



CITY OF
YORK
COUNCIL



Early Years and Childcare Workforce Profile

Summary Report 2018/19

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1. Introduction

This report represents the findings of an independent profiling project examining the Early Years and Childcare Workforce across the City of York. The project was undertaken by [BrightSparks Community Interest Company](#) and was commissioned by City of York Council (CYC) in October 2018 and concluded in April 2019. The key purpose of this project was to enable CYC to obtain current information on the size and scale of the workforce and enable the Local Authority to gain a deeper understanding of the factors affecting the Early Years and Childcare Workforce across the city.

A comprehensive research report was produced featuring insights from a survey completed by over 150 early years and childcare settings in York, as well as qualitative information derived from a range of focus groups and interviews. The following provides an overview of the key findings of this research.

2. Strengths of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce in York

Throughout all of the data collection workstreams Brightsparks identified aspects of good practice, innovation and collaboration with regards to developing and improving the early years and childcare workforce in York. These can be categorised into the following themes:

Values and Commitment

One of the overarching findings of this report is the extent to which providers in York are committed to providing the highest standards of care and early education to the children and families they support. This was particularly evident from the qualitative feedback from the focus groups, which demonstrated very clear commitment and values regarding why people join and stay in the early years and childcare workforce. Settings felt strongly that they make a difference, are shaping young lives and supporting families.

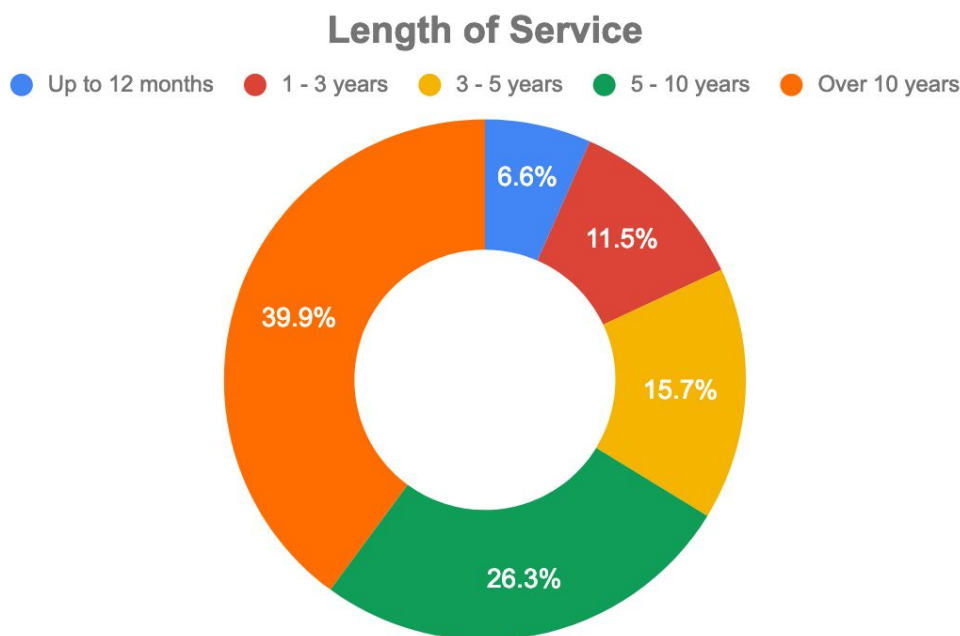
It is clear that these values and commitment have shaped the landscape of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce in York. For example, around 67% of the workforce have been working in the early years and childcare sector for 5 years or more and around 40% of the workforce have been working in the sector for over 10 years.

This shows a striking commitment to the sector particularly given some of the financial pressures on settings and staff as discussed below. The early years and childcare managers who contributed to this project articulated how the staff that work in the sector are constantly striving to improve the services they offer:

“Always keep the children at the heart of what you do. Always strive to do your best and give 100%”



“We need to treat ourselves as professionals and be proud and value ourselves. We also need to keep to our values because that matters.”

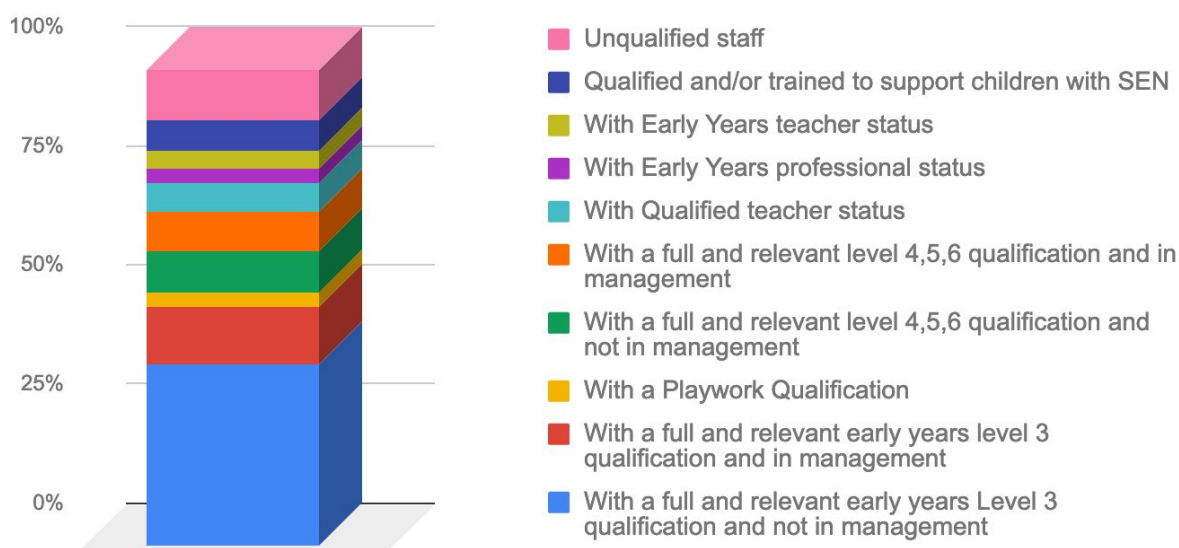


Qualifications Base of the Sector

Settings that participated in the project said that almost 90% of all staff working in their setting had at least a level 2 early years and childcare qualification and at least 82% were qualified to a minimum of level 3. This indicates that the sector has highly qualified and skilled staff working with children in all sectors.

This is an area where settings in York appear to perform above national averages. A recent [CEEDA report](#), suggested that nationally only 71% of the early years and childcare workforce were qualified to level 3.

Qualification Base of the Early Years and Childcare Sector In York



Furthermore, 32% of staff working in the Early Years and Childcare sector in York appear to be qualified to level 4 and above which appears to be consistent with national figures.

As such, the report's overall findings show that settings in York are committed to ensuring that their staff are qualified to a suitably high level that is at least consistent with national Early Years and Childcare Workforce. This commitment was perfectly summarised by one respondent, who said:

“Our ethos is that in order to plan and deliver an outstanding EY curriculum, you need to prioritise education, training and development opportunities for staff”

Another said:

“In order to have happy kids we must have happy, skilled and confident staff who feel valued and supported”

Learning and Skills

A clear finding from the research is that there is a high commitment to the training and development of staff in all sectors of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce in York. 100% of settings that contributed to the research said that they provided training and development opportunities for their staff. Indeed, it appears that learning and development is embedded in the organisational infrastructure of most settings particularly within the Day Nursery Sector.

Around 60% of all settings that responded to the survey suggested that the majority (over 80%) of the training that they offered staff was formally accredited training. Settings listed a wide range of different training provision offered to staff from operational type training such as food hygiene and health and safety to speech and language training as well as training to support specialist SEND needs.

There was also a lot of innovation in this area with settings using a broad range of training methods from face to face courses to online systems such as Tapestry (an online EY learning journal) and Noodle Now (e-learning platform). Many respondents stated that training offered by CYC was both of a high quality and regularly available.

Workforce Benefits

Against the landscape of a challenging financial climate, early years and childcare settings in York highlighted some interesting and innovative methods of keeping their staff motivated and incentivised to provide a consistently high level of service to families in York.

These schemes included:

- Extra annual leave days
- Staff salary bonuses



- Monthly staff treats e.g. Perkbox (www.perkbox.com)
- Staff recognition schemes
- Birthday gifts
- Christmas meal
- Tablet computers
- Mobile phones
- Reduced childcare fees for their children
- Staff team building and recreational activities
- Discount at local gyms and cafes
- Access to Health Care schemes
- Free meals

The extent to which these schemes were offered to staff varies by sector. For example, over 60% of respondents from the Day Nursery sector suggested that they offered at least some staff benefits schemes. However, only 20% of the OOSC sector suggested that they offered staff benefit schemes.

Respondents were clear that their staff really valued these schemes and that they felt that these schemes positively impacted on staff morale which was typified by the following quote from one respondent:

“happy staff means happy children and happy parents”

Collaboration and Partnerships

A clear theme that emerged from the focus groups and interviews was how much early years and childcare settings in York value the collaboration and partnership networks that are currently in operation.

Settings clearly saw the need for working in partnership and attending partnership meetings, recognising that it can be an isolating sector, particularly as a Childminder and therefore accessing networks was seen beneficial for sharing experiences and knowledge.

Settings suggested that the existing partnership and networks in place across York should be further built on in order to address some of the common issues facing the Early Years and Childcare sector in York:

“Being in a partnership encourages good practice and sharing of resources”

“More networking events for people to share ideas/suggestions and/or discuss work through problems”

“It is nice to be part of a network where I can ask questions and share how I feel”

“Working in partnership with a Primary School has meant that we can support each other as EY settings and share resources, staff, training etc”

3. Challenges of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce in York

As part of the project, settings expressed a wide range of issues that they felt posed challenges to the development of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce in York. Some of these challenges are very much York centric issues whilst others are part of the challenges faced by the wider early years and childcare sector nationally. Again, these challenges coalesced into a number of key themes as follows:

Pay and Funding

Pay within the sector was identified throughout all the research strands as the largest workforce challenge facing early years and childcare settings in York. Although it would appear that the levels of pay in York are consistent with that of national averages, there is still a clear disparity between the remuneration that staff receive in this sector and the national and legislative expectation around the skills, qualifications and working practices that the workforce is subject to. Some settings were clear that they are really struggling to make the 30 hour funding cover costs and this was having a direct impact on staff pay.

The research suggests that pay is a significant factor on issues such as recruitment, retention, progression and quality of the workforce within the sector which are best articulated through the following quotes from respondents:

“The level of pay is not appropriate for the responsibility of the role”

“The only way to change the pay would be to increase the fees, but then some parents couldn't afford this”

“It is hard to recruit, retain and maintain staff numbers when pay levels are static”

“We are really struggling since the 30hrs [funding] has come in. It doesn't cover what it costs at all”

However, it should be noted that pay within the sector is clearly an issue that transcends the geography of York and is, in fact, a national and political issue affecting the entire sustainability of the sector.

Entry into the Sector

There should be concern about the lack of younger staff entering into the Early Years and Childcare Workforce in York. There appears to be very low levels of young people transitioning through from early years and childcare education/training programmes into the early years workforce.

There was also very little evidence of the adoption of apprenticeship schemes as a method of creating a pipeline of new (and younger) talent into the sector. Indeed, of all 155 settings that responded to our survey, only 10 (6%) said they employed an apprentice in their workforce. This is in direct contrast with national figures published in a recent [CEEDA report](#) that suggests that around 40%-68% of settings employ apprentices in their settings. It would also appear from the feedback that there is a lack of overall knowledge regarding apprenticeship routes into the sector as well as the financial and organisational benefits of employing apprentices. Indeed, apprenticeships are an area where some respondents suggested could help to address some of the challenges they face around pay, recruitment and retention:

‘Work based learning and apprenticeships would be really great to develop skills in the correct setting’.

The lack of young people entering into early years and childcare could have significant implications for some workforce sufficiency in York due to the relative age profiles of some sectors. For example, in pre-school, OOSC and childminder sectors over 50% of the workforce is aged 50 or over. This means that without a new, younger cohort of staff entering these sectors it is likely there will be staffing shortages as a large proportion of the current workforce enters into retirement.

Increasing entry to the early years and childcare market in York also needs to be considered in line with the local labour market dynamics and the fact that there is a very competitive labour market in a city that is currently at full employment. Given some of the challenges identified in this report, particularly in relation to pay, it may prove difficult for the early years and childcare sector to compete with other career sectors for new talent.

Profile of the Workforce

The Early Years and Childcare practitioners who were consulted as part of this research identified that they felt that the perception of the workforce needs to change in order to reflect the professionalisation of the workforce. They felt that they were not seen as a professional in the same way as those working in other areas of the children’s workforce and this message was consistent across the focus groups. One practitioner suggested that:

“Childminding is seen as babysitting”

Most people felt that qualifications were needed in order to be seen as professionals. However, it was clear that there is disparity between the expectations of the qualifications that early years and childcare practitioners should hold in order to act as professionals, and the remuneration that they receive in comparison with other areas of the children’s workforce.



4. Recommendations

Based on the findings and themes identified above and within the detailed research report, the following recommendations could be included within the Early Years Workforce Development Strategy to build on the strengths identified in the workforce as well as addressing some of the challenges detailed above.

Theme 1 - Pay

- Pay within the sector is clearly an issue that transcends the geography of York and is, in fact, a national issue regarding the sustainability of the sector. As such, it is recommended that the findings of this report be used to add to the national debates and policy development around pay within the sector, in order to lobby for increased funding for the 3 and 4 year old free entitlement and other government funding schemes.
- Where appropriate members of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce Strategy Group should influence and lobby government through organisations such as National Day Nurseries Association, Early Years Alliance and PACEY to address some of the barriers that require national solutions.

Theme 2 - Entry into the Sector

- Whilst it is accepted that the issues in relation to recruitment and retention within the workforce are linked to the issues discussed above around pay, more work needs to be done to understand why more young people are not making their way into the early years and childcare workforce from local FE/HE education establishments as well as through apprenticeship routes. However, it should be noted that the level 3 childcare apprenticeship programme only recently became available nationally.
- To work with providers to help introduce the new Education and Childcare T Levels locally from 2020 which will offer students a mixture of classroom learning and 'on-the-job' experience during an industry placement of at least 45 days.
- Develop new strategies with schools and other organisations to raise the profile of careers within the early years and childcare sector. Consider the use of childcare champions/ambassadors and the role of partners and sector organisations within this.
- Promote and develop early years and childcare apprenticeship opportunities to encourage more young people into the sector and use of the levy to support the continuing professional development of the existing workforce, particularly developing leadership skills. In support of this develop apprenticeship case studies where there has been positive experiences for both provider and apprentice.
- Understand barriers to recruitment of prospective students, possibly by replicating what works well for the Out of School Club model where students and young practitioners are in higher numbers.

- Consider targeted work to attract those who are returning to the workforce eg after maternity
- Develop and increase opportunities for students to experience high quality placements with local early years and childcare providers.
- Explore value based recruitment approaches and how these can be scaled and implemented within the sector.
- Review how the sector could utilise volunteers more effectively and attract more volunteers to support the workforce.

Theme 3 - Profile of the Sector

- Develop new strategies with schools and other organisations to raise the profile of careers within the Early Years and Childcare Sector.
- Consider the use of childcare champions/ambassadors and the role of partners and sector organisations within this.
- Actively raise the status of childminders through all networks, training, forums and partnerships as well as taking feedback from the sector on the tangible actions to achieve this.

Theme 4 - Qualifications Base of the Sector

- Identify collaborative solutions to build on the involvement of QTS/EYP/EYT in areas of disadvantage to improve outcomes for young children and close the gap in development between all children and disadvantaged children.
- Promote the DfE Early Years Careers Pathway and Map for staff working in the early years and childcare sector to support their career development and for those interested in working in the sector

Theme 5 - Learning and Development

- Increase and promote opportunities for high quality continuing professional development with a range of organisations and prioritise where it supports local Early Years Social Mobility priorities
- Offer a blended approach to learning and development, which is a mix of face to face, online and shadowing etc. and from a wider pool of national, regional and local training providers.



- Develop a central platform where relevant information can be accessed and shared to support recruitment, retention and signposting to wider training opportunities.
- Give focus to developing opportunities for leadership such as; success planning, managing talent and sharing case studies to highlight any effective practice.

Theme 6 - Collaboration and Partnerships

- Networking opportunities could be made available across York in settings/cluster type arrangements which could be beneficial for practitioner support, sharing of good practice, cascading of learning and dissemination of revision of requirements e.g. safeguarding arrangements.
- Build on the sharing of good practice between local partnerships and networks which are highly valued by the sector.
- Create collaborative forums where providers and partners can come together to develop solutions to some of the key challenges faced by the sector.
- Support retention by sharing good practice in terms of benefits, flexibility, accessing good quality training.

Theme 7 - General

- It is clear that the recommendations identified in the report above will require capacity and resources to be identified from all sections of the early years and childcare sector.
- It is also evident that the solutions to some of the issues stated above cannot be solved by any one provider or organisation. As such, it will be the responsibility of all providers to take joint ownership of the priorities and solutions developed as part of the Early Years Workforce Strategy. Partners will need to work collaboratively as agents of change in order to address the challenges detailed above and implement solutions that help to improve the Early Years and Childcare Workforce in York.

5. Summary

Brightsparks and City of York Council would like to extend their sincere thanks to those settings that contributed to this project. Your input has resulted in a much clearer understanding of the strengths and challenges that the Early Years and Childcare Workforce are subject to.

It is evident from this Workforce Profiling Project that there is some excellent and innovative practice happening in early years and childcare settings across York. This paired with an obvious, and values based commitment to continually improving the standard of provision from children and families means that generally, the early years and childcare workforce in York is in a good place.

However, it is also clear that the workforce believes it is operating in a challenging financial landscape which means that there are key themes of workforce development that need taking forward both locally and nationally. It is these themes that have been identified as part of this project and which should now be translated into an Early Years and Workforce Strategy which should be jointly owned by providers and partners across the city.

Finally, the Early Years and Childcare Workforce in York is an ever evolving landscape. As such, it will be necessary to refresh this workforce profile at regular intervals over the coming years in order to monitor progress against the priorities and recommendations identified in this report.





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