EARLY YEARS POLICY ADVICE:

[PARENTS AND FAMILIES]

IMMEDIATE CONCERNS

- Improve professional development opportunities for all graduate practitioners working with children birth to six to improve practice leadership to support and empower parents and families from different backgrounds.
- Identify ways to support key persons working with two-year-olds, so that they are better able to carry out the two-year-old progress check and share it with parents and health visitors.
- Investigate ways to support parental choice of childcare options. Consider revising taxation/parental leave structures so that non-working parents can transfer their tax allowance to a working parent at any point during the first three years of a child's life, so that the carer receives a small wage, funded by transferred tax allowance.

MID-TERM ISSUES

- Ensure all EY practitioners have a core understanding of social inequalities, cultural difference, their impact on families, and parents' viewpoints, whilst maintaining professional relationships that allow them to carry out safeguarding functions.
- Ensure that practitioners work in genuine partnership with parents and carers, avoiding a 'deficit model' of parenting that constructs the practitioner as the 'expert' and the parent as the 'learner/ junior partner'.
- Continue to revise taxation/parental leave structures in innovative ways to help parents and close relatives work together to provide home-based care for children under five where appropriate. For example, enable parents/ grandparents to share a period of 36 months leave from the workplace to care for the child in a flexible fashion.
- Continue to fund children's centres to provide a family hub for local communities. Extend their role by integrating services for the elderly with services for children and provide a venue for people of all ages to work together in various ventures.

LONG TERM ASPIRATIONS

- Find out more about how parents and families from a variety of different backgrounds understand 'quality' in early years provision.
- Identify how different understandings of 'experienced' quality are related to quality as constructed in policy; that is, do measurements and judgments of quality capture what parents and families think is good about settings and what they would like improved?

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