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Study of Early Education and Development: Experiences of the Early Years Pupil Premium

Research report

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Social Science in Government

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This report presents findings of a qualitative study exploring providers' experiences of the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP), undertaken as part of the Study of Early Education and Development (SEED).

The aim of the study was to build in-depth understanding of how EYPP funding is used and its perceived impact on disadvantaged children. The report includes exploration of how settings identified eligible children, how funds were targeted and spending decisions made, as well as provider views on whether EYPP funding had an impact on children's outcomes.

Methodology

This small qualitative project involved 30 interviews with early years providers who had received EYPP funding. Settings were selected from those who completed 4Children's screening survey, conducted in autumn 2015.¹

Qualitative interviews with setting managers took place in March and April 2016. All selected settings were recorded as having received more than £200 in EYPP funding between April and August 2015 in the screening survey.

The qualitative study used four key sampling criteria with a view to include a range of providers with different:

- i. **Quality scores**, based on settings' SSTEW score for simplicity, but cross-checking with ECERS scores.²
- ii. **Funding levels** (low to high) but with a threshold of EYPP funding over £200.
- iii. A mix of providers by **region** (the study being England-wide).
- iv. **Provider type** (private, voluntary and nursery classes attached to schools).

¹ The screening survey was a short telephone survey of over 200 early years settings who had participated in assessments of quality of provision as part of the SEED study. The survey was carried out by 4Children in October-November 2015. The survey focused on whether the settings had applied and received any EYPP funding and how they used the funding they received. Settings in early implementation areas were excluded from the sample.

² The Sustained Shared Thinking and Emotional Wellbeing (or SSTEW) quality measure supplements other measures such as Early Childhood Environment Rating (ECERS-R and ECERS-E/ITERS-R) measures, focusing on the interactions and pedagogy within the setting and the adult's role in supporting learning and development (Siraj, Kingston & Melhuish, 2015). *Assessing Quality in early Childhood Education and Care: Sustained shared thinking and emotional well-being (SSTEW) for 2-5 year-olds provision*. London: Trentham Books). It considers high quality interactions with and between children, using subscales related to critical thinking, assessment for learning and supporting and extending language and communication. More information on how SSTEW scores were calculated are set out in Appendix A.

The majority of the interviews were conducted with a member of the management team (the setting manager or the assistant manager); although in some cases paired interviews were conducted with the manager and Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) or the finance officer, where they had a significant role in the allocation or delivery of EYPP.

As this was a small scale qualitative study, the prevalence of views and experiences arising from the data is not reported.

Summary of findings

Contextual factors affecting the delivery of provision

In discussing the demographics of the local area, a number of providers reported that their settings were located in areas with higher levels of poverty and deprivation. The proportions of children eligible for EYPP in such areas typically ranged from 10% to 30%, although one provider reported that 50 % of their three and four year olds had been awarded EYPP.

It is important that local deprivation levels and associated contextual factors are borne in mind when interpreting the findings presented in this report, as local needs were felt to have played a role in the spending decisions made by some providers, as well as on parents' ability to apply for EYPP funding.

While high levels of deprivation placed pressure on some settings, those in areas with a greater demographic mix faced different constraints, with levels of EYPP funding fluctuating over the course of the year alongside eligibility. There was a perception that this flux made funding allocations harder to manage, especially in terms of forward planning.

In addition to perceptions of deprivation, providers were required to support children with a mixture of learning and health needs, for example, children with communication needs. Considerations about how best to cater for children with additional needs often fed into decision-making about how to spend EYPP funding.

Eligibility and the application process

Children aged between three and four years old are eligible for EYPP if they receive government-funded early education and their parents receive specific means-tested benefits. The research found that some providers collected information from parents and made applications to Local Authorities on their behalf, while others relied on parents to make direct applications to the Local Authorities themselves.

Providers highlighted some challenges with the process of identifying eligible children. In some cases this was due to the fact that the responsibility for making applications for EYPP rested with parents, who faced a number of barriers. This included literacy and ESOL needs, a perceived lack of parental motivation, difficulties with parents providing the right

information and potential stigma related to claiming targeted (means-tested) funding. Providers employed a range of techniques to address these barriers and tried to strike a balance between encouraging all parents to consider whether their child might be eligible and targeting those that they thought were more likely to be eligible.

Whilst providers adopted strategies to aid identification, it seemed that in general there was a lack of clarity amongst providers on exactly what criteria Local Authorities used to establish eligibility. For example, one setting explained that they assumed ten children who had previously received early education funding for disadvantaged two year olds would qualify for EYPP, but only three were found to be eligible. There was therefore a call from providers for more transparency around the eligibility criteria to ensure that both parents and settings could successfully and accurately identify situations in which children were likely to be eligible.

Provider experiences of receiving EYPP

Total EYPP funding awarded to settings was calculated each term on the basis of how many children are eligible. Therefore if a setting had more eligible children, it received more money. Providers participating in the study received between £300 and £4000 in the term during which they completed the screening survey. The average amount claimed by participating providers in the same term was £1,206.50.

A number of barriers were identified in relation to the processes for allocating and receiving EYPP funding. These related to the information providers received on eligible children and the timing and format of payments, which seemed to make allocating and planning EYPP money challenging, especially for smaller settings. Furthermore, the requirements application processes placed on smaller providers, who were less likely to have resources to support the necessary administration, were perceived to be burdensome.

Use of EYPP

Providers made different choices about how to allocate EYPP funds. However, two key recurring themes were highlighted across provider types. The first of these was the use of EYPP to directly support the speech, language and communication needs of children eligible for EYPP. The second was supporting children to play and learn outside; the intended aim was to broaden children's experiences of the outdoors, their understanding of the natural world and encourage healthy learning activities which providers felt was important for their development.

There was clear evidence to suggest that providers targeted spending towards the needs of eligible children. However, they were keen to ensure there was longevity in any investments made and hopeful that EYPP funding would benefit a broader range of children in the future if they made astute decisions about how money was spent (e.g. to buy resources or upskill staff in ways that would benefit a wider pool of children with additional

needs). Providers acknowledged and welcomed the fact that a wider group of children would stand to benefit from investments and improvements made possible by EYPP.

Participants were confident that EYPP delivered added value. They reported that it had enabled them to do things or purchase goods and services they may not have otherwise been able to afford, deliver and join up services more strategically and support staff, particularly in working with children who have additional needs.

Decision making and monitoring

Overall, providers welcomed the freedom they had to make their own decisions about using EYPP funding as it gave them flexibility to respond to contextual factors and needs of eligible children. A variety of approaches were used to support decision-making, which included informal observations, utilising data and consideration of relevant research evidence. It was paramount for all providers that EYPP funds, (including where they were low in value) were used to achieve as much impact as possible. This included giving consideration to how to best balance the needs of individual eligible children as well as ensure long-term improvements and investments for all children.

Most providers used systems already in place to monitor the progress of all children within the setting. However, there was broad consensus that providers might benefit from improved guidance and support to monitor the impact of EYPP with standardised tools, which could show performance across settings.

Perceived impacts of EYPP

This study was conducted less than a year after the implementation of EYPP, limiting the extent to which providers were able to discuss its medium or longer-term impacts. It was however hoped that EYPP funding would be shown to deliver significant improvements in the development and educational attainment of eligible children in the future.

Providers explained that children and settings had benefited from the additionality of EYPP. Careful consideration of the needs of eligible children and how funds might be used to help address these meant that providers thought that EYPP was perceived to have been effectively used to achieve maximum impact, including across a range of measures such as increased confidence and improved communication skills.

A number of indirect benefits were also highlighted. These included:

- an increased focus for frontline staff to consider ways to better support and provide for eligible children, including those with additional needs;
- an improved awareness and understanding of children's family backgrounds and ways to provide wrap-around support; and

- the generation of financial savings for providers, where EYPP funding was used to purchase goods and services which would otherwise have come from other sources. This was perceived to be particularly useful in the context of public sector cuts.

Perceived limitations to achieving impact related to the amount of funding settings received and therefore what they felt they could do with what they had (although as the report highlights, some providers received a significant amount of funding; up to £4,000 per term). Furthermore the fact that funding amounts changed each term in line with a changing number of eligible children made forward planning difficult.

Providers also noted that at such an early stage in the implementation and delivery of EYPP, it might be too early to effectively assess the range of impacts.

Conclusions and key messages

It is clear that providers welcomed the opportunities that EYPP offered to focus support on the needs of disadvantaged children and make a range of improvements to the learning resources and environments of all children. However, in exploring providers' experiences of the process of securing and spending EYPP funds, a number of challenges were identified. Providers suggested ways in which they thought EYPP could be improved to better support a smooth application process, effective decision-making and the onward allocation of support for future cohorts.

- In relation to identifying eligible children, providers explained that it would be useful to **standardise the eligibility criteria or make eligibility more transparent** so that settings would be better able to plan resources. Confusion around which children would be eligible made it difficult for some providers (especially smaller providers with more limited resources) to work with and target, families to complete application forms.
- Linked to this, some providers thought that it would be beneficial to **remove the administrative burden placed on parents to complete application forms**. Providers suggested EYPP applications could perhaps be more easily processed alongside applications for benefits or other subsidies, for example. Overall there was a sense that engaging parents in this process was difficult and that best practice on this particular issue could be shared more effectively.
- There was a sense that some smaller providers struggled to achieve the same kinds of impacts as larger settings, because they had fewer eligible pupils and therefore less funding overall. For example some smaller settings found it more difficult to purchase staff resources such as Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) as they were too expensive, although some had found creative ways around this such as training existing staff.
- Some providers indicated that they would have found it useful to have **more guidance on how to spend EYPP money**, including where it would have most impact (implying low levels of awareness of existing resources such as the EEF toolkit). Providers appreciated the flexibility of the funding but were also keen to learn from the successes

of other settings. It was suggested that this learning be compiled and disseminated for the benefit of all early year's providers, either through a series of guides, learning and networking events, or both. Greater emphasis could usefully be placed on publicising existing resources, raising awareness within the sector.

- Finally, in relation to monitoring, providers explained that **standardised data collection tools would help settings evaluate spending and impact on an ongoing basis**, which would be useful in identifying what is working well and any possible areas for improvement, helping to prioritise decision-making and allocations going forward.

Introduction

This report presents findings of a qualitative study exploring providers' experiences of the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP), undertaken as part of the Study of Early Education and Development (SEED). This introduction sets out the research context, study aims and methods.

Research Context

The Study of Early Education and Development (SEED)

The Study of Early Education and Development (SEED) is a major study commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) and undertaken by NatCen Social Research, the University of Oxford, 4Children and Frontier Economics. SEED is an eight-year study following approximately 6,000 children across England from the age of two, through to Key Stage One. SEED aims to assess the impact of early education on school readiness and longer-term outcomes for children including the most disadvantaged children in society.³

This study

This qualitative study was undertaken as part of the Study of Early Education and Development (SEED) to exploring providers' experiences of the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP). The aim of the study was to build in-depth understanding of how EYPP funding is used and its perceived impact on disadvantaged children. The report includes exploration of how settings identified eligible children, how funds were targeted and spending decisions made, as well as provider views on whether EYPP funding had an impact on children's outcomes.

Background and policy context

Pupil premium funding for school aged children has been available since 2011. The Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) was introduced in April 2015 for disadvantaged three and four year olds in receipt of the 15 hours entitlement to receive additional funding to support identified need in improving outcomes. In September 2013 the early free entitlement (15 hours per week over 38 weeks a year or equivalent) was extended to the 20% most disadvantaged two year olds with the funding being further expanded in September 2014 to the 40% most disadvantaged. This left an important financial omission of additional funding support for disadvantaged three and four year olds. The introduction of EYPP was seen as rectifying this by ensuring a continuum of additional funding from 2 years through to 16 years of all identified eligible children and young people to support their learning and

³ The SEED website includes more information about the wider study, see www.seed.natcen.ac.uk. Further details about SEED can also be found on the DfE website, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/study-of-early-education-and-development-seed>

development needs.

The aim of EYPP is to close the gap between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers by providing funding to early years providers to help them raise the quality of their provision.⁴

The eligibility criteria for EYPP mirror the school age pupil premium, being targeted at three and four year olds in any early years setting who:

- Meet the criteria for Free School Meals (FSM); or
- Have been looked after by the Local Authority for at least one day; or
- Have been adopted from care; or
- Are subject of a special guardianship and/or child arrangements order.

EYPP funding is allocated to Local Authorities through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and transferred by Local Authorities to providers in line with the early years education entitlement funding streams. A national amount of £300 per year per eligible child was set and it was agreed that the funding would follow the child if they moved between settings. In reality this means that if a child's take up of the 15 hours free entitlement is split between two providers, the EYPP money is proportioned to represent the split. All providers (private, voluntary, independent, maintained and childminders) are entitled to receive EYPP for their eligible children.

After consultation with the sector it was agreed that providers would be free to decide how funding is used.⁵ The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has produced a toolkit to support early years providers in thinking about how to best use funding to achieve improvements in the learning and development of children.⁶

As with the Schools Pupil Premium, the main accountability route of the effective use of the EYPP is through Ofsted. Under the Common Inspection Framework, inspectors track children in receipt of the EYPP to observe their progress in relation to Early Years Outcomes.

This study was carried out early on in the implementation of EYPP. Data was collected in

⁴ The 'Early Years Pupil Premium and funding for two-year-olds' consultation guidance includes further information about the policy aims, see: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/323495/EY_Funding_ConDoc_-_Branded_final_with_foreword.pdf

⁵ The Government consultation response includes further information regarding outcomes from the consultation: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/367359/Early_years_pupil_premium_government_response_FINAL.pdf

⁶ The Early Education Endowment Foundation Toolkit can be found here: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence/early-years-toolkit/>

March and April 2016, a year after the funding was rolled out nationally in April 2015.

Methodology

Research Aims

The aim of the study was to develop in-depth understanding of how EYPP funding is used and its impact on disadvantaged children. It includes exploration of how settings identified eligible children, how funds were targeted and spending decisions made, and whether settings considered EYPP funding to have had an impact.

Sampling

This was a small qualitative project based on 30 interviews with managers of early years settings that had received EYPP funding. Settings were selected from those who completed the EYPP screening survey, conducted in autumn 2015.⁷

Qualitative interviews took place in March and April 2016. All settings selected for the sample were recorded as having received more than £200 in EYPP funding between April and August 2015 in the screening survey. Although, as this report highlights, there were some instances where data collected in the survey and interviews were not consistent. This could, in part, be due to the fact that settings' allocations of EYPP funding had changed between the autumn term when survey data was collected, and spring term when interview data were collected.

The qualitative study used four key sampling criteria⁸ with a view to include:

- i. A good mix in terms of provider **quality**.⁹
- ii. Settings with a range of **funding levels** (low to high) but with a threshold of EYPP funding over £200 per year.
- iii. A range of settings in **regions** across England.

⁷ Study of Early Education and Development: the Early Years Pupil Premium Screening Survey (unpublished). The screening survey was a short telephone survey of over 200 early years settings who had participated in assessments of quality of provision as part of the SEED study. The survey was carried out by 4Children in October-November 2015. The survey focused on whether the settings had applied and received any EYPP funding and how they used the funding they received. Settings in early implementation areas were excluded from the sample.

⁸ Some sampling criteria, such as the quality score, were collected as part of strand 2 of the SEED longitudinal study. This strand of the wider project collected data about quality from 1,000 settings.

⁹ To ensure diversity in the sample, we focussed on settings' Sustained Shared Thinking and Emotional Wellbeing (SSTEWE) scores and cross-checked these with the Early Childhood Environment Rating (ECERS) scores. The SSTEWE considers adult-child interactions alongside the planning and organisation of learning spaces, to provide a deeper focus on the adult role (Siraj, Kingston & Melhuish, 2015). More information on how SSTEWE quality scores were calculated is set out in Appendix A.

- iv. A spread of **provider type** (private, voluntary and nursery classes attached to schools).

The table below outlines the diversity achieved across the four key sampling criteria. In the reporting of the findings, and where relevant, we have outlined differences across these characteristics.

Table 1: Achieved sample of early years providers

Provider characteristics		No. of providers
Region:	The Midlands (East and West)	5
	Yorkshire and the Humber	5
	East of England	5
	South of England (excluding London)	4
	North East	4
	North West	4
	London	3
Setting type:	Voluntary	12
	Private	11
	Nursery class	7
EYPP funds received per year:	£500<	7
	£500-£1000	8
	£1000-£2000	11
	£2000>	4
Quality score¹⁰:	Excellent	7
	Good	13
	Average/ poor	10

The majority of the interviews were conducted with a member of the management team (the setting manager or the assistant manager); although in some cases paired interviews were conducted with the manager and Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) or the finance officer, where they had a significant role in the allocation or delivery of EYPP.

More detailed information on the providers interviewed including key demographic information can be found at Appendix C.

Recruitment

Initial contact was made by telephone. All sampled settings took part in the 4Children screening survey in autumn 2015 and most were therefore already familiar with the study. During recruitment calls researchers took the opportunity to explain the research, confirm selection criteria and invite participation. Participants were not obliged to take part in the study and consent was collected at the point of recruitment. Participants were given the option to decide whether to take part in the interview by telephone or face-to-face and flexible interview dates and times were offered to maximise participation.

¹⁰ Ibid 6.

Fieldwork and analysis

Fieldwork took place in March and April 2016. A topic guide was used to guide the discussions (see Appendix B). Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes and were conducted by researchers at NatGen and 4Children. All interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of participants and transcribed.

The qualitative data were analysed using Framework - an approach to qualitative data management that is systematic and comprehensive. This approach ensures the study's findings are robust and grounded in the data (Ritchie et al., 2013). Verbatim interview quotations and short case illustrations are provided in the report to highlight key themes and findings where appropriate.

The project was carried out in accordance with the ISO20252 international quality standard for market and social research.

Contextual factors affecting the delivery of provision

In discussing the demographics of the local area, a number of providers reported that their settings were located in areas which were perceived to have high levels of poverty and deprivation. This was true of both rural and urban locations. Providers who delivered services in areas of high deprivation explained the prevalence of other factors such as:

- Unemployment
- Illness and disability
- Poor housing and living conditions

The proportions of children eligible for EYPP in areas where providers reported high levels of local deprivation typically ranged from 10% to 30%. One participant reported that 50% of their eligible three and four year old cohort had been awarded EYPP. Unsurprisingly these settings also had high proportions of families who were eligible for free funded hours for disadvantaged two year olds. In such deprived communities, providers thought that community needs were substantially greater than in more affluent areas.

It is important local deprivation levels and associated contextual factors are borne in mind when interpreting the findings presented in this report, as they were considered to have played a role in decision-making for some providers. For example, factors such as high levels of unemployment, poor literacy skills and ESOL needs amongst parents were perceived to have impacted on the EYPP application process. Contextual factors were also thought to have influenced the spending and targeting of EYPP funding.

Other providers reported that they were delivering provision in areas of greater affluence, and these areas had lower proportions of children in receipt of EYPP (typically between 0-

2% at the time of interview).¹¹ There were also settings who thought their catchment areas were more mixed in terms of the families that used their services. Some of these providers had seen their levels of EYPP funding change along with fluctuating eligibility over the year. There was a perception that the changeable nature of eligibility in more mixed areas made the funding allocations harder to manage, especially in terms of forward planning.

In addition to perceptions of deprivation, providers were required to support a mixture of learning and health needs in the children they cared for. They reported that it was sometimes challenging to support these needs within the constraints of the funding and resources available to them,¹² and thus had to consider how to best provide specialist care within the context of more mainstream provision. Considerations of how to spend EYPP funding fed into these decision-making processes. Additional needs reported by providers included special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and more general communication needs, including some children with English as a second language (ESOL). As the report will highlight in detail, there was evidence of providers allocating EYPP funding specifically to benefit and support children with such needs.

Limitations of the research

The findings presented in this report reflect the range and diversity of views and experiences among early years providers. As this was a small scale qualitative study, the prevalence of views and experiences arising from the data are not reported. It is also worth noting that EYPP was only introduced in April 2015 and this study therefore captures the views and experiences of those involved at an early point in the delivery of this programme. It is likely that the experiences and views of providers will further develop over time as the programme beds down.

Structure of the report

The remaining chapters present the findings from the study, as follows:

- Chapter 2: Eligibility and the application process
- Chapter 3: Use of EYPP
- Chapter 4: Decision making and monitoring
- Chapter 5: Perceived impacts
- Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations

¹¹ Though providers were sampled on the basis of having a threshold of EYPP funding over £200, this was based on information collected through the survey which took place in autumn 2015. At the time fieldwork took place, some providers EYPP allocations had changed, which is why some reported fewer eligible children and lower levels of EYPP funding.

¹² Funding issues in relation to SEND are discussed in more detail in other SEED reports; see Griggs and Bussard, *Study of Early Education and Development: Meeting the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities in the early years* (2017), and chapter 6 in Blainey and Paull, *Study of Early Education and Development (SEED): The cost and funding of early education: Research results* (2017).

Eligibility and the application process

This chapter sets out findings on providers' approaches to identifying children eligible for EYPP, highlighting some of the differences between providers. Challenges with the application processes and approaches adopted to support better identification of eligible children are explored. The chapter also considers provider experiences and views of the practical process of applying for and receiving EYPP funding and how this differs between providers of different sizes.

Understanding providers' experiences of making EYPP applications and some of the barriers faced during this process will be helpful in considering the future design, roll-out and delivery of EYPP and other similar programmes.

Identifying eligible children and supporting applications

Children aged between three and four years old are eligible for EYPP funding if they receive government-funded early education, their parents receive specific means-tested benefits, and a number of other criteria set out in the previous chapter. It is the responsibility of the parent(s) to apply for EYPP, which in most cases involves completing a form that checks for eligibility based on parental income. Some providers collect information from parents and make applications to Local Authorities on their behalf and others rely on parents to make direct applications. Applications are returned to the Local Authority and processed according to whether the parent(s) meet eligibility requirements. When awarded, funding is transferred directly to the childcare provider (or providers) that the eligible child attends. There are no restrictions on how the provider spends this money. Differences in approach are highlighted throughout this chapter.

Participants reported some frustrations with the process of identifying eligible children. In some cases this was due to the fact that parents (not providers) were required to make individual applications for EYPP to the Local Authority. Some providers had made efforts to actively target parents whom they thought might be eligible for the funding, often on the basis that their children were, or had been, eligible for other subsidies such as the provision for disadvantaged two year-olds or because other siblings were eligible. Other providers reported that they engaged in less targeted techniques to identify eligibility, and instead tried to encourage *all* parents to consider whether their child might be eligible, often as part of standardised information and dissemination processes at enrolment, or the start of term. They thought that this approach normalised applying, as the form was part of a standard process of collecting parent information.

A number of barriers were perceived that made the process of identification and parental application more difficult:

- Some parents could not complete forms due to literacy or ESOL needs. For a number of settings this was a significant barrier and measures were required to enable and encourage these families to apply for EYPP.
- There was a perceived lack of motivation among some parents to apply for EYPP. Participants thought that this lack of motivation may have been linked to EYPP funding going directly to the childcare provider, and it was therefore difficult for parents to link the application process to potential benefits for their child.
- Some providers explained that application forms required extensive personal information (including National Insurance numbers) from parents which they often did not have to hand when providers were completing forms with them. Without such information providers were unable to complete forms on behalf of parents. Following experience of this particular barrier, some providers started to request National Insurance numbers from parents as part of standard registration processes so that they had the relevant information to hand.
- Another barrier related to the stigma parents might feel in applying for EYPP funding, as it is for disadvantaged children. This might lead parents to complete forms dishonestly to avoid being negatively labelled. Linked to this, there was a concern that by targeting parents to apply for EYPP, providers could inadvertently increase the chances of them feeling stigmatised. It was thus thought that the identification process should be handled sensitively to ensure it was as transparent, accessible and supportive as possible.

In light of these barriers, providers across different setting types reported that lower numbers of applications had been made for EYPP than they expected. To increase the identification of children and the chances of receiving additional funding, the following strategies were used to motivate and support parents to apply:

- **Some providers focused on providing additional practical support** to parents to complete application forms. This was often given face-to-face and started with explaining the process in more detail to ease any fears the parent might have. Following this, some providers helped parents fill out application forms.
- **There was evidence of multiple and varied attempts to identify eligible children** using a range of promotional materials such as flyers and leaflets and discussing EYPP in forums attended by parents, including welcome meetings and parent days. Again, the aim of these activities seemed to be to market the benefits of EYPP and make it as easy as possible for parents to consider whether their children might be eligible and, if so, to apply.
- **Some implemented strategies to motivate parents to complete applications.** This included discussing the potential benefits for their children of being awarded the funding. Several providers offered more tangible benefits to parents, for example, discounted or free school uniforms. Unfortunately, it seemed that these strategies were not always as successful as providers hoped they would be.

'What we find is that very few people do actually return it [the application form]. We've offered incentives of free sweatshirts and all of that sort of thing, but again we've had a very low uptake.' (Nursery class, North East of England)

Illustration 1

One nursery class was concerned that not all eligible parents would be identified, and as a result, that some children might miss out on funding. In the first instance the nursery sent letters and forms to all parents regarding EYPP. Unfortunately, this resulted in very few forms being returned. In subsequent terms, staff looked into ways that they might better target and support the process and decided to approach parents when they arrived to drop off and pick up their children for sessions. Staff then sat with parents to complete the EYPP applications together.

'We were incredibly thorough in the process for checking eligibility, because we were very anxious that we would be missing parents, so, actually, we did it on a one-to-one basis with every single parent.'

The setting intended to extend this approach to the registration process for new starters; parents would be informed of the benefits of EYPP and asked to complete an application form with a member of staff during an initial home visit. The provider explained that this flexible and thorough strategy had increased the number of successful applications.

(Nursery class, London)

In addition to strategies adopted by providers to encourage the identification of children and applications from parents, several participants explained that they had received support from their Local Authority to address barriers, which was highly valued. For example, one Local Authority sent a list of FAQs and additional information to providers to help with identification and application processes. There was also evidence that some Local Authorities had developed tools to help providers check eligibility before asking parents to complete and send off EYPP applications. This was considered to have additional benefits in supporting providers to forward plan.

Whilst providers had adopted appropriate strategies to aid identification, in general they perceived there to be a lack of clarity on exactly what criteria Local Authorities used to establish eligibility. Some providers reported instances of applying for funding for children in very similar circumstances, where one would be awarded EYPP and the other would not. There was therefore a call for more transparency around the criteria for eligibility to ensure that both parents and providers could accurately identify situations in which children were likely to be eligible.

The lack of clarity relating to eligibility criteria may have been partly due to the fact that EYPP had been rolled out less than a year before the interviews took place, and providers

were still becoming familiar with the new system. Furthermore providers may not have fully understood some of the more detailed or nuanced criteria underlying decisions around eligibility; for example that a family in receipt of one benefit may be eligible, while another family in receipt of a different benefit may not, even though their situations appear to be very similar.

The majority of settings interviewed did not have 'looked after children' (LAC) on their roll and therefore did not claim EYPP funding for LAC. Those providers with looked after children, reported that the process of identification happened automatically; in some cases through the virtual school heads (VSH),¹³ which they reported worked well. Several participants reported they had regular meetings with the VSH to discuss how EYPP money would be used for the relevant children at the settings. However, others seemed less clear about how the process of receiving funding for LAC worked. Some of these participants claimed not to know about VSH, though it is likely that somebody else within the setting; perhaps within a business administration or finance team, dealt with this process.

Provider experiences of receiving EYPP

Total amounts of EYPP funding paid to each provider are calculated each term on the basis of how many children are eligible. Therefore the more eligible children on a roll, the more money a provider receives. Settings participating in the research received between £300-£4000 in the term during which they completed the survey; the average amount received was £1,206.50.

Total amounts received varied over the few terms providers had been claiming it, in line with the numbers of eligible children attending. Most providers reported that they received funding after applications had been submitted, usually towards the end of the term.

Some providers reported that they were happy with the systems that had been established to allocate and pay EYPP funds. This was particularly true of larger providers who invariably received larger amounts of EYPP funding and had more flexibility around funding generally. Participants from these settings did not, for example, perceive it to be a problem that funding came at the end of the term as they were able to borrow from other funding streams in the meantime. Furthermore, these settings did not necessarily perceive administrative burdens in relation to application processes. The processing of applications and payments for larger settings was often made simpler through access to specialist administration staff who could help with such tasks. These jobs therefore did not fall to setting managers.

Whilst providers were generally content with the approaches Local Authorities adopted to process and allocate EYPP funding, a number of concerns and barriers were raised:

¹³ Virtual school heads are responsible for promoting the educational achievement of all the children looked after by the local authority they work for. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pupil-premium-virtual-school-heads-responsibilities>.

- Providers reported they were often not informed of how many (and which) children had been awarded EYPP until they received payments at the end of the term. This was perceived to be a barrier as providers could not easily plan how to spend EYPP funds and communicate this to staff without a clear indication of how much they would get.

'I need to let the staff know how many children are eligible and then we need to have a look at how we're going to spend the money. Well, you can't do that until you know exactly how many children you've got and the amount you're going to receive. So that's been difficult.' (Private setting, East of England)

- For smaller providers and those with fewer children eligible for EYPP, the process of applying for funding, including support offered to parents to complete forms, was perceived to be disproportionate in relation to the amounts received. The administration required was thought to be resource and time intensive, and for some, not a particularly worthwhile use of time, especially at management levels.
- Another issue highlighted by some providers was the fact that EYPP funding was often transferred to settings in a single payment with universal funding for three and four year-olds, which made it hard to identify levels of funding and ring-fence it accordingly. Furthermore, some providers reported that there were difficulties in checking EYPP payments to ensure they received the correct amounts. Linked to an earlier point, this was perceived to be complicated by the fact that providers did not know in advance of receiving funding how many children were eligible, and therefore how much they were likely to receive.

'I would prefer it if the pupil premium was sent separately so you know exactly how much you've got to evidence that you've spent on these children.' (Private setting, West Midlands)

- The timing of some payments towards the end of term was also considered problematic, especially in terms of targeting EYPP spending on specific children. For example one provider explained that they wanted to employ a Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) but could not plan for them to start until after the first term as the funding arrived too late. Furthermore, when funding was awarded, it was less than the provider had expected and they therefore had to find the additional money required to pay the SLT they had organised. Greater clarity around eligibility criteria, advance notice of funding allocations and a speedier process for allocating funding to providers would help settings plan more effectively, especially when budgets are tight.

'So if next term, for after Easter, if I was to apply for the children I think would be entitled to it, I wouldn't know until the end of July if those children were going to get that money. So you can't plan anything.' (Voluntary setting, West Midlands)

- Finally one provider reported a lack of information and clarity on the details of when and how they could start applying for EYPP, which meant that they missed out on

making applications during the first term. This particular participant felt that the Local Authority could have done more to make providers aware of the necessary information and cut-off dates.

Use of EYPP

This chapter presents important evidence on how EYPP has been used. It highlights the range of ways in which providers spent EYPP allocations, including how they sought to address key learning and development needs. The efforts of providers to target funding on eligible children is discussed in detail alongside efforts to ensure there was longevity in any investments made. Whilst targeting was evident amongst providers, the research found that decisions were taken to make more general improvements to settings, resources and staff.

The chapter also presents evidence on the pooling of EYPP funds and needs assessments undertaken by providers. Finally, it sets out providers' future plans for the use of EYPP funding.

Targeting and needs assessments

Overall, there seemed to be a drive to use EYPP money to purchase goods and services to directly support those children for whom funding was received; this suggests that providers understood the policy focus on directing funding towards eligible children. In this way, providers tried to ensure that they targeted spending on improvements that would support the particular needs of eligible children, and as already highlighted some settings made very specific purchases of resources and toys for those with specific learning needs. Additional staff resources and training funded through EYPP was also targeted to support the development and learning needs of eligible children.

Two key learning and development needs; communication, and widening children's experiences were highlighted by providers as prevalent among the eligible population and guided decisions around how funds were used. More traditional education needs, such as literacy were also identified and supported in a targeted way.

As previously highlighted, significant proportions of eligible children in some settings had developmental delays in speech, language and communication. Previous research has emphasised the links between speech and language delays and social disadvantage, (Communication Council, 2015) and participants in this study perceived that difficulties with communication prohibited children from learning and benefiting from the early years education provided. Providers felt that it was important to support these needs where possible and used EYPP money to purchase specific resources for these children. Staff resources were perceived to be particularly useful in addressing speech and language needs with participants reporting that they used the money to provide training for existing staff (including speech and language training), and/or to provide speech and language professionals to work with eligible children on a regular basis.

'Communication and language in this area is, is a huge issue and a huge problem. It's something that we have to plough some money in. Now, we are looking at

actually using the, some of the EYPP now to bring in speech therapists.’ (Voluntary setting, North West of England)

Specialist staff resources were expensive and several providers had considered alternative ways to provide the support needed. For example, in one setting they used the support of a Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) to upskill an early years practitioner to be a language champion to enable her to run regular sessions for eligible and non-eligible children.

Literacy and numeracy needs were also identified as areas where EYPP funding could be usefully targeted on eligible children. Spending here seemed to be geared towards helping the children prepare for primary school, where the learning environment is more structured. Amongst other things, providers reported that they purchased homework bags, an interactive whiteboard and ‘Numicon’ resources to address numeracy and literacy needs.

Whilst spending decisions clearly took into account the needs of eligible children, some participants highlighted that there were children eligible for EYPP funding who did not have additional needs, and likewise, non-EYPP eligible children with additional needs. Therefore, an ethical question was raised for some about whether the funding should be targeted at those children regardless, or if money could be better spent supporting non-eligible children with particular educational needs. Providers were therefore keen to ensure there was longevity in any investments made and were hopeful that EYPP funding would continue to benefit all children in the future. Providers acknowledged and welcomed the fact that a wider group of children would stand to benefit from investments and improvements made possible by EYPP.

‘We want the money to be sustainable; we want it to impact on individual children, but also be sustainable for all.’ (Voluntary setting, West Midlands)

Illustration 2

A child attending a voluntary setting was selectively mute and talked only with some children and did not talk to staff at all. Since he enjoyed spending time outside, staff decided to focus EYPP funding on something that he could use and play with outdoors that might encourage him to develop his communication skills. Following consultation with staff across the setting, a mud kitchen was purchased which the child was encouraged to use alongside others to extend his experiences and promote communication between peers. Staff noted that the mud kitchen was widely used by children at the setting, creating the same benefits for the wider group.

'The last lot [of EYPP money], bought a much-sought-after mud kitchen for outside. This is really targeting the boys, who are constantly outside building mud castles and playing in the mud, and the girls have been hankering after a mud kitchen for some time too... it's really to sort of encourage communication, language, really, and working together as a team.'

This case study highlights the ways in which providers considered the needs of individual eligible children and made decisions from which a much wider group of children benefited. It also highlights the diversity and flexibility available to settings to spend EYPP funding on whatever they thought would be most beneficial.

(Voluntary setting, North West of England)

Key uses for EYPP funding

As outlined in the previous section, in some cases EYPP spending was directly targeted at eligible children. However, providers also discussed a range of ways in which they used EYPP funding more broadly. This differed considerably according to the size of provider, level of funding and needs of children who attended the setting. Providers that received more funding reported that they were able to do more with it, though often the needs they were trying to meet were perceived to be more wide-ranging or significant.

Two key recurring uses were highlighted across provider types. The first of these involved using funding for resources to help with speech, language and communication. Providers highlighted speech and language as a key development need amongst the disadvantaged group targeted by EYPP.

'Communication and language is one of the big barriers for these children, and there's lots of reasons as to why the communication and language is poor: capacity of parents, the parenting skills, left in prams hours upon day, sat in front of TVs, so they're hearing things, they're listening to language, and nobody's actually talking to them and waiting for them to reply.' (Voluntary setting, North West of England)

Having highlighted speech and language as a key issue, providers took particular efforts to improve the range and quality of resources available to support children with these difficulties. This included purchasing toys and learning materials aimed at improving speech and language as well as using the money more generally to improve elements of the learning environment to help support for speech and language development.

The second key focus for EYPP spending was on supporting children to play and learn outside. Providers reported using the money to improve (physical) outdoor spaces, purchase equipment and resources that could be used to encourage outdoor play and fund trips away from the classroom. Focused spending on this area was intended to widen children's experiences of the outdoors, improve their understanding of the natural world and encourage healthy learning activities. For example, one provider explained that they had used EYPP to enable the children to attend 'Forest School', a programme where children are taken to woodland settings to learn and play outdoors. Another provider used the funding to buy resources to run a 'living eggs project' where the children were involved in hatching eggs and looking after the chicks for several weeks.

Another nursery used the money from one term to significantly improve their outdoor space. This included the creation of a growing area so that children could learn about, help plant and look after flowers and vegetables. Funding was also used to lay grass and paving stones to make outdoor space more attractive and inviting for children to play in, and to purchase equipment that could be used outdoors, such as bikes. This participant, who worked for a medium sized provider located in an urban setting, explained that she had taken strategic decisions to improve the outdoor space. She hoped the improvements would be of great benefit to all children who attended the nursery, as some did not have access to outdoor space at home. Other providers echoed these points in explaining why they had focused on investing in outdoor spaces and resources.

'We have completely transformed our outdoor area. That was based on recognising that 60% of our families don't have gardens. So we wanted to make sure that our outside area was an exciting environment for the children to develop their skills in.'
(Voluntary setting, South West of England)

The activities described were perceived to be important because participants thought they positively supported the wider learning and development of children, especially those with additional needs. Investments in these types of activities can be linked to the focus in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) on outdoor learning.¹⁴

There was also evidence of providers using EYPP funding to purchase equipment and resources to support eligible children. In these instances, EYPP was considered to have

¹⁴ The EYFS framework highlights the importance of physical development and understanding the world. It also states that providers must provide access to outdoor play areas or ensure outdoor activities are planned on a daily basis. See: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/335504/EYFS_framework_from_1_September_2014_with_clarification_note.pdf

helped provide additional things of benefit to children with very particular needs. Providers who used funding in this way explained that they made specific decisions on a case by case basis and weighed up the potential costs and benefits. For example, one provider used some EYPP money to purchase puppets and CDs for a sensory room to benefit an eligible child whose parents were deaf in order to help with his language development.

Providers described several other priorities that they aimed to address in eligible children using EYPP funding, including:

- Organising and purchasing extra-curricular experiences such as days out to the theatre or seaside for the children and parents to broaden learning experiences. This was more likely to be a focus for providers based in urban and/ or deprived areas where it was perceived that children might lack exposure to these kinds of opportunities.
- Resources and training to better support parents to help their children learn or to involve them in setting activities. One provider used the funding to run courses for parents focussing on parenting skills they thought would benefit eligible children including behaviour management, sleep and toilet training.
- Resources such as new furniture, books, games and tools to assist with learning, such as iPads. This allocation of EYPP funding seemed to be less targeted at eligible children, but was perceived to have far-reaching benefits for all children and the setting more generally. In these instances settings did not discuss how they would report this more untargeted spend to Ofsted or the Local Authority.
- Additional staff resources to work with children on specific areas of development such as speech and language. There were also examples where the funding was used to provide additional training or for the professional development of staff.

Illustration 3

One provider who had pooled funding with other local settings explained that they had been able to use EYPP funding strategically to employ a part-time SLT and to deliver joined-up training with staff across the group of settings. Training included Makaton, language and communication skills and improving adult-child interactions, all topics the providers felt would bring about positive impacts for eligible children.

The same provider also used funding to run classes for parents to support the development and learning experiences of children outside the setting. Classes focussed on speech and language, behaviour management, toilet training and sleep; topics that the provider explained were selected to address the development needs of those eligible for EYPP.

'It's a group which the parent and the child attends and we target those parents and they are the ones that the children have significant delay and who receive EYPP... When you look at those EYPP children it is these prime areas where those delays are, which we are addressing.'

(Voluntary Provider, South East of England)

Pooling EYPP funding

Providers in receipt of EYPP funding are able to pool money allocated across settings locally or within a group of managed nurseries to support more strategic expenditure, for example to fund a new staff post. Several providers reported pooling all of their funding across nurseries to enable the money to be spent across settings and used more efficiently (though there did not seem to be any particular differences in how these providers spent EYPP money in comparison to providers that did not pool funding). Some flexibility was maintained to enable individual settings to make requests for specific pots of EYPP money if there was a particular need. Providers who had done this seemed broadly happy with the opportunities pooling created, but were keen to retain the ability to make autonomous decisions where a need was identified. Others, who had not had experience of pooling, thought that it could potentially enable them to do more with the money or access additional resources.

Finally, there were some participants who were more negative about the option of pooling. These individuals often worked for smaller providers and perceived there to be limited money available through EYPP. Furthermore, they were concerned that they might not be able to meet the specific needs of (individual) children if they opted to share funds with other local providers.

Added value

Participants emphasised that they had been able to finance activities, or purchase services and goods that they would not have been able to afford otherwise. This was perceived to be particularly true if providers had been able to pay for additional staff time using EYPP. Using EYPP to pay for staff resource was more common amongst larger providers who received more funding for more eligible pupils. Linked to this, larger providers had greater confidence that EYPP funding would continue on the basis of their (predicted) eligible cohort.

EYPP also contributed to staff feeling valued in their work, particularly with groups of children who had additional needs and required increased or more intensive support. Providers acknowledged that resources tended to be stretched within the public sector, and funds like EYPP signalled to early years providers that the government valued their important contribution to working with young children and supporting their development.

'I think the nursery staff actually feel valued because they're getting a pot of money that is dedicated to their children, instead of 'oh nursery can manage without that', which can be the attitude in lots of schools. It's raising up the status of nursery education and it's showing the value I personally place on education.' (Voluntary setting, West Midlands)

Conversely, other providers placed less value on the benefits of EYPP and reported that they may have done some of the things they used EYPP for, even if they had not received the funding. One participant explained that EYPP had been used to purchase staff time for an SLT that she felt should have been part of the core funded service offered to those with communication needs. To this end, this participant thought that funding an SLT was vital, and reported that she probably would have found a way to do it even without EYPP. This feeling was echoed by providers who received comparatively little EYPP funding because they had fewer eligible pupils. There was a sense amongst these providers that they would have explored options to support children with additional needs in other ways if the funding had not been available to them.

Future plans for use of EYPP funding

When asked about how they would spend future allocations of EYPP money, most providers explained that they wanted to extend and enhance improvements they had already made using EYPP funding. In this way, providers planned to further broaden the experiences of children and support learning and development needs that had been identified early on. For example, in one setting where speech and language had been highlighted as a significant need, they planned to continue to focus on this, further developing services. A desire to build on existing strategies was closely linked to a perception that EYPP had a positive impact on both providers and children since being introduced.

There was also evidence to suggest that providers were keen to explore alternative options for using EYPP. For example, one participant explained that they were considering purchasing musical equipment that would help children with concentration and movement skills, having spent early allocations on resources to help children with communication needs. Others reported that they would look to prioritise spending on outdoor activities, such as trips to the seaside, as they moved into the summer term. In all instances, participants seemed to be keen to ensure that EYPP enhanced the learning environment and experience for children, and that they got as much value from the resources purchased as possible.

Finally, and as highlighted earlier in this chapter, some providers explained they may explore opportunities to pool funding with other settings in the future, as they thought it would help them to be more strategic in their decision-making. However, there was little evidence of providers who had not already pooled their funding making concrete plans to set up pooling arrangements at the time fieldwork took place.

Decision making and monitoring of EYPP spend

This chapter presents important evidence on the broad range of approaches taken by providers to decide how to use EYPP funding, including how this differed by the type and size of setting. The involvement of parents and other stakeholders such as the Local Authority is also set out in this chapter, and is useful in building our understanding of other influences impacting on decision-making and targeting of funds. Finally, findings are presented on providers' approaches to, and views on, monitoring EYPP spending and impact, which includes some important recommendations from providers on how this might be further streamlined and improved.

Making decisions about spending EYPP funding

There are no restrictions or guidelines on how providers spend EYPP money. Each provider is therefore able to make spending decisions appropriate to their setting and take the needs of eligible children into consideration. Participants welcomed the freedom they had to spend the money how they wanted as it gave them flexibility to respond to contextual factors and needs.

'I do like the freedom, yeah, because one size does not fit all... we've got very different needs to another setting down the road.' (Voluntary setting, Yorkshire and the Humber)

Participants outlined two approaches to making decisions about how EYPP was spent, which differed amongst provider type and size. Smaller settings and those with more informal management structures tended to engage in collaborative and joint decision-making processes involving staff at different levels and those working closely with eligible children. The involvement of front-line staff in making decisions about EYPP funding was perceived to be particularly beneficial as these staff were likely to have the most direct contact with the children and thus understanding of their needs. For other larger providers and those in the private and voluntary sectors, this process seemed to be more formal and structured. Decisions therefore appeared to be considered in leadership meetings or with boards of trustees, depending on how the setting was managed. This may have been a natural consequence of these settings having larger pots of EYPP funding requiring more strategic coordination.

Regardless of whether decision making was more or less formal or who it involved, providers discussed a number of practical ways in which they made decisions about allocating funding. This included:

- Informal observations and experiences of working with children;
- Utilising data on the development and progress of children, particularly those eligible for EYPP funding and with specialist needs;

- Consideration of research on how best to support children with specific development needs. This included the EEF toolkit, which was used by a small number of settings to look at different ways to support learning. This strategy helped several settings consider how they might use EYPP to support speech, language and communication needs, as improvements in this area were proven to have a wide range of benefits to children and their families.

It was paramount for providers that EYPP funds were used to achieve as much impact as possible. Therefore, they gave careful consideration to a range of evidence to help guide decision-making and sought to be creative with the funds. For example, some providers pooled funding with other local settings, supplemented EYPP with other funding streams, or where possible, (and often if the setting was attached to a school) sought to utilise or purchase additional time from staff already working with the setting.

Furthermore, and as previously highlighted, staff gave consideration to how to best balance the needs of individual eligible children as well as ensure long-term improvements and investments for all children.

'When they say it's for individual children, this is the little bit I struggle with, because those children are only here for a year, and then they don't take it with them. So, it's trying to find something that will benefit children year after year.' (Private setting, East of England)

On the whole, providers reported that parents were not actively involved in making decisions about how EYPP was spent. However, it was considered beneficial to try and engage parents in the process and keep them informed of how EYPP had been used, as well as plans for future spending. Providers sought to do this informally as well as through more structured information-giving sessions and thought that informing parents of progress had added benefits of supporting their ongoing engagement in identification processes, which was ultimately important to settings receiving the money to which they were entitled.

Providers using the money to work more directly with parents (e.g. to provide parenting courses) explained that they were more involved in decision-making. Others said that they would like to involve parents more and some had plans to improve their engagement in the future, including the use of questionnaires to better understand parent views on how EYPP should be spent. However, there were concerns that increased parental engagement would only be possible and worthwhile if settings received higher levels of funding, as it would take time (which itself costs money) to properly involve them.

Whilst most reported high levels of flexibility on how EYPP could be used, a number of providers reported outside influences on spending decisions. This included one provider that was offered guidance on targeting EYPP money from their Local Authority and another voluntary provider that was required to seek advice from a board of governors. In both instances, the guidance offered was perceived to be useful, but lengthened the process of purchasing the necessary goods and services.

Monitoring EYPP spend

Providers discussed a range of methods for tracking the impact of EYPP. This included formal processes such as the use of monitoring spreadsheets, and less formal methods, including documenting learning journeys, taking photos and observing sessions. Whilst a range of approaches were taken, most providers explained that they used systems already in place to monitor the progress of children attending the setting. These systems tended to collect data (regardless of whether the child had been awarded EYPP or not), and were perceived to be useful in identifying the needs of EYPP children and highlighting priorities for future EYPP spend.

‘That’s just done through my normal monitoring tool... so it’s not really any extra work...but I would expect to see those children that we have pinpointed, so see their levels [attainment] coming up , and if they’re not, then it’s discussions with supervision and individual key workers.’ (Voluntary setting, Yorkshire and the Humber)

Some participants reported that they had started to consider how they might collect and use management information over and above data that they would normally collect to better explore impact in the future, as it was thought that better monitoring would be helpful to further target specialised support. For example, one setting reported that they would like to compare monitoring information on outcomes collected for eligible and ineligible children to better understand progress amongst those with additional learning and development needs. Some also acknowledged that it was likely that Ofsted would want information on how EYPP funding had been spent and were keeping formal records in anticipation of such requests. In order to collect the right information in a timely way, providers wanted tools capable of capturing relevant data quickly and easily.

Furthermore, there was broad consensus that providers would welcome additional support and guidance to monitor spending and assess effectiveness, including at a more strategic level and across settings. For these kinds of evaluation activities, standardised tools would be necessary. Careful consideration would also need to be given to ensure that sites were not over-burdened with too much additional administration. If evaluation tools were rolled out, smaller providers in particular may struggle to fulfil data management requirements.

Another view held by some of the smaller providers, who received lower levels of EYPP funding, was that they thought it would be difficult to properly monitor impacts on such a small cohort with the presence of so many other external factors. These settings reported fewer and less effective impact monitoring activities, though again, there was an acknowledgement that some reporting might be necessary for Ofsted even if plans had not been fully thought through.

Perceived impacts of EYPP

This chapter sets out the range of provider views on the perceived impacts of EYPP on both children and settings more generally. It is an important indication of the extent to which providers thought that EYPP could make a difference. There is a particular focus on eligible children with additional needs, which is where providers targeted most support. While providers reported a range of impacts, they tended to focus on soft outcomes (such as improved confidence levels and general well-being), which is likely to be partly due to the fact that EYPP was still relatively new at the point at which interviews were conducted. With that in mind, participants highlighted that there was potential for impacts to change and build over time. This chapter also considers perceived barriers to achieving positive impacts.

Perceived impacts on children

Participants across different provider types explained that children had benefited from the additionality of EYPP, including the provision of specialist resources and services that may have been otherwise unaffordable. By carefully considering the needs of eligible children and how funds might be used to help address these, providers thought they had utilised the EYPP effectively to achieve maximum impact, especially across soft measures. The level of perceived impact and ways in which providers discussed impact differed according to factors such as the size of the setting and number of eligible children. However, a number of recurring views emerged, which are discussed in this chapter.

Providers placed particular emphasis on supporting learning and targeting children who needed additional educational support; this included a focus on speech and language (as discussed above). Participants reported that as a result of resources procured through EYPP, children were more confident in communicating both with peers and staff, were better able to build relationships and could listen and stay engaged in other activities for longer periods of time. Providers explained that that they had seen evidence of positive changes in children with these educational needs and some reported that they thought that attainment gaps had narrowed as a result of the additional funding. This was not however an outcome that had been properly measured and more reflects participants' perceptions of change.

Illustration 4

One provider took the decision to use EYPP funding to support speech, language and communication needs within their setting. This provider discussed the case of an eligible child who was below the expected levels on early communication measures, and had made very little initial progress. To address the needs of this child and others who attended the setting, a Speech and Language Therapist had been recruited using EYPP funding. The SLT carried out a detailed assessment of this particular child, put in place plans to support her learning in nursery and met with her parents to share strategies that could be used at home to support her development. A tailored approach was taken, and the setting reported that the child's communication and language skills had improved significantly as a result.

'At data capture one which was on entry, she was below [average] in listening and attention, understanding and speaking, so we put her into one of our targeted groups in nursery. She didn't make a huge amount of progress at first, so, as a result of this, the speech and language therapist did a detailed individual assessment on her, and set personalised targets. She then received individual support from one of the speech and language teaching assistants, probably two or three times a week... This tailored support has enabled her to move into the age appropriate band in all three of the areas of communication and language, and will continue to ensure that this progress is maintained.'

This provider reported that a key benefit of EYPP was that it was possible to identify and target children earlier and ensure that interventions continue as children progress to mandatory education.

(Nursery Class, North East of England)

Providers that had used EYPP funding to provide additional staff resources were confident that children had benefited significantly from having more one-to-one time with staff (existing and new).

'I think that definitely encouraged the speech a lot further than it would have done if he was just left within the larger group' (Voluntary setting, East of England)

Additional one-to-one staff time was seen to be particularly beneficial for those with more acute needs, including behavioural issues, and was perceived to be something that settings would not have been able to provide without the funding.

Providers felt that EYPP had helped frontline staff to think about how they might better support and provide for eligible children, including those with additional needs. They argued EYPP had helped to focus the attention of staff on children who needed additional support, including in cases where it may not have been immediately obvious.

'So I suppose we are focussing on those particular children like in terms of observations and feedback to parents... you're concentrating on those few children and you're thinking more of them.' (Private setting, West Midlands)

Furthermore, providers reported that they had a better awareness and understanding of children's backgrounds and ways to better support them, aside from using EYPP funding to purchase additional resources. Supporting parents in the application process highlighted some potential difficulties faced by families' eligible for EYPP and helped providers to have conversations with parents about ways the setting could help them. This included, for example, discussing home and family situations and signposting parents to wrap-around services for advice on other issues such as housing and welfare benefits. Whilst this focus on eligible children was largely perceived to be positive, some expressed concerns that it might come at the detriment of working with other children who also needed additional support. However, most providers seemed to address this by working flexibly and openly with eligible and ineligible children equally.

Finally some providers noted softer yet equally valuable impacts around what could be summarised as an extension of a learning experience, again particularly for disadvantaged children. These providers perceived the impacts of improved outdoor play areas, trips and outings as vital to opening children's minds, improving relationships and increased levels of happiness and wellbeing more generally.

'I think one of our SEN children, he in particular has just been completely in awe of being outside, near nature going into the woods, building things with sticks. I think it's had a real impact on him in particular because he is unfortunately somebody who is put in a buggy and I think you know, just being able to walk past a field and see a squirrel or a pheasant, and being able to extend his learning and language, because that's something he isn't exposed to. So from his point of view I think it's had a huge impact on his overall development' (Voluntary setting, South West of England).

Illustration 5

One private provider explained that their main focus for spending EYPP funding had been to facilitate learning outdoors. They felt that outdoor play had a wide-range of benefits for children, including improved physical development and in imagination and creativity.

The provider explained that they had used EYPP funding to purchase 'Forest School' sessions (hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or other natural environment) and 'Hopla' (a box of toys and resources aimed at improving personal and social development). These things had been chosen to target the specific needs of eligible children, especially in relation to speech, language and communication. The provider had noted particular improvements in the development of targeted children, including in their interactions with peers.

'Those two children... their listening has really improved, they seem to be able to be more attentive, they hold - their attention span has improved tremendously... now I notice, now they're playing as a team in the games that we play outside'

(Private setting, West Midlands)

Perceived impacts on settings

As highlighted throughout the report, there was an overwhelming sense that the benefits of EYPP were felt more widely than just by the eligible children and their families. Providers were keen to ensure that expenditure addressed the needs of the setting as whole and that benefits had legacy for future cohorts, even in instances where settings received very little funding. Considering the resources that were purchased, improvements to physical spaces and training of staff, this notion of ensuring lasting benefits seemed to be very much in the minds of those making decisions. At the same time, providers reported that they had been given the space and flexibility to respond to particular needs of individual children, without having to engage in too many or highly burdensome processes to acquire financial support. This helped settings to be responsive to the ever-changing needs of their local communities.

'I guess it's having that budget there... With us being a non-profit making organisation anything that we're budgeting for, you're waiting on. You save up and get it. Whereas now this is a fund that goes into the pot so I know what's in that pot. So I can look and be in charge of that budget and say yeah, that's there, we can go out or we can get that. It's not a matter of going to the committee and saying this is what I need, you know, can I get the funds for that, because I know that that's there and I know that it's apportioned to each of those individual children.' (Voluntary setting, Yorkshire and the Humber)

EYPP also had the very practical impact of generating savings for providers, which in the context of public sector cuts, was perceived to be useful. These providers explained they had been able to focus mainstream funding on other things and provide a level of additionality that has been referenced throughout the report.

'I think you know on the whole its money that we wouldn't have had to spend. So that has benefited us because we've been able to use some of the money that we haven't spent and buy other things around the nursery. So yeah, I think that's probably the main thing.' (Private setting, East of England)

Limitations to achieving impact

Whilst in general providers thought that EYPP had a positive impact on both children and settings, they also highlighted a number of barriers to achieving impact:

- The amount that settings received varied considerably¹⁵ and providers' ability to achieve impact seemed to be lessened if the setting was smaller or had fewer eligible children. These providers explained that it was hard to make significant improvements with so little funding. There were, however, some examples of settings using smaller amounts of funding to the benefit children in their care (see illustration 6, below).
- The fact that EYPP funding changed each term was also perceived to limit the potential for impact, in particular, because it restricted forward planning and continuity of support. For example, a setting might be able to afford to pay a Speech and Language Therapist one term and not the next.
- Finally, providers highlighted that it might be too early to properly assess impact, as the initiative had only been in place for a short period of time. There was also an acknowledgement that it was hard to isolate the impact of EYPP from other factors.

However, as outlined previously, there was still a sense amongst all providers that the additional money and opportunities provided through EYPP enhanced the learning experiences of a broad range of children attending each setting.

Some possible solutions to addressing some of these limitations were proposed by providers and are outlined in the following chapter.

¹⁵ As highlighted earlier in the report, providers that participated in the research received between £300 and £4000 in the term during which they completed the screening survey. The average amount claimed by participating providers in the same term was £1,206.50.

Illustration 6

One private provider in receipt of a modest amount of EYPP described how they made the best use of the funding they received to enrich the learning experiences of the children in their care. This particular provider felt that impacts could be achieved through the wise investment of even a small amount.

The provider initially used EYPP funding to raise staff awareness of the backgrounds and needs of disadvantaged children, which included holding meetings and training events. The rationale was to ensure that staff understood the aims of EYPP and were motivated to work as a team to support children with additional needs. Remaining funding was spent on outdoor equipment, to be used by eligible children, as well as other three and four year olds attending the setting.

'I think the funding is a great thing, because it helps those children that are classed as being deprived. So it's - it's extra for them... It can be used to benefit all the children as well... if you're buying resources and things, it's not just a case of they'll be in there for that year while that child's here. It can benefit future children as well.'

'Even though it's not a huge amount of money it still makes a difference. The amount of money that you get can determine, you know, how extravagant your support is, I suppose. You know - is it a big trip that all the children go on? Is it just a case of adding little bits of resources and things? So you manage with what you've got.'

(Private Setting, West Yorkshire)

Conclusions and Key messages

EYPP was introduced in April 2015 for disadvantaged three and four year olds to receive additional funding. The aim of this study was to produce in-depth understanding of how EYPP funding is used and its perceived impact on eligible children. DfE were keen to explore in detail how providers allocated and targeted funding at eligible pupils and their perceptions on the impact and added value of this relatively new policy.

This chapter draws out the key themes of the report, reflects on examples of good practice and draws out provider recommendations which may be of interest when considering how EYPP and similar interventions might be developed and delivered in the future.

Summary of key themes

A range of views and experiences were reported across providers. Differences are highlighted throughout the report in relation to setting type, demographics and contextual factors. Mid to high levels of poverty and deprivation in local areas were reported across providers involved in the study, which is perhaps unsurprising given that EYPP targets and aims to support providers' work with disadvantaged children.

Identification and application processes

Providers highlighted some challenges with the process of identifying eligible children, which was due to the fact that in many cases parents (not providers) were required to make individual applications for EYPP to the Local Authority. Barriers included literacy and ESOL needs amongst parents, a perceived lack of parental motivation, difficulties in parents providing the right information and potential stigma related to claiming targeted (mean-tested) funding. Providers employed a range of techniques to address these barriers and tried to strike a balance between encouraging *all* parents to consider whether their child might be eligible and targeting those that they thought were more likely to be eligible.

Whilst providers had adopted appropriate strategies to aid identification, it seemed that in general there was a lack of clarity on exactly what criteria Local Authorities used to establish eligibility. There was therefore a call from providers for more transparency around the eligibility criteria to ensure that both parents and settings could successfully and accurately identify situations in which children were likely to be eligible.

Whilst, in general, participants seemed content with the approaches Local Authorities had adopted to process and allocate EYPP funding to their setting, a number of barriers relating to these processes were identified. These related to the information settings received on eligible children and the timing and format of payments, which made allocating and planning the use of EYPP funding more challenging.

Use of EYPP funding

Whilst all providers made different choices about how to allocate EYPP funding, two key recurring themes were highlighted across provider types. The first of these was the use of EYPP to directly support the speech, language and communication needs of children eligible for EYPP. The second was supporting children to play and learn outside; the intended aim was to widen children's experiences of the outdoors, their understanding of the natural world and encourage healthy learning activities, which was perceived to be important in developmental and learning terms, particularly for eligible children.

There was clear evidence to suggest that providers targeted spending towards eligible children. However, they were keen to ensure there was longevity in any investments made and hopeful that EYPP funding would continue to benefit all children in the future. Providers acknowledged and welcomed the fact that a wider group of children would stand to benefit from investments and improvements made possible by EYPP.

Decision making and monitoring

Overall, providers welcomed the freedom they had to make their own decisions about spending EYPP funding, as it gave them flexibility to respond to contextual factors and needs. A variety of approaches were used to support decision-making, which included informal observations, utilising data and consideration of relevant research. It was paramount for all participants that EYPP funds (even relatively small amounts) were used to achieve as much impact as possible. This included giving consideration to how to best balance the needs of individual eligible children as well as ensure long-term improvements and investments for all children.

Most providers used systems already in place to monitor the progress of all children within the setting. However, it was generally felt that settings would benefit from improved guidance and support to measure the impact of EYPP.

Impact of EYPP

Providers explained that children and settings had benefited from the additionality of EYPP, including the provision of specialist resources and services that they may have been unable to afford otherwise. Careful consideration of the needs of eligible children and how funds might be used to effectively address them meant that providers thought that EYPP had been effectively used to achieve maximum impact, especially across a range of soft measures.

A number of indirect benefits were also highlighted. These included:

- an increased focus for frontline staff to consider ways to better support and provide for eligible children, including those with additional needs;

- an improved awareness and understanding of children’s family backgrounds and ways to provide wrap-around support; and
- the generation of financial savings for providers, where EYPP funding was used to purchase goods and services which would otherwise have come from other sources. This was perceived to be particularly useful in the context of public sector cuts.

Key messages and learning points

It is clear from the data collected that providers welcomed the opportunities that EYPP gave them to focus support on the needs of disadvantaged children and make a range of improvements to the learning resources and environments of all children. Most thought that they would not have been able to do the things that EYPP afforded them, in the absence of the additional funding. However, in exploring providers’ experiences of the process of securing and using EYPP funding, a number of challenges were identified, which have been highlighted throughout the report.

In response to these perceived challenges, providers proposed a number of ways in which processes and practice could be improved to better support a smooth application process, effective decision-making and the onward allocation of support for future cohorts. These recommendations included:

- In relation to identifying eligible children, providers explained that it would be useful to **standardise the eligibility criteria or make eligibility more transparent** so that settings would be better able to plan resources. Confusion around which children would be eligible made it difficult for some providers (especially smaller providers) to work with and target, families to complete application forms
- Linked to this, some providers thought that it would be beneficial to **remove the administrative burden placed on parents to complete application forms**. Providers suggested EYPP applications could perhaps be more easily processed alongside applications for benefits or other subsidies, for example. Overall there was a sense that engaging parents in this process was difficult and that best practice on this particular issue could be shared more effectively.
- Whilst providers accepted it might be difficult to allocate different levels of funding per child to different settings, some called for **greater proportions of funding to be allocated to smaller settings, to enable a higher amount per child to be apportioned to smaller settings**. There was a sense that some smaller providers struggled to achieve the same kinds of impacts as larger settings, because they had fewer eligible pupils and therefore less funding overall. For example some smaller settings found it more difficult to purchase staff resources such as Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) as they were too expensive, although some had found creative ways around this such as training existing staff.

- Some providers indicated that they would have found it useful to have **more guidance on how to spend EYPP money**, including where it would have most impact in responding to a diverse range of needs (implying low levels of awareness of existing resources such as the EEF toolkit). Providers appreciated the flexibility of the funding but were also keen to learn from the successes of other settings. It was suggested that this learning be compiled and disseminated for the benefit of all early year's providers, either through a series of guides, learning and networking events, or both. Greater emphasis could usefully be placed on publicising existing resources, raising awareness within the sector.
- Finally, in relation to monitoring, providers explained that **standardised data collection tools would help settings evaluate spending and impact on an ongoing basis**, which would be useful in identifying what is working well and any possible areas for improvement, helping to prioritise decision-making and allocations going forward.

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Appendix A: Quality assessment scores

Quality assessment scores as set out in Table 1 in the introduction were assigned to settings, to support the sampling and selection using the following methodology replicated from the quality assessment element of the SEED undertaken by 4Children.¹⁶

The quality assessment visits carried out by 4Children as part of the wider SEED study were carried out in settings attended by children from the SEED survey of families. The instruments used to gather information on process quality included the Sustained Shared Thinking and Emotional Wellbeing scale (SSTEWS). The ratings were based on a minimum of a two-and-a-half-hour/ three-hour observation in a setting and a set number of interview questions to gather information on indicators that could not be observed. The instruments were scored on a 7-point scale, where 1=inadequate, 3=minimal, 5=good and 7=excellent.

To achieve this, quality was defined in the following way:

Quality of provision (grouped)	SSTEWS threshold
Excellent provision	SSTEWS is 6 and above,
Good provision	SSTEWS is from 4.5 to 5.9
Average/ poor	SSTEWS is below 4.5

¹⁶ Department for Education (2016) Study of Early Education and Development: Good Practice in Early Education (yet to be published)

Appendix B: Research tools

Topic Guide



**Study of Early Education
& Development**



Study of Early Education and Development:

Early Years Pupil Premium study

Setting Manager Topic Guide

Aim of the interviews (for researcher)

To provide a more in-depth understanding of how EYPP funding is used and of its impact on disadvantaged children from the perspective of early years practitioners. Also, where possible, to identify examples of good and/or innovative practice.

Interviews with Setting Leaders/ Managers aim to explore from their perspective:

- How children eligible for EYPP funding are identified
- Applying for EYPP funding and amounts received
- How EYPP funding is used, targeting of funds, decision making, monitoring
- Perceived impacts of EYPP on disadvantaged children

The topic guide

This guide sets out a number of themes and topics that will be covered during interviews. The guide does not contain follow-up probes and questions like 'why', 'when', 'how', etc. as participants' contributions will be explored using prompts and probes in order to understand how and why views, behaviours and experiences have arisen. The interview will last for approximately 45 minutes.

Introductions

- Introduce yourself and NatCen/4Children
- Introduce the study:
 - Funded by the Department for Education
 - Working in collaboration with 4Children/NatCen, as well as with Professor Edward Melhuish
 - Part of the wider Study of Early Education and Development (SEED) which includes a longitudinal survey of 2 year olds.
 - This part of the study aims to explore use of and impacts from EYPP funding
- 30 interviews in total across the country

- Reminder of interview length – 45 minutes
- Data kept securely in accordance with Data Protection Act
- How we'll report findings – anonymity of participants and settings
- Right to withdraw during or after the interview has taken place
- Any questions/concerns?
- Digital recording – check OK, and reassure re: confidentiality, record verbal consent

Setting overview

Aim: to gather detail on the setting context to inform the rest of the interview. [Note: this can be brief because some detail will be known from EYPP screening information / quality visit].

- Overview of setting
- Type of setting
 - Private
 - Voluntary
 - Maintained Nursery class
- Size (capacity) / facilities
- Age range catered for
- Number of children aged 3-4 at the setting
- Staff number / qualification levels (incl. if there is a graduate at the setting and if the manager is a graduate)
- Opening hours / session lengths
- Socio-economic profile of the area, and of children at the setting
- Proportion of children with free entitlement places.

• Identifying eligible children

Aim: to explore in depth the setting's approach to identifying children/families eligible for EYPP

- Number of children eligible for EYPP / number of children for whom they claimed EYPP, and the number of children in receipt of EYPP
- Number of children eligible for EYPP who also have SEND (Probe: nature of SEND)
- How eligible children are identified
 - What steps did they take to identify eligible children? (Probe: looked at records, asked parents etc.)
 - How easy/ difficult was it to identify eligible children? Barriers? Facilitators?
 - Do/ did they communicate with all parents, or just some parents in identification of EYPP children?
 - How comfortable did they feel about asking if parents think their child might qualify/ to complete an application form?
 - Any (other) difficulties in identifying eligible children?
- Any looked after children (including those who have been adopted from care, or guardianship from care) at the setting
 - If yes, are they receiving EYPP funding? How does this process work (Probe: contact with Virtual School Heads for looked after children only. Barriers and facilitators of process).

Applying for EYPP and amounts received

Aim: to collect information on how long the setting has been receiving EYPP funding and how much they have received so far. To explore practitioners' views on the process of claiming the funding and on how the funding is being paid to the setting.

- When first started receiving EYPP funding
- How much EYPP funding received since April 2015 (and overall)
- How are EYPP applications made
 - Views on the application process. Barriers and facilitators
- Views on how the funding is being paid to the setting by the LA (e.g. any cash flow problems / issues with logistics of payment)

Use of EYPP funding

Aim: to explore how the EYPP funding is used, to what extent the use is targeted at individual eligible children or groups of eligible children, is EYPP also used to support a wider group of children, in addition to the eligible children, decision making around the use of EYPP, and how the spend and impact are being monitored. Try to identify examples of good and / or innovative practice.

➤ Use of EYPP funding

- What the funds have been used on so far
 - collect as much detail as possible – e.g. if spending is on ‘literacy/language’, what does it actually mean – CPD for members of staff, buying in specialist support, buying special equipment or something else? (Probe: type of equipment bought, nature of training/ CPD etc.)
- What (if anything) has funding allowed the setting to do/achieve that would not have happened otherwise?
- How is spending targeted? Probe:
 - Individual EYPP-eligible children
 - a potentially wider group of eligible disadvantaged children
 - children with additional needs (probe nature of SEND)
 - looked after children/ adopted from care/ guardianship etc (all those eligible for non-economic need) (Probe: is EYPP used in a different way for looked after/ adopted children)
- If they are claiming EYPP funding for looked after children - how does this process work? Probe: contact and joint working with Virtual School Heads. Barriers and facilitators of process. Involvement of Virtual School Heads in decisions about EYPP spend.
 - Plans for future spending of EYPP funds - concrete and speculative (Probe: if different from how funding spent before, why? What changed thinking?)
 - Has setting pooled EYPP funds with another setting? Any plans to pool funds in the future?
 - If pooled funds (or plan to), how were (will) they (be) spent

➤ Decision making

- How did they decide how the funding would be used? Who was involved in the decision?
- Did they analyse the needs of the eligible children? How?
- What was their planning process for spending the EYPP funding?
- Did they think about what (potential) impact the funding might have on the eligible children? On all disadvantaged children? On the setting as a whole? (Probe: what effect/ influence this thinking had on decisions and any targeting)
- 1. If the spending is targeted at individual children (discussed above) – what was the rationale?
- 2. If targeted at wider group of children/ whole setting, what was the rationale for this? (Probe: reason decided not to focus only on EYPP children and how do they maintain the link back to the needs of the individual EYPP eligible child)
- What evidence did they use to inform decision making?

- Did they involve parents in their decision making regarding EYPP? If so, how, (Probe: displays, letters, website, questionnaires, individual discussions etc.)
- Did they develop any partnerships in deciding how to use EYPP? (Probe: other local providers, local schools, health partners etc.)

➤ **Monitoring use of EYPP**

- (How) do they monitor their use of EYPP funding
- (How) do they measure/ monitor the impact of EYPP funding (probe: any formal system of monitoring and measurement).
 - on individual children
 - on the setting overall (Probe: use of a tracking progress system or learning journals; recorded evidence; discussions with parents/ children/ outside professionals; observations).

Impacts

Aim: to understand perceived impacts of EYPP funding on individual or groups of children and the setting overall. (If possible) to collect case study examples of positive impacts on individual children for use in the report.

- What do they see as the main impacts of EYPP? (**if any**)
 - (**if doesn't feel EYPP** has had an impact why not?)
- Impacts on individual children
- Impacts on setting level quality and other setting level characteristics
- Pathways for any impacts identified
- Examples of where EYPP has had a direct impact on individual children or groups of children.
- Any final thoughts or comments about EYPP? (Probe: any additional support required for EYPP, e.g. info. on how it should be spent, help with application process, how to monitor impact)

Thank and close

Letter to settings

SEED: Study of the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)

Dear *manager*,

The Department for Education has commissioned the Study of Early Education and Development (SEED), a major longitudinal study following over 5,000 two-year-olds to the end of Key Stage One. It will find out how childcare and early education can help to give children the best start in life and what is important for high quality early education. The study is being carried out by NatCen Social Research, working with Frontier Economics, the University of Oxford and 4Children. You can find out more about the study by visiting the SEED website: www.seed.natcen.ac.uk

Why are we writing to you?

We are currently contacting early years providers who took part in a short telephone survey about the Early Years Pupil Premium, conducted by 4Children in Autumn 2015, and who reported receiving EYPP. We would very much like to interview the managers of the selected settings about their experiences of claiming and using EYPP funding, with the ultimate aim of developing a more in-depth understanding of how well the EYPP works for settings and any impact it has on children.

The topics covered during the 45 minute interview will include:

1. How your setting identifies children eligible for EYPP funding
2. How you found the EYPP application process
3. How your EYPP funding has been used and the processes involved in spending decisions
4. Whether/ how EYPP funding has had an impact on target children and the setting as a whole.

Taking part is completely voluntary and findings will be reported anonymously. Interviews will be taking place in **March 2016**, and can be arranged for a date and time that is convenient for you.

What do I need to do?

We will contact you by telephone in the next few days to explain this element of the study further and to answer any questions you may have.

If you still have questions about the study or want any more information about what taking part will involve, please contact me on 0207 549 XXXX or at XXXX.

Thank you for your support, your contribution is invaluable.

If you are not the setting manager we would be grateful if you could forward this email to them.

Yours sincerely,

Julia Griggs

**Senior Researcher
NatCen Social Research**

Appendix C: Overview of provider type and demographics

Interviews were conducted with a range of provider types, including voluntary, private and nursery class settings.¹⁷ The table below provides an overview of how characteristics differed according to provider type:

Provider type	Key characteristics
Nursery class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers tended to offer provision for three and four year olds only. • Provision was typically accessible for length of normal school day; until around 15:30. • Mostly sessional provision offered. • Some providers offered parents opportunities to top-up free provision (of 15 hours).
Private	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision offered to a wider age range, from 0-5. • Private providers opened for longer than other provider types. • Settings were varied in nature and included very small local organisations as well as larger chains of private nurseries.
Voluntary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision typically served a wider age range of children, from 0-5. • Providers often offered sessional or full-time provision and were open for varied lengths of time; some much longer than others. • Settings had varied governance structures.

Whilst there are some clear patterns in the ways that provision was organised and delivered across the three types of setting, providers reported that they aimed to be responsive and flexible to the needs of parents. For example, whilst some voluntary providers offered sessional provision, they reported that they would explore options for extending provision if there was increased demand locally. Similarly some private providers explained that they helped parents who needed additional hours, but could not afford to pay for them, to access financial subsidies.

The sample included a mixture of large and small providers across provider types. The size of three and four-year old cohorts ranged from over 180 at one setting to 17 in another. There was a view amongst some that there was potentially more scope to organise provision systematically (including grouping children by age) and manage provision more strategically in larger settings. Linked to this, the availability of indoors and outdoors space to support learning activities was at a premium for some providers, and seemed to be

¹⁷ No child minders were included in the sample because the focus was on centre-based early years provision.

related to whether the setting was in a rural or urban location. Some in more urban locations reported feeling particularly limited by a lack of accessible open space. Some providers used EYPP funding to address this need, as explained later.

The number of staff at each setting was dependent on the size and needs of the provider. Larger providers had more children and inevitably needed more staff, though the ratios of children to staff differed across all providers. Most settings included a mixture of staff who worked part and full time. Staff across the settings had a mixture of qualifications, though most held lower level qualifications (levels 2 and 3). Staff in management positions tended to hold higher level qualifications, and some had degrees or were qualified teachers. A number of settings had Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) in addition to nursery practitioners to help support children with additional learning needs.



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