

10 years of early years policy, practice and research

What have we learned about all three

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**Making
government
work better**

Where started in 1997-1998

- Labour Manifesto commitment to universal pre-school education for 3 and 4 year olds (5 days a week, 2.5 hours per day, school term time only)
- National childcare strategy designed to increase quantity, accessibility, and quality of day care for working parents
- Comprehensive Spending Review on Services for Children under 8, HMT review that resulted in Sure Start
 - **3 different strands: early education, childcare, and integrated services for poor children**

2

What happened?

Four major developments that encapsulate changes over the 10 years:

- 2002, merger of Sure Start Unit with Early Years and Childcare in DfES (as was)
- 2003, Every Child Matters Green Paper
- 2004, Publication of Ten Year Childcare Strategy, backed up by Childcare Act 2006
- 2009 Publication of Next Steps for Early Learning and Childcare

3

Increasing emphasis on parents and parenting, as part of wider social policy agenda

- 1998 Supporting Families Green Paper
- 1999 Sure Start
- 1999 NFPI established
- 2002 Integration of all early years and childcare services
- 2003 Every Child Matters
- 2004 Choice for Parents, the best start for Children
- 2006 Schools White Paper
- 2007 Aiming high for children: supporting families
- 2007 Every Parent Matters
- 2007 Reaching Out, Think Family
- 2007 Children's Plan
- 2008 21st Century Schools
- 2008 Families in Britain: an evidence paper
- 2009 Next Steps for Early Learning and Childcare

4

Government, parents and families

- **Are parents:**
 - Consumers?
 - Clients?
 - Pupils?
 - Co-producers?
- **Are parents really mothers?**
- **Are fathers providers? Male role models? Benefits cheats?**
- **Impact of adult conditions on capacity to parent; Think Family work on chasm between adults' and children's services**

5

The Role of Government: supporting parents and parenting

Reduce pressures

- Rights and legal protection
- Financial support
- Support in kind

For example:

- Access to maternity and paternity leave
- Flexible working and flexible childcare
- Targeted benefits

Enhance capabilities


- Information and guidance
- Skills and training
- Intervention

For example

- Before and after birth, midwife and health visitor support
- Family Intervention programmes
- Family Nurse Partnerships

Intervening to safeguard children

6




What has research told us that has informed all policy development?

Two pre-eminent studies

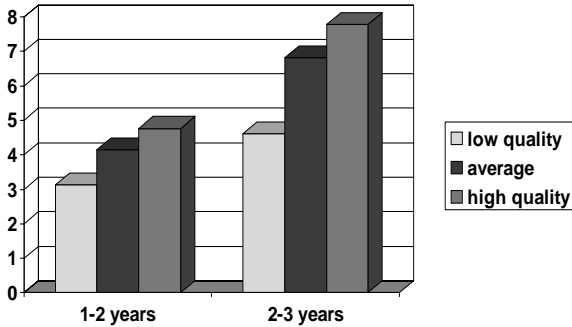
- Effective Provision of Preschool Education (Sylva and Melhuish)
- National Evaluation of Sure Start (Melhuish and Belsky)

7




Key messages from EPPE

1. **Quality and Duration matter (months of developmental advantage on literacy)**

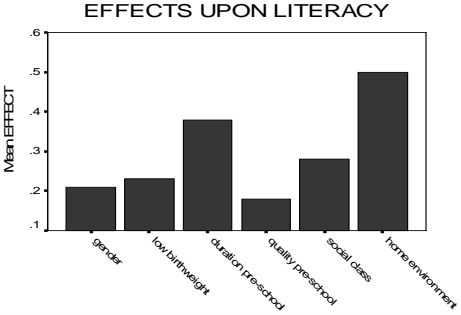


Duration	Low quality	Average	High quality
1-2 years	~3.2	~4.2	~4.8
2-3 years	~4.5	~6.8	~7.8

8




2. Home Learning environment most important



Factor	Mean Effect
gender	~0.20
low birthweight	~0.22
duration preschool	~0.38
quality preschool	~0.18
social class	~0.28
home environment	~0.50

9




3. What makes preschools effective

Five areas were particularly important:

- Quality of the adult-child verbal interaction.
- Knowledge and understanding of the curriculum.
- Knowledge of how young children learn.
- Adults skill in supporting children in resolving conflicts.
- Helping parents to support children's learning at home.

10




4. Summary: What makes a difference to outcomes: EPPE evidence

3 elements that can lead to educational success

- **Good** Home Learning Environment (pp. pre-school)
- **Good** Pre-schools for longer duration
- **Good** Primary schools

Those children with all 3 will out-perform those with 2
 who will out-perform those with 1
 who will out-perform those with 0
 All other things being equal


11



Evidence from NESS: Changes in Sure Start communities - 2000 to 2005

<p>Families</p> <p>More young children in SSLP areas Reduction in children in 'workless households'</p> <p>Child health:</p> <p>Reductions in hospitalisations for 0-3 year olds low-birth weight in 'Indian subcontinent' areas the proportion of children identified with SEN 4 to 17 year olds on Disability Living Allowance</p>	<p>School achievement for in SSLP areas</p> <p>Greater than England increases in English achievement (KS2) 5 (A*-C) GCSE passes proportion staying on after 16</p> <p>Crime and disorder:</p> <p>Greater than England reduction in: burglary and vehicle crime primary school permanent exclusions unauthorised absences</p>
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12



Impact evidence, 2005: Sub-group findings (3-year-olds)

- Among non-teenage mothers (86% of total):
 - greater child social competence in SSLP areas
 - fewer child behaviour problems in SSLP areas
 - less negative parenting in SSLP areas
- Effects on children appeared to be mediated by effects on mother:
 - SSLP → less negative parenting → better child social functioning


13



2005: Sub-group findings (3-year-olds)

- Among teenage mothers (14% of total):
 - less child social competence in SSLP areas
 - more child behaviour problems in SSLP areas
 - poorer child verbal ability in SSLP areas
- Among lone parent families (40%):
 - poorer child verbal ability in SSLP areas
- Among workless households (33%):
 - poorer child verbal ability in SSLP areas

14




Huge differences in quality among programmes
Did we tell them to do the wrong thing, or did they not do well enough what we told them: both

Key dimensions of proficiency:

- Effective governance and management / leadership
- Informal but professional ethos of centre
- Empowerment of service providers and users


15



What happened next, 2007
The impact of well-established SSLPs on 3-year-olds & their families

- Of 14 outcomes 7 showed a significant difference between SSLP and non-SSLP areas, i.e. a SSLP effect
- 5 outcomes clearly indicated beneficial effects for SSLPs. These were for:
 - child positive social behaviour (cooperation, sharing, empathy)
 - child independence / self-regulation (works things out for self, perseverance, self-control)
 - Parenting Risk Index (observer rating + parent-child relationship, harsh discipline, home chaos)
 - home learning environment
 - total service use
- In addition there were better results in SSLPs for:
 - child immunisations
 - child accidents
- But these 2 outcomes could have been influenced by timing effects


16



Reasons for differing results

1. Amount of exposure
It takes 3 years for a programme to be fully functional. Therefore
 - in the first phase children / families were not exposed to fully functional programmes for much of the child's life
 - in the second phase children / families are exposed to fully functional programmes for all child's life
2. Quality of services
 - SSLPs have been reorganised as SSCCs with clearer focus to services following lessons from earlier years, and NESS
 - early on staff had a lot to learn. As knowledge and experience have been acquired over 7 years, SSLPs have matured in functioning
 - hence it is likely that children / families are currently exposed to more effective services than in the early years of Sure Start

17



Overarching messages: NESS

- Inter-agency collaboration is essential for good services
- Active engagement of health services important for success of Sure Start. Health has contact with all families and children from pregnancy
- However beneficial services are, children and families need to be in touch with them; those with the greatest need may be hardest to reach and engage
- Trust is fundamental to parental engagement
- Staff capacity problems, many staff inadequately trained for the work to be done and staff turnover is very disruptive
- We vastly underestimated the skill requirements in establishing a local program, particularly true for large capital projects

18

How has it all come together? England policy on early years, childcare and parenting

- Maternity leave extended to 12 months, paid leave for 9 months
- New right to request flexible working for all parents with children up to age 6
- Nearly 2.3 million children using 3,000 Sure Start Children's Centres
- All children in early years provision accessing single play based framework, EYFS
- Draft legislation in progress to make Children's Centres statutory duty for local authorities
- Family Green paper due to be published in the Autumn, emphasis on relationships
- New draft guidance on 'Think Family' currently out for consultation, ensuring appropriate links between adults and children's services

What have we learned

- It is all very hard, every structure requires a different kind of joining up
- Tensions in policy intent: optimal child development vs optimal flexibility for parents
- Pilot interventions much easier to implement than systems reform, and confusion between the 2
- Rigorous evaluation is critical, but wait for results before programs are dropped or expanded
- Next big investment should be in staff; without significant improved skills, salary and career structure, early years outcomes progress will plateau