



Newsletter

Newsletter 3 - December 2020

Dear Members of the Early Childhood Forum,

Following the second COVID Lockdown and as we draw near to the Christmas Holiday period this third Newsletter brings you an update on the various initiatives and important aspects of the Early Years that ECF has been involved with. The most recent General Meetings have included presentations by:

23 October 2020 Dr Stella Louis provided Anti-racist Training to the ECF members, **“Let’s Talk about Race – an incomplete guide”**. This was an excellent training session which provided us with information about Anti-racism and, most importantly, food for thought about our own practices. We were also asked to think about and share some of our past experiences, and to consider, **‘Why is it that you find it difficult to talk about race?’** At times we were made to feel quite uneasy especially when thinking about our possible unconscious biases. Please see the attached presentation that provides an outline of the discussions.

10 November Zoom Meeting at 14:00 - Sally Hogg: ‘Babies in Lockdown’

Sally Hogg shared research findings about the effect of Lockdown on babies and their families, especially their mental health, the impact of fewer Health Visitors and the results of funding cuts in the last ten years. Other points made were that:

- There is no universal provision for children from birth to two years across England.
- It is hoped that the abolition of Public Health England might provide the opportunity to get Health Visitors back under National Government.
- COVID has resulted in little antenatal care, visitors not allowed into hospitals and very little postnatal care.
- We should be talking about recovery “not catch up”.
- The lack of help and legislation linked to Parent and Toddler groups
- Andrea Leadsom is leading Early Years Healthy Development review which it is hoped will lead to the establishment of a cross-party consensus.
- ECF membership of the first 1001 days movement is welcomed so that EY settings are represented.

Letter in the Guardian

Early in November, Melian Mansfield (Chair of ECF and London Play) wrote to the Guardian about the importance of play and playgrounds, particularly in inner city areas. Expressing concerns that many play facilities will not be available for children during the second lockdown. She stated that ‘children have a right to play and have already suffered disproportionately from the impact of corona virus restrictions. The full letter, published on 5 November, is available online.



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17th November 2020 – Zoom meeting with Kate Green MP, Shadow Education Secretary and Tulip Siddiq MP, Shadow Minister (Education)

Prior to the meeting members of the ECF Steering Group were asked to provide a question for the MPs about a specific topic. The topics were:

- Outdoors and SEND
- The importance of higher qualifications in the Early Years
- Finding for Maintained Nursery Schools and their importance
- The Impact of COVID 19 on young children
- The PVI Sector

Kate Green and Tulip Siddiq (TS) gave a brief outline of their respective careers and current roles. Our questions were addressed in turn and both ministers provided very positive replies about their hopes for the future of the Early Years, the funding and the hope that the childcare provided will put the needs of the children first, then the needs of the parents. Sure Start was mentioned as having been very good in relation to the support that young Mothers and babies had received.

Covid-19 was acknowledged as having exposed and worsened underlying problems. Although, lockdown had forced many to work successfully from home, using Zoom etc it was thought this form of working might continue. Employers need to continue to build in a degree of flexibility. TS stated that they would continue to communicate with ECF outside the meeting as time is limited now, and ECF's practical experience is very useful. Therefore, another meeting in February may be arranged.

As a follow up we have shared some of the information and research data referred to during the meeting with both Kate Green and Tulip Siddiq; they responded favourably and encouraged us to stay in touch and communicate issues of concern. Melian also highlighted our current campaigns to extend early years up to the end of Key Stage 1 and to abolish all testing of young children next year and beyond.

ECF is committed to supporting the UNCRC and the work of Children's Rights Alliance of England

Thirty years ago, England, along with all UN member states, apart from the USA, ratified the 54 articles in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Every five years each Government has to send a report to the Children's Rights Committee to explain how they are implementing the Convention.

At the same time a report is sent from non government organisations, co-ordinated here by the Children's Rights Alliance for England, following consultation with many different organisations with an interest in children.. This year 90 organisations including ECF have contributed to and supported the report. Usually a group of children also go to meet the Committee to give their views.

The Committee, after receiving both the Government and NGO reports send their Concluding Observations to the Government, identifying what needs to change. (see cocreporting.childrightsconnect.org) This time this will be in

February 2022. To date successive English Governments have made little progress. The expectation is that the Convention is embedded in domestic law but that has not happened here.

The Convention can be seen on the UNICEF website (www.unicef.org.uk)

Early Years Coalition – Birth to Five Matters.

Early Education and Members of the ECF Steering group have been extremely busy over the past few weeks amending the 2012 Development Matters document. They are working to a very tight schedule, the first draft will be circulated widely via members of the coalition during the week of 14th December 2020, surveys will be sent out to a wide audience to assess thoughts about the amended guidance. Please engage your members in responding to this important survey. The completion date for completion of the project is March 2021.

Dates and topics for next General meetings:

27 January 2021 via Zoom at 14:00 – Peter Moss will speak about this recent work in the field of Social Pedagogy

3 March 2021 via Zoom – Maggie Fisher will report on current issues concerning health visitors in England.

Further details will be circulated nearer the time.

Season's Greetings and Best Wishes for 2021 to you, your families and colleagues.

Tricia and Barbara
On behalf of the Steering Group, Early Childhood Forum