

UK ECERS Network



Sandra Mathers June 2011 Meeting
Hackney

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Identifying Quality in Early Years Provision

- Funded by the Nuffield Foundation
- Partnership between Daycare Trust, the University of Oxford Department for Education, and A+ Education Ltd.

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Context

- Despite progress since the Childcare Strategy, there are still gaps in provision and variations in quality
- Challenging financial climate - we must continue to demonstrate the value of high quality early years provision in delivering positive outcomes for children
- Political climate also shifting, existing policies subject to review
- The issue of what makes high quality education and care, and how it is identified and understood by different stakeholders, is therefore highly relevant to the current policy debate
- This study is designed to:
 - Make good use of existing data
 - Provide information which could inform the direction of policy, in particular any review of the inspection framework

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Who needs to know about quality?

- Effective means of identifying high quality are relevant to a number of different stakeholders:
 - Parents
 - Local Authorities
 - Central Government
 - Early Years providers
- What measures are available?
 - Ofsted reports
 - QA schemes
 - ECERS/ITERS data

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Key research questions

- What are the key differences in content and scope between Ofsted and ECERS/ITERS quality ratings, and what can the comparison tell us about what Ofsted reports measure?
- Is there a statistical correlation between Ofsted gradings, ECERS/ITERS quality ratings and participation in other QA schemes?
- To what extent do the different stakeholders have an awareness of the different measures and use them to make decisions about quality (and which other considerations come into play)?
- To what extent the concepts of quality embodied in the measures considered here (Ofsted, ECERS, QA schemes) align with stakeholder perceptions of quality, and how does this relate to the academic literature on quality?
- What factors should parents focus on when they visit a setting, and how should they use the Ofsted report and any other evidence they have gathered on the quality of the setting?

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Methods

- Literature review
- Quantitative analysis of relationships between QA schemes, Ofsted gradings and ECERS scores:
 - ECERS/ITERS data gathered by A+ Education Ltd (where permission given)
 - Research data from University of Oxford
 - Data gathered on QA schemes in Surrey and Derbyshire
- Focus groups with:
 - Parents
 - Providers
 - Local Authorities

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