families and should be continued.

The EYPs in this study benefit from substantial support from the local authority in which they work. While this is not the norm in other local authorities, the study seems to indicate that such support is essential and should be considered at a national level.

This study suggests that EYPs lead practice not only by working directly with children, but also by working with parents, families and staff. Research is needed to determine the relative value of time spent with parents, families and staff in indirectly improving outcomes for children.

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Appendix A - Survey Questions

Question	Survey (Current EYPS student or completed EYPS)	In original survey
What pathway are you on?	Current	No
What year are you in?	Current	No
Are you male or female?	Both	Yes
How old are you?	Both	Yes
Have you secured a role as an EYP?	Completed	No
How many years have you been in your setting?	Completed	Yes
what sort of setting do you work in (previous responses given as option) (category response)	Completed (open)	Yes
Have you ever worked in an Early years setting (previous descriptions given as choices) (if 'none of these' move to parent option*)	Current (category response)	Yes (open)
What role did/ do you have in this setting?	Current	Yes
How many members of staff are in your setting?	Completed	No
Is there an EYP in this setting	Both	No
How many EYPS are in this setting?	Both	No
*Do you have any children in an early years setting?	Current	No
*Is there an EYP in this setting (If No move to Q below#)	Current	No
*How many EYPS are in this setting?	Current	No
Is this a different setting to the one you work/worked in?	Current	No
As an early years professional I feel I can influence change in my work setting	Completed	Yes
Please let us know how strongly you agree with the statement, "An Early Years Professional I can influence change in my work/childs setting"	Both	No
Could you describe any aspects of leadership and management the EYP has in their role?" (options informed by previous response plus 'other' with comment) (see appendix B for categories)	Both	Yes open question

Question	Survey (Current EYPS student or completed EYPS)	In original survey
# "Could you tell us about any difficulties you think EYPs might experience in their role? (open question)	Both	Yes
Do you feel the role of an EYP is important to ... Children... Parents... Other professionals...none of the above... (yes/ no/ don't know)	Both	Yes
Do you think the EYP role leads or could lead to improvements in the following outcomes? (ECIM outcomes listed with Yes, No, Don't Know)	Both	Yes
How might an EYP improve the outcome of Healthy eating (open question)	Both	Yes
How might an EYP improve the outcome of Staying safe (open question)	Both	Yes
How might an EYP improve the outcome of making a positive contribution (open question)	Both	Yes
How might an EYP improve the outcome of enjoying and achieving (open question)	Both	Yes
How might an EYP improve the outcome of achieving economic wellbeing (open question)	Both	Yes
What do you plan to do with your degree?	Current	No
Was your decision to undertake the undergraduate degree influenced by an EYP/an EYPs experience in any way? (For example, inspired you or made you want to learn for your self). Yes, No and Please explain comment box	Current	No

Appendix B - Summary of survey findings to main questions

Question	Phase 1 EYPs only	Phase3 Current EYPS	Phase3 Completed EYPS
Responses	17 (36% response rate)	54 (36% response rate)	47
Gender	100% female 2% male	98% female 2% male	98% female
Mean Age	45.7	36.94	41
In a management Role (response to what role do you have)	76%	65%	93% (including SENCO and teacher roles)
Time in setting	N/A	N/A	79% 3 years or over
Only EYP	N/A	71% Yes	76% Yes
Are you an EYP	N/A	N/A	95% Yes
Can Influence Change	94% Yes (EYPs) 69% (Non EYPs)	86% Strongly Agree or Agree	82% Strongly Agree OR Agree
Aspects of leadership and management in EYP role management	Open question (informed choices for new survey)	(Strongly Agree or Agree)	
All management and leadership skills	Open question (informed choices for new survey)	78%	81%
Guiding staff through the EYFS	Open question (informed choices for new survey)	84%	97%
Day to day running of the setting	Open question (informed choices for new survey)	68%	87%
Implementation of new ideas and practice	Open question (informed choices for new survey)	84%	92%
Planning curriculum	Open question (informed choices for new survey)	78%	87%
Liaison with school governors/management	Open question (informed choices for new survey)	65%	65%
Liaison with other agencies	Open question (informed choices for new survey)	78%	84%

Question	Phase 1 EYPs only	Phase3 Current EYPS	Phase3 Completed EYPS
Raising the levels and standards in Early Years	Open question (informed choices for new survey)	84%	97%
Student monitoring	Open question (informed choices for new survey)	71%	82%
Input into policy making	Open question (informed choices for new survey)	82%	82%
Modelling good practice	Open question (informed choices for new survey)	88%	100%
Bringing training back to setting	Open question (informed choices for new survey)	80%	95%
Do you feel the role of EYP is important to	Majority said yes	94% Yes	92% Yes
... Children			
... Parents	Majority said yes	90% Yes	90% Yes
... Other professionals	Majority said yes	82% Yes	92% Yes
Improvement in Being Healthy?	16 responses to open question	84% Yes	85% Yes
... in Staying Safe?	16 responses to open question	86% Yes	91% Yes
... in Enjoying and Achieving?	16 responses to open question	93% Yes	88% Yes
... in Making a Positive Contribution?	16 responses to open question	93% Yes	91% Yes
... in Economic Wellbeing?	14 responses to open question	82% Yes	82% Yes

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