



Newsletter

Newsletter March 2022

Dear Members of ECF,

Following on from the previous Newsletter, Melian and members of the Steering Group have been working hard to bring together and extend the membership of ECF in order to provide a strong voice to present issues to the Government and the DfE. Please would you help by responding to the previous request for comments about the document 'Early Years - Foundations for Success' as soon as possible.

We have a contact at the DfE through whom we plan to arrange a meeting as soon as we can to address the issues raised in the document.

We have had two very successful meetings with other Early Years organisations invited as guests, many of whom have expressed the wish to work closely with ECF.

The Birth to Five Matters Spring Festival has some very interesting webinars, all of which are being recorded. <https://birthto5matters.org.uk/spring-festival/> (available until 13th May).

Future Meetings

On the 6th April we have a meeting with two OfSTED inspectors; Samantha Sleeman-Boss, Early Years Regulatory Inspector, and Wendy Ratcliffe. Gill Jones has sent her apologies as she now has an inspection commitment. We are hoping that you will all be able to attend.

We plan to have a third open meeting on the 29th April and have invited two speakers to talk about the Early Years in Wales. Anna Westall, from Children in Wales and Dorothy Selleck.

The Steering Group is meeting in May to discuss future plans for ECF and we will have one further meeting online in June. We welcome your participation as members and any thoughts or ideas you may have. Much is happening in the early years but it is still fragmented and we need a holistic approach and recognition from government that these years are the most important and influential in children's lives.

Treasurer

As you will be aware, Anne Nelson, who has been treasurer for ECF for eight years is standing down at the end of March. We are extremely grateful for all the work she has done for us and are looking for someone to take over from her.

The role does not demand a great deal of time. It involves

- a) sending out invoices to members for subscriptions once a year in June and chasing up payments
- b) paying bills - these have been minimal since we moved to Zoom
- c) presenting accounts/up to date financial information at Steering Group meetings and the AGM



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The Treasurer is a member of the Steering Group and attends meetings of the group. Anne has committed to work with the new treasurer in the Summer to ensure a smooth transition. If you wish to have a conversation about the role please contact Anne on anne.nelson@chunkychips.com

We have included contributions from the Early Years Alliance and OMEP.
Other members can send items they might wish to be included in the next newsletter.

The Early Years Alliance

The Early Years Alliance continues to lobby government and raise awareness of the underfunding of early years. The results of the Alliance's most recent survey (released 25th March) found that more than a third of early years providers in England planning to increase childcare fees this year say they would not do so if government funding was enough to adequately cover their costs, while four in 10 said that they would be raising childcare fees by a smaller amount, a new survey of nearly 2,000 nurseries, pre-schools and childminders by leading early years organisation the Early Years Alliance has revealed.

The survey of nearly 2,000 nurseries, pre-schools and childminders was run in parallel with the parent survey launched by campaign group Pregnant Then Screwed and parenting forum Mumsnet, ran from 17 – 22 March 2022 and received 1,970 responses.

It found that:

Of the 66% of early years providers have confirmed they will be increasing childcare fees this year:

- **43%** say if government funding covered the cost of delivering places, they would be increasing fees by a smaller amount
- **35%** say that if government funding covered the cost of delivering places, they wouldn't be increasing fees at all
- **86%** of providers delivering funded three and four-year-old places say that the funding they receive is less than the cost of delivering places, and of those whose rate has been confirmed as increasing in April 2022, **90%** say that this will not be enough to cover the cost of delivery
- **30%** of settings are currently operating at a loss and **34%** of settings expect to be operating at a loss in 12 months' time.

The survey also reveals the toll that government underfunding is putting on the early years workforce itself. It found that:

- **73%** of respondents haven't had a pay rise in the past two years
- **15%** (roughly 1 in 6) of respondents are currently, or have previously been, in receipt of Universal Credit
- **5%** (1 in 20) of respondents have had to use a food bank over the past two years
- **31%** of respondents are currently overdrawn in the personal bank account or accounts
- Almost half (**48%**) respondents are actively considering leaving the early years sector (42%), have already confirmed they are leaving (5%) or have already left (1%)



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In a damning indictment of government policy, a huge **98%** of respondents say the government isn't doing enough to support the early years sector.

The parallel parent survey carried out by Pregnant Then Screwed and Mumset of around 27,000 parents found that:

- **62%** of parents say that the cost of childcare is now the same or more than their rent/mortgage
- **25%** of parents say that they have had to cut down on necessary expenses such as food, heating or clothing to afford childcare
- **43%** of mums said that the cost of childcare has made them consider leaving their job
- **40%** said they have had to work fewer hours than they would like because of childcare costs

Commenting, Neil Leitch, chief executive of the Early Years Alliance, said:

"It is unacceptable that so many parents are not only struggling to meet their childcare costs, but often are also being forced to make sacrifices in their careers as the result of a lack of affordable, accessible care and education."

Organisation Mondial Education Prescolaire - O.M.E.P.

Early Childhood Sustainable Citizen Awards:

OMEP UK has established an Early Childhood Sustainable Citizenship Award. It has been developed to support a wide range of early childhood providers including childminders, preschools, and nurseries who are working with parents in supporting the objectives of education for sustainable development in early childhood.

The scheme is organised around an 'ESC Passport' that is provided for each child. This document summarises the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and defines Sustainable citizenship as a life-long emergent capability.

The passport also provides discounted entry to wildlife conservation parks and other related community resources and services.

Each child is able to collect up to 15 award stickers for entry into their passport, and these show their ESC achievements at Bronze, Silver and Gold level. To be awarded each sticker, parents and preschool practitioners work together to support the child in completing educational activities that range from the identification and naming of three wild birds, the identification of wildlife habitats, to the recycling of waste materials, and the recognition of cultural and linguistic diversity.

The approach celebrates sustainable achievements and innovations, and encourages the children to feel themselves involved in the creation of a more sustainable future.



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The activities are set at an appropriate level for the age group, they are based upon commonly available environmental resources, and provide the foundations of an education for sustainable citizenship that addresses all aspects of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Participating preschool settings are provided with a range of resources that offer an optimistic, and pro-active approach to the subject that celebrates sustainable achievements and innovations and encourages the children to feel themselves involved in the creation of a more sustainable future.

There are fifteen '*I-care...*' booklets in the complete set. These comprise Bronze, Silver and Gold awards in the following ESC educational areas that broadly address the UN Sustainable Development Goals:

- Social-Cultural education
- Economics education
- Environmental education
- Emergent Literacy education
- Emergent Numeracy education

Each of the booklets also has recommendations for related picture story books or activities. Once the child has completed their '*I-care...*' book, their key person, will issue a sticker for their ESC passport.

Up until now 15 settings have completed the Bronze level award and 1 silver. Forty other settings are in the process.

OMEP Seminars:

OMEP also has online seminars open to members and practitioners. Our last seminar was on 16th February 2022 and was designed to gather members' views on the issues as also highlighted by ECF, so that the organisation can prioritise a focus and garner suggestions for a way forward. Each committee member hosted a breakout-room which members could join according to their personal interests. There were eight themes with an overarching and integrated concern about the current levels of child poverty. The resulting document for this is currently being produced and will be addressed at the upcoming committee meeting.