

Newsletter 5 – July 2021

Dear Members of the Early Childhood Forum,

As we are hopefully leaving the challenges of the past year behind us, the Early Childhood Forum continues to reflect on the impact of the pandemic not only on our operations but also on the state of education and plight of children in the UK. Hopefully the summer break will give us all a welcome respite and energy to fight for what we know is right for young children.

Birth to Five Matters

In this context we have continued our engagement with the Early Year Coalition and their work on Birth to 5 Matters. We are very proud of what has been achieved by this expert group of 100 early years consultants, lecturers, teachers and parents under the expert guidance of Nancy Stewart. If you have not had a chance to do so, please visit their resource rich website and see the final document including the extra materials supporting it.

<https://www.birthto5matters.org.uk/>

Health visiting during the pandemic

Maggie Fisher's presentation on 3 March was a thought-provoking update on the current state of health visiting and the deficits the profession is experiencing. This was a sobering account of reminder of the unmet needs of so many families and their children. Please see summary of talk in the minutes shared following the meeting and Maggie's presentation which can be found on our home page.

http://www.earlychildhoodforum.org/uploads/IHV_updated.pdf

Sharing of ideas and experiences

Our June meeting brought an unexpected opportunity for those present to discuss their current experiences and concerns, most of which were rooted in the challenges of last year. Despite the on-line nature of the meeting, members engaged in a meaningful conversation and all were reminded of the richness these dialogues can bring to our professional experience.

We have continued to campaign

At our meeting in June we asked members to promote the idea of early years continuing until age 7 wherever they can - on social media, at conferences or in meetings. Flick Drummond MP, member of One Nation Conservatives, in the document *The Future of Education* promotes the idea that early years should continue until age 6. When she spoke at the Primary Umbrella Group meeting on the 14th June she asked for evidence to support her argument. She is prepared to challenge the (her) Government, Melian has written to her offering to work with her. ECF is in a good position to work with her on this. Peter Moss who presented the book he has edited with Claire Cameron 'Transforming Early Childhood in England' to ECF members in January also argues for early years to continue to age 6.

We continue to be members of More than a Score campaigning against tests in the primary schools. Tests have of course been suspended in 2020 and 2021. However, unfortunately, as we know, as we know, Baseline Assessment is being reintroduced this September.

We have connected with the Royal Foundation and delighted to support its aims and aspirations.

We would like to alert you to the publication of the Cross-party EY Manifesto on 8 July.

Steering group update

We have continued to explore ways of extending our membership. As we are approaching the October AGM the steering group has been busy revising our membership terms and conditions and other important documents. We are also planning to re-establish our annual meeting with past members of the ECF whose expertise and support of ECF we very much value. The next meeting is planned for 16 July.

AGM - 12 October 2021

The next general meeting will be held virtually, by ZOOM on 12 October 11 am. Please be sure to put this date in your diary; as the AGM will consider the revised documents and members will be tasked with finding a new chair for the forum and well as new members for the steering group.

We are hopeful that Mine Conkbyair will join us a speaker on the day and will present her research on co-regulation .

Plans for the future

For the foreseeable future we plan to meet by zoom once a term. Do share your suggestions for future presentations at our termly meeting by emailing earlychildhoodforum@yahoo.co.uk

As we are preparing for the summer break, we would like to share with you Kathryn Solly's inspiration and reflection on Benefit of Being Outdoors in Nature. You will find her article on our website .

Have you got an article you would like to share and provoke our members thinking in our next newsletter? Please share it with us on earlychildhoodforum@yahoo.co.uk

We thank you for your continued support and send our very best wishes for a well-deserved and joyful summer break

Tricia Johnson and Barbara Isaacs

ECF Steering Group