



Working with diversity

A report for the cross-European programme *Working for inclusion: the role of the early years workforce in addressing poverty and promoting social inclusion*





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Summary

This report addresses the theme of working with diversity, in particular ethnicity, language, disability and gender, in relation to the overarching theme of the Working for Inclusion project: the role of the early years workforce in addressing poverty and social inclusion.

The report is based on delegates' responses to a study visit to early years services in Edinburgh, Glasgow and West Lothian that took place in September 2009, and a concluding seminar in Edinburgh.

Delegates from Italy, Hungary, Norway and Poland attended the study visit. The group included elected representatives from national and local government, staff members responsible for a wide range of children's services, managers from voluntary organisations, academics, and officials and consultants from many levels of the public sector.

During the study visit delegates discussed a series of questions about diversity. These were 1) What is your understanding of "diversity" in relation to the early years? As well as ethnicity etc, does diversity include diversity of perspectives, paradigms and practices? 2) What qualities, values and ethics are required to work with diversity? 3) What are the implications of diversity for workforce roles, qualifications and development? 4) How can early years services be more representative, in terms of diversity, of the communities they serve – for example, how can services recruit more men and other under-represented groups? Responses to these questions form a substantial part of the report.

Delegates were provided with a background paper that discussed in depth the concept of diversity. They heard how diversity relates to all children and all families, but that despite this universal quality it is frequently conceived

of and articulated as being a marginal or minority issue. Conversely, many of the services visited and the observations of delegates on the study visit highlighted the multiple positive experiences diversity could bring to work in the children's sector.

At the seminar completing the study visit delegates concluded that any measures to address diversity needed to involve all those with responsibilities for children, from parents to specialist practitioners – and that sharing and comparing approaches to diversity was of immense value.

Through delegate discussion and feedback a number of key themes about diversity emerged:

- The 'specialised' versus 'universalist' approach to diversity
- The role of language in shaping attitudes to diversity
- The need to train the workforce to be equipped to understand diversity issues in the early years
- The positive role of legislative frameworks in providing the workforce with guidance and a shared set of values
- Prioritising common values and training across the workforce
- The benefits international comparison and dialogue bring to understanding diversity in the early years.

Introduction

By drawing on individual and group feedback from delegates, this report aims to bring out the range of study visit perspectives, the mix of insights and responses, and some of the key learning points about the theme of working with diversity.

One of the main objectives of the report is to facilitate discussion and debate on these issues, alongside the sharing of experience and good practice.

Delegates were provided with a discussion paper, *Working With Diversity*, by Peter Moss and John Bennett. The following extract from the paper contextualises some of the key themes around diversity that were explored by delegates on the study visit.

Diversity – context and key themes

As a term, diversity is usually used to refer to educational work with children who may be differentiated in a variety of ways: by ethnicity, immigrant status, gender, language, social class or background, poverty, disability, membership of a different church or association, or even by a life experience that distinguishes the child from the majority of children. In much of this work, diversity is often treated as a negative, minority issue, as the exception rather than the rule. In practice, of course, diversity applies to every child and family, and some dimensions of diversity can be valued positively, as bringing advantage and inclusion.

Another perspective on diversity is offered by Dahlberg and Moss (2007) in 'Ethics and Politics in Early Childhood Education'. Dahlberg argues, for example, that absolute respect for the distinctiveness and 'otherness' of the individual has profound implications for working with diversity: "to think of another whom I cannot grasp is an important shift and

it challenges the whole scene of pedagogy".

Moreover, discussions of diversity frequently neglect the causes of inequality and how disadvantage and advantage are often reproduced. The extent of diversity is profoundly influenced by the social context and the social policies of different countries. Tackling exclusion through education only, or through piecemeal health and social interventions, without addressing the underlying issue of inequality, will not work. Inequality and its exclusionary consequences must first be tackled through (inter alia) strong redistribution measures, including an equitable tax regime.

Our [background] paper *Working With Diversity* discusses four themes: working with ethnicity and poverty; majority language acquisition; children in need of additional learning supports; and gender issues. In these themes, the focus is on the contribution of early childhood services and their role in reaching equitable and successful outcomes for the young children involved in these issues.

Working with ethnicity and poverty - Possibly the most challenging circumstance for policy planners and practitioners arises when minority ethnic status is linked to poverty. Children from lower socio-economic groups are (statistically) likely to have poor outcomes on a wide range of measures, including health, socio-emotional development, educational attainment, school attendance, family stability and employment opportunities. The forecast of poor outcomes is even more probable in the case of poor children from excluded ethnic groups. The issue is important in contemporary Europe, as children affected negatively by ethnicity linked to poverty are far more numerous than the children affected by other issues. *Working With Diversity* outlines five approaches to tackle exclusion

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and also calls attention to necessary government action. More than ever, governments need to give leadership in the defence of excluded groups and employ fiscal, social and labour policies to reduce family poverty and give young children a fair start in life.

In his latest online column, Viewpoint (http://www.coe.int/t/commissioner/viewpoints/default_EN.asp) Thomas Hammarberg, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, writes:

"The current economic crisis has made it particularly important to screen state budgets for their compliance with human rights. The allocation of resources will affect human rights protection - including gender equality, children's rights and the situation of old or disabled persons, migrants and other groups who risk being disadvantaged. The way state revenues are obtained will also have an influence on justice and fairness in society; in this regard no tax system is neutral."

Majority language acquisition – For young children, the acquisition of a second language is a long-term process. American research suggests that children from second-language backgrounds – particularly when second-language, poverty and ethnicity combine – perform less well in academic subjects compared to mainstream peers (McKeon, 2005). The study outlines the factors that influence the development of a second language, in particular, socio-economic status. Many migrant children achieve a good level of communicative competence in the majority language in everyday situations during pre-school, in many cases comparable to majority children. Knapp warns, however, that seeming fluency can conceal hidden language difficulties, which only become evident when written language is used. The attention given

to language development in the kindergarten curriculum – and later in school – is critical.

Children in need of additional learning supports - Before the 1980s, care for young children with special needs was generally provided by their families, supported by health and medical services. Frequently, this is still the case for infants and toddlers. Except for a handful of countries, a picture emerges of public support for these children and their families being irregular, under-funded and non-inclusive. For older children, education departments have modified considerably their former practice of segregating children with special needs into specialised educational institutions. In this regard, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the American legal requirement of placement in the "least restrictive environment" have become safeguards for these children and their families.

Successful inclusion of children with special needs also requires responsive pedagogical approaches and curricula, eg more intensive team planning and careful management of activities as staff endeavour to adapt constantly to the learning patterns presented by individual children. To reach the learning goals that children can realistically achieve, individualised educational plans (IEPs) – determined by children, parents and teachers together – are formulated and implemented. By necessity, staff ratios – both teachers and classroom assistants – are higher for children with special educational needs and special training is necessary, factors that still inhibit inclusion in some countries. Strategies to improve approaches to young children in need of additional learning supports are addressed in the *Additional Support for Learning Act* of the Scottish Parliament, 2004.

Gender issues – A distinction is made between *gender equality* and *gender equity*. Despite

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the superior education achievement of girls, *income inequality* and *political inequality* remain features of women's lives in European countries. Gender inequity, that is unequal sharing of child rearing and domestic work, is even more marked. Although generally outside the legal field, gender equity issues should not be underestimated: the lack of gender equity within the home prevents many women from achieving gender equality in work. A heavy domestic work schedule can oblige women to engage only in part-time work outside the home, generally in low-paid and feminised fields, such as cleaning, caring, catering, and cashiering (the 'four Cs') and often with little reference to their educational levels or qualifications. As the domestic division of labour is considered voluntary and traditional, it is difficult to challenge gender inequity in the home or oppose it through the courts.

In the kindergarten, research suggests that both early childhood programming and schooling have only a limited impact on gender outcomes. The key, perhaps, is to undertake active, programmatic interventions over a longer period of time. Basic questions of participation and power need also to be addressed through research and observations, for example, to determine the extent to which girls have equal access to teacher time, resources, educational experiences, play spaces and play materials. There is also the question of men in kindergartens, linked to the issue of 'women's work' and its remuneration.

A final important question is *what type of workforce is needed to achieve diversity goals*. In contemporary societies, it has become clear that the task of the early childhood professional includes social care and wellbeing as well as education. The [background] paper provides information on three main educator profiles, chosen by three well-developed systems: the pedagogue in Denmark, the

'new' teacher in Sweden and the early childhood teacher in New Zealand. All three professions focus on children 0-6 years. Rather than adopting a mainly co-ordinating role (leaders among a host of ill-trained 'childcare' workers), these graduate professionals are the majority staff in early childhood centres in their countries. Where diversity is concerned, it is important to conserve a 'democratic professionalism' (Oberhuemer & Schreyer, 2008), which values reciprocal relationships not only with children but also with families and communities.

Delegate feedback (Part 1)

Part 1: Individual and group responses

The following are edited extracts from feedback given by delegates on the study visit. These responses establish a range of perspectives on the project's key themes: the workforce, poverty and social inclusion.

Aldo Fortunati

President of the Research and Documentation Centre on Childhood, La Bottega Di Geppetto in San Miniato Municipality, Italy, Vice-president of Gruppo Nazionale Nidi-Infanzia (National Group Childcare – Childhood), Director of the Documentation, Research and Training Area of the Istituto degli Innocenti in Firenze.

The overall impression I got from the visits to all the centres was that there was strong focus and motivation in all the workers I had the chance to meet. It seems that the field of childhood services is synonymous with highly motivated staff. This is a positive factor for our reflections on workforce quality because it shows how motivation, skills and experience are three elements necessary for quality.

We visited services that focused attention on children with additional needs. The approach I observed concentrated on developing policies through various interventions. This seems to take diversities in to account but then separates them. I was not convinced by this approach.

Our focus on diversity must start from the point of recognising the potentiality and the richness that diversity brings, even in the cases in which it represents difficulty and discomfort or real problems. Policies have to keep together diversities to truly promote social inclusion. In the context of the economic value of political choices, I think this perspective could also lead to better

investment and even to the saving of money.

Gloria Tognetti

Manager of Educational and School Services in the Municipality of San Miniato, Italy, Director of the Research and Documentation Centre on Childhood La Bottega Di Geppetto

The study visit represented an important opportunity to reflect on the different contexts of "diversity". I had the chance to observe the important work undertaken with children and families with additional needs. Sometimes I felt a sort of distance between these interventions and centres and the rest of the education system.

I would have liked the chance to talk much more about diversity in a positive way; about individual potentialities as a value we have to let emerge inside children's groups – diversities that emerge from the very early years that can become a resource for everyone and everybody's growth.

I noticed that the work in small groups and one-to-one is very well done. It is managed professionally.

The impression is of good educational attention and services for children from two to three years old. But services for children from zero to two and for their families seem to be lacking.

I heard some strong statements in workshops and during the conference about the importance of working in the very early years to limit disadvantages and to promote the positive integration of diversities. A commitment to these goals underlines the importance of developing services for this age range, both to support children's growing processes and to positively support parents.

Delegate feedback (Part 1)

Many of the things I had the chance to observe seemed familiar to what we too experiment with: the organisation of some educational contexts, the care for the space and furniture, the reflection on natural materials, the flexibility in experiences offered to children, and the choice of having groups of children with mixed ages in pre-school services. I found, especially in pre-school services, a real passion for work and a great respect for childhood.

Franco Doni

Manager of Services to the Person and Solidarity Policies Sector in San Miniato Municipality, Italy

I found the visit to Beatlie School in West Lothian, which is dedicated to children with additional needs, particularly interesting. Thanks to the welcoming attitude of the school staff it was possible to understand the aims of the educational team very well.

Alongside my colleagues, I would highlight the value attached to viewing diversity as an opportunity for the whole community to be involved in "integration". I found that this was based on the reciprocal recognising of differences, and not only an additional support needs issue.

San Miniato's social services experience, and the one generally applied in Italy, prioritises as much as possible the possibility of integration at any level, from the early childhood services until after the conclusion of the school period.

Barbara Pagni

Educator in the educational services for early childhood in the Municipality of San Miniato, Italy, operating representative for Research and Documentation Centre on Childhood La Bottega Di Geppetto for coordination of

services activities, consultancies and international project and exchanges

It was very useful to visit services in three different areas – Edinburgh, Glasgow and West Lothian. In this way we had the chance to see centres in different kind of territories – a city, an industrial city and a more rural context – with different populations and different needs.

I found my visit to the adventure centre The Yard very interesting. The service has a great outside space, which was very big and organised in different corners. It offers very different uses to children. Most of the furniture and the materials are recycled and reused in creative ways. But what I really appreciated was the approach the adults working in the centre have to play. First of all they observe children they see for the first time, then they share their opinions with their colleagues, and after this they think about the kind of materials they could suggest children use on their next visit. What is important at the centre is that children are observed and are left free to use materials and furniture as they wish.

The only negative from my viewpoint is that – as people working there told us – *The Yard* is a unique facility in Scotland. Unfortunately children with additional needs cannot share this service with other children.

Jessica Magrini

President of the Social Cooperative Il Piccolo Principe, staff member of the Research and Documentation Centre on Childhood La Bottega Di Geppetto for coordination of services, activities and consultancies, Italy

I found staff working at The Yard to be very highly motivated. The extremely positive characteristics of this centre include the

Delegate feedback (Part 1)

shared planning by the workers and the organisation of the outside space. The approach to playing was that every child could choose among several opportunities previously organised through appropriate staff intervention. This was very interesting. I also really liked the use of recycled materials and the capacity of the staff – even with little money invested in the centre – to create playing opportunities by assembling different materials.

At the service I visited in West Lothian (Beatlie School) I was very impressed by the motivation, the attention and the good attitude the staff had toward children. I was impressed also by the work the staff did around daily planning, and the quality of the facilities used for children with additional needs.

I felt that the centre could be more integrated with other educational contexts and should plan more opportunities for children with additional needs to meet other children. If they are built into a continuum of other sharing and exchanging experiences, specific interventions can be a great opportunity for children to grow. We should work towards a situation where every child can express diversity and difference; this should be seen as a resource and potentiality, and not as a difficulty.

Beata Tarłowska

*Department of Educational Opportunities,
Ministry of National Education, Poland*

I visited The Yard, a play centre with a playground for use by children and young people with additional support needs. The age range catered for was three to 21. The centre is located in a big building with an adjacent green area. The building as well as the green area give a wide variety of opportunities for

the children and teenagers who take part in different games: the rooms are easy to rearrange and transform depending on the needs of children. Distinct areas with building blocks, books or mattresses in different shapes and sizes, and music instruments etc meet the needs and interests of a very diverse (in terms of age and disability) group. Children of all ages are inspired to take up different activities. The arrangement doesn't impose limits on the kind of activity undertaken, or restrict children's initiative. Qualified play workers channel the activities, but it is the child that decides what is interesting and what it wants to do. Play workers take care of children's security while monitoring their activities and stimulating their development.

This play-centre has a broader dimension. The work with the local community and families and siblings of the disabled children is an aspect that merits special attention.

I also visited Bridgeton Family Learning Centre in Glasgow, a centre designed for infants and children up to the age of five. The children are divided into groups depending on their age. The number of children and childcare workers differs depending on the age group. There are enough staff to guarantee high quality care, good contacts with children and knowledge about their needs and interests. Work in small groups or with individuals takes place as required.

Here the adult follows the child, meeting its needs and interests. Children are thought to be self-reliant; even the youngest eat unaided by adults. All the rooms are well equipped: special interest areas, sandboxes, a variety of toys and teaching games. All this inspires children, giving them the possibility of development, and teaching them about communication and co-working in groups. Even during bad weather outside the children

Delegate feedback (Part 1)

can play in the sand.

This institution gives support to children from difficult environments. It also supports their parents, who often struggle with problems such as drug addiction. There is one room designated for mothers of children who spend their time there. I noticed simple and practical things of benefit, for example tables in a semicircular shape that enable adults to easily communicate across the table with a four or five year old. Colourful hallways and rooms contribute to a warm family atmosphere. The teachers prepare a book for every child, documenting its development. For the workers it is a recording of observations, while for children and parents it might be a great souvenir.

In the afternoon I took part in workshop in Glasgow City Council led by Samir Sharma, Race Equality Officer. This short meeting made a big impression on me and made me think about the essence of racism. Seeing a movie and a presentation prepared by teenagers made me more sensitive to this issue. I think that too many people ignore this problem or are not aware of it. This is why I think it is so important to bring up anti-racist initiatives among children and teenagers.

The following afternoon was spent at Beatlie School in West Lothian. This institution offers a holistic approach towards the care and upbringing of disabled children and their families. The whole building is designed for people with limited motor abilities. Small groups and well-qualified pedagogical staff enable an individual approach. Thanks to special methods of work the children are prepared to move to different schools, depending on conditions and availability.

What drew my attention was the equipment in this institution. In particular a room designed for working with autistic children, where the lights were dimmed and it was quiet and

isolated. There were separate boxes where children could work individually. This way of arranging the workspace limits stimuli. Despite a diversity of teaching aids to assist in perceptual and motor development, here teachers often use self-made props created out of recycling materials.

In each service what surprised me was the proportion of staff to children, the work in small groups or individually, and the arrangement and equipment of rooms where the classes took place. What also caught my attention was the amount of work that is carried out with the families. One of the conditions for success when working with children is working with parents and siblings who may live in marginalized environments.

I came away with the impression that the Scottish education system puts the child, along with their needs and abilities, at the centre. The task of an adult is to work in a way that the child reaches its optimum at every stage of development. Each child has the right to success.

Monika Rosciszewska Woźniak

Vice-president of the Board, Comenius Foundation for Child Development, Poland

Above all this visit made me think about diversity among children and the role of diversity in the development of society. Support for children with diverse needs is an obligation of our society resulting from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. On the other hand, children who conquer a difficult life can enrich the lives of other children.

Greendykes Child & Family Centre in Edinburgh was an excellent example of best practice work with children and their families. A variety of socio-economic backgrounds exist

Delegate feedback (Part 1)

in every country. We can find dysfunctional families, and disabled, ill, or poor people anywhere. I was touched by the directness and simplicity of relationships between the children, parents and staff at Greendykes.

The complexity and variety of programmes at Greendykes made a big impression on me. Many parents are more helpless than their children. If we want to help the children and increase their chances in mainstream primary education, we have to help the parents. I came away with the impression that this is sometimes hard and carries a high risk of failure.

The visit gave me the chance to find out about many inspiring programmes, for example PEEP (Peer Early Education Partnership). I intend to introduce some of these ideas in Poland when we begin to set up centres for children and parents from dysfunctional families.

At Greendykes all the needs of children are discussed with the parents or guardians. Contact with the family is well established before the child arrives in the Centre, which increases the likelihood of parents being engaged and contributes to a sense of security about the child's learning.

Families that attend the centre often require help from different specialists, so it is extremely important to coordinate their activities. I compared this with my experiences in Poland. We very rarely start with an analysis of needs; instead we usually match the needs to the facilities of preschools.

As part of the visit to Beatlie Campus in West Lothian I spent some time in the playgroup for small children with additional needs. Sessions conducted there are for smaller children, designed to stimulate their development and strengthen their chances in mainstream education. I think the system of documenting

individual development (every day the children take home a special diary, where the teachers note the child's successes and any relevant observations about them) is a very good idea.

I also visited Castlemilk Family Centre in Glasgow. The centre has a very effective programme based around cooperation with parents. Parents have their own room for meetings, where mothers organise different activities such as arts and crafts. The aim of this is not only to increase skills but also to meet, exchange experiences and support the school through fundraising initiatives – whatever they make, they can sell and raise funds for the school. It made me think about ways of reinforcing how the centre could be used by parents. I am interested in how the commitment of parents to different school activities could be encouraged.

The conditions for children's education and development are good at the Centre. Children have spacious, nicely decorated rooms to use. The space is not cramped, which gives the opportunity for a variety of activities. What drew my attention was the manner in which the preschool introduces its curriculum to the parents – clear, simple information and language is used, alongside photographs. With this way of communicating information, everyone can understand the aims of education. I would like to propose this as a model to follow in our Centres in the rural areas of Poland.

I liked the lunch routine. Children chose the lunch dishes they wanted, carried them to the tables and cleaned their plates after eating. To me this was a sign of respect towards the diverse needs represented by the children in the Centre, and it taught the children to take responsibility for the choices they made. It also helps develop self-reliance.

Delegate feedback (Part 1)

In Poland we have few experiences with racial and cultural diversity, and this is why the presentation in Glasgow City Council was interesting for me. What I found especially interesting was the film made by teenagers, which explored issues around prejudice, inequality, and stereotypes. It made me think about how to introduce this topic in early education in Poland. The film raised questions about racial and religious prejudice but also about what is more common in Poland: prejudice directed at poverty, family status, alcohol problems in the family, or having a family member with a criminal record. This raises huge issues about acceptance and stigmatization, and about the development and security of own children.

The seminar in Edinburgh was extremely interesting, particularly the workshop group. We discussed diversity among the staff working with children and the need for more men to work as early educators.

I think that regardless of how well we take care of children with different needs, the problem remains how to include these children in mainstream education. Will children and parents who have serious problems feel happy in a typical school? Is the support they get now enough for them to manage by themselves in the future? These are questions for which we must keep seeking answers.

Anna Adamczyk – Chmielewska

Center for Social Help in Bełżyce, Poland

The study visit in Scotland allowed me to gain new competence in the education field. I am sure I can use this in my work with children from marginalized or dysfunctional families.

Two things that drew my attention were the designated, very well equipped play areas and the sandboxes and water containers located in

every room. I have never seen this in any Polish pre-schools. This idea convinced me to buy a sandbox and a water container for my institution in Poland. The direct entrance to the garden from the pre-school was also striking. Another aspect I found very appealing was the rental programme: books and toys were put into a big bag and children could choose some and take them home. From a social help point of view this is an excellent solution, mainly because some parents don't realize how important books and toys are to children and their development. Also, sometimes the financial status of families limits the buying of toys and books for children.

The room designed for parents made a big impression on me; it is place where adults can meet, talk, prepare and discuss their ideas. This is a very important initiative. It gives the parents a feeling of status and ownership. They feel needed and often thanks to places like this they "spread their wings" and discover their talents. All activities that involve parents are a significant aspect in my work. They prevent the social marginalization of the whole family and motivate the parents to fulfill their duties properly.

In each of the institutions I noticed the personal commitment of staff and their highly professional approach toward working with children.

During different conversations I discovered that the education system works in partnership with the social welfare system, which is extremely important in delivering integrated help to the families.

The conference presented a wide overview of children's education. One element that touched me was a film made in Italy. For me it was wonderful seeing the little children who dish out the pasta to themselves, use metal

Delegate feedback (Part 1)

cutlery and glasses and monitor who is in charge of sweeping the floor. It made me want to open a nursery like this in Poland for children from families who are on welfare. I can see this as an opportunity to help children grow, so they can go to pre-school, then to school and university. It would be a chance for them to become educated and self-reliant adults.

A visit like this was precious for many reasons. It allowed for the exchange of experiences and inspired me to introduce new activities for children.

General feedback from Italian delegates:

We had the opportunity to visit several different services and spaces. What the Italian delegation found very positive was the opportunity for sharing, comparing and free discussion space.

We found that the theme of diversity was approached either from the perspective of prioritising prevention, or from a stance based on the need to intervene to mitigate social exclusion. We were aware that there was a trend towards the latter approach to diversity. This approach was viewed as not corresponding with recent Italian policy positions on diversity.

A further observation was that the interventions in relation to diversity were mainly represented by taking care of children with additional needs in special centres and not in traditional [mainstream] schools.

Delegate feedback (Part 2)

Part 2: Responses to thematic questions on diversity

Delegates on the study visit were given four questions about diversity, and asked to respond.

1) What is your understanding of "diversity" in relation to early years? As well as ethnicity etc, does diversity include diversity of perspectives, paradigm and practices?

Italian delegates:

Our understanding is that diversity is about richness and potentiality. We consider diversity as something to welcome and to view as a resource that makes opportunities and life experiences richer, both for children and adults.

Norwegian delegates:

Firstly, we were surprised that diversity can be viewed as a negative concept (as explained in the paper by Peter Moss and John Bennett). The corresponding Norwegian term – *mangfold* – does not have these connotations. *Mangfold* simply means a variety of something, whether we are talking about resources, people etc, while diversity seems to be more connected to the challenges that this *mangfold* might produce.

The hurdle of understanding and integrating the concept of diversity into our own world of concepts was something all delegates felt was necessary. Instead of using the corresponding term *mangfold*, we in Norway would probably be using more specific concepts and terms such as 'multicultural', 'children with additional needs', 'poverty' etc when talking about the challenges regarding diversity that we saw in the institutions we visited.

We think many perspectives on diversity are possible:

In working life: the importance of having a variety of people – young and old, from different backgrounds and cultures, with different experiences and attitudes. How can they and the resources they represent contribute to shaping a good working environment for all?

In education provision: one school for all. The Norwegian 'unity school' concept was developed by the Labour Party in the post-war years to signal that all children should have a place in their local school. This concept is still very much alive in the education debate, linked to the debate about private schools, amongst other things. For the Norwegian education system this currently, but also historically, has meant a 'no' to private schools and also a 'no' to separate schools for children with additional needs.

In kindergarten provision: aiming at provision locally so that children who live in the same area first meet in kindergarten and then in school. The variety that exists locally should be represented in both schools and kindergartens.

In learning environments – making use of the variety that exists locally, whether that is a farm, a forest, the local museum, beach etc.

In learning approaches – giving the children varied and challenging learning experiences.

In learning resources – a variety, including good quality and accessible local resources.

For us the concept of diversity, or *mangfold*, is very much connected to universal services. In practice this means that all children within a local area meet in kindergarten, in school, at the family centre, in the local culture school, with the same health visitor etc. The children whom, for whatever reason, need extra

Delegate feedback (Part 2)

attention receive the support needed within these universal services.

When visiting Scottish institutions we found that the approach was different. Diversity was, to some extent at least, met by a range of more specialized services. These services included a special school, a family centre for families with major challenges, and a language centre.

We think there are some important questions to raise regarding this way of organizing the services:

The school and kindergarten as a 'mirror' of the local environment.

Children learning together, children as role models for each other. What consequences will the choice of more specialized services have for this educational principle?

Parents learning together, acting as role models for each other.

Travel – some children seem to have to travel fairly long distances to get to the specialized services.

Developing the children's identity and their sense of belonging – place-based education, using local resources, outdoor education etc. By offering specialized services do we then say that 'the problems' reside with the child? That the local school/kindergarten can't provide services for them, because they are too 'special'? Instead, what about focusing on the institution being responsible for adapting to the needs of all children, so that if it doesn't work well the problem is with the institution, not the child/family?

Access to specialized competence is easier – and is perhaps of better quality – when organising specialized services, but what

about the rest of the day and week? How do all the people working with the children develop the necessary competence? Are there better models that might solve the competence problem regarding specialized or 'distributed' / universal services?

As we stated earlier, we found it strange that diversity had negative connotations. However, another concept – race – has negative connotations in Norway and is almost impossible to use as a term there. In Scotland we found that it was used quite openly, even in titles, such as Race Equality Officer. Why are we so afraid to use this word in Norway, and is our fear positive or negative? We had no conclusive answers to this, but it was another difference that we found very interesting to discuss.

2) What qualities, values and ethics are required to work with diversity?

Italian delegates:

People working with diversity need a very high level of training and ongoing training during their work in services. They also need multi-professional training and the chance to forge partnerships with other kinds of professionals.

Norwegian delegates:

You have to love working with people. You need a firm belief that all people can develop knowledge, skills and attitudes as long as the provision they get is adapted so that that they can make use of their full potential. You have to have a genuine respect for other people – this was a quality we felt was very strong in all the institutions we visited in Scotland. The people working within these institutions expressed a genuine respect for the children and their families and made huge efforts to provide a variety of good services by getting to know and include parents and

Delegate feedback (Part 2)

grandparents.

Knowledge of and respect for the local context is important – engaging with the diversity in the local environment you are working in must be a priority. You need to know the local environment (including outdoor learning arenas), the children’s background, their culture, and their families.

And of course you need the competence to provide well-adapted services to suit the diversity of children and families you work with. Connected to this, the workforce needs to respect each other’s competences – conflicts between professionals work against children’s interests. There should be a will to work from the principle of ‘the child at the centre’, with integration of the services needed in such a way that the child and his/her family do not have to relate to a number of different agencies if extra support is needed.

3) What are the implication of diversity for workforce roles, qualifications and development?

Italian delegates:

For workforce roles, qualification and development it is necessary to support the social recognition of people working in the services and to invest in the development of networks among services.

Norwegian delegates:

Formal education and training is central. But of equal importance is in-service training and development. We think that the theoretical foundation people get from formal education (preferably higher education) is crucial in being able to reflect on and challenge one’s own practice. However, this does not happen just by chance; leaders of institutions need not only to have good qualifications

themselves to lead development processes within their institutions, they also need to be challenged from outside. ‘Critical friends’ – such as a representative from the local authorities or a colleague from another institution engaging in development work together with researchers or higher education institutions – have a key role to play in this. We saw some examples of this during our study visit and think that was very positive. We met a representative from Glasgow City Council acting as a ‘critical friend’ to a manager of a nursery school. The services in Glasgow seemed to have a very good approach to developing their workforce through qualification programmes in cooperation with the universities.

Framework is important – the institutions must know the aims and objectives they are working towards. Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland, the Framework for the kindergarten’s organization and the Children’s Act in Norway are good examples of this. These frameworks help ensure children’s rights and are tools for trying to implement the principle of ‘equity through diversity’. This means that children get an equitable provision of services that respect and take into account the diversity of life situations and environments they experience. Continuous development work is important. The services are never fully developed, never perfect. The people working with children need to accept and understand this and engage in development work where they are willing to challenge and develop their own practices.

Integration of services – with the aim of achieving the best for the child – is a difficult but important process. In this process it is important that the more specialized competences that the different professions represent is not lost. Quality assurance of integrated services is central.

Delegate feedback (Part 2)

4) How can early years services be more representative, in terms of diversity, of the communities they serve – for example, how can services recruit more men and other under represented groups?

Italian delegates:

Early years services could be more representative of the communities they serve through an enhanced social recognition of the workforce – for example by recruiting more men – and by putting more of an emphasis on training. There should also be more recognition of the role and contribution made by people coming from other nations.

Norwegian delegates:

Regarding bringing more men in to the workforce, a number of different approaches have been tried in Norway, with limited success. These have included national campaigns, visits by male role models in schools to try to persuade young men to qualify for working in kindergartens, and ring-fencing a certain number of places for male students within higher education programmes for training pre-school teachers. A key variable seems to be the number of men in each institution – there has to be more than one or two. They need to be able to develop their own culture, to have somebody to talk to about issues that men are interested in. Achieving this is not easy, but not impossible either. A conscious, systematic approach is necessary – recruiting young men, supporting their education on the job, or supporting their participation in formal qualification programmes etc.

It is important to start early, making young boys aware of kindergartens and similar services. This can be done through schools and kindergartens cooperating. Teenagers

could visit and work with children in kindergartens, and outdoor activities could be organised where teenagers act as instructors and assistants together with qualified personnel.

Similar approaches can be used with regard to other under-represented groups. The main issue, however, is that employers have to be genuinely interested in a diversity of backgrounds, experiences and professions in their institutions, and be willing to approach the challenges involved in providing more integrated and holistic services for children and young people.

Service profiles and delegate discussion points

The following are profiles of a selection of services visited by delegates, based on reports by Children in Scotland staff.

1. Govanhill Nursery School, Glasgow

For children aged: 3-5

Ethnicity: Around 95% of the children come from Asian families. Increasing numbers of Eastern European children applying for nursery places. 5% of children are local Scottish children.

Capacity: 80 children in the morning; 80 children in afternoon session. Small number staying for whole day.

Number of staff: 18

Bilingualism approach: Bilingual / English as an Additional Language (EAL) positions within the nursery for over 20 years. Urdu and Punjabi commonly used but also Arabic and Malayan.

Discussion points

Ethnic minority children attending the nursery

For many ethnic minority children who attend the nursery it is the first time they have done something away from home and the first opportunity they have had to interact with children and adults outside their ethnic group. Children from the Asian communities do not tend to go to pre-school groups. Discussion took place about how mixing different ethnic minorities, cultures and ages at an early age could be extremely effective in breaking down barriers.

Additional Support for Learning requirements

The importance of integrating children with Additional Support Needs (ASN) into mainstream education at an early stage was highlighted. Children with ASN were the subject of individual plans. Discussion took

place around cultural issues relating to assessing additional needs and receiving adequate information to make informed choices. An application form was “not enough” – it was absolutely necessary to meet the child. Often the parent is too embarrassed to say that their child has a problem, or sees not highlighting the problem as a way of protecting their child.

Access to nature

The Norwegian delegates asked what access the children had to learning outdoors. Discussion took place about the fact that the door from the nursery is always open to the outside area so that the children can go outside at any time (outdoor clothing is supplied).

Bilingualism

The importance of children not losing their own language, and the role this played in the later development of English, was stressed. Getting to know the parents through home visits and social events in nursery (parents often bringing in cooking, for example) was a priority. There was a strong emphasis on recognising that the nursery needs to be part of community life. The nursery uses English but where possible the children’s native language will also be used, with English being introduced gradually. It was suggested that, if one language is strong to start with, the other language will develop more strongly than if two are focussed on from the start. Parents assist in supporting languages within the nursery in different ways, for example by reading stories onto tape in their native language.

2. Deanpark Nursery, Glasgow

For children aged: 3 - 5

Capacity: 70 full-time

Service profiles and delegate discussion points

Overview

Deanpark draws children from a variety of social backgrounds. Delegates were keen to understand the nature of early years provision in Glasgow (and more generally in Scotland), including issues such as staff qualifications, ratios of staff to children, staff development and training, how nursery care is financed, and enrolment procedures and rates. They also wanted to know about Curriculum for Excellence (CFE), particularly in the early years. Delegates gave the host a brief overview of the situation in their respective countries, which allowed for interesting comparisons between the three nations. The visit provided evidence of the nursery's efforts to be inclusive and celebrate diversity. Delegates attached great importance to exploring early years provision in Scotland in general.

Discussion points

Bilingualism and communication

Deanpark currently has 12 children who come from homes where English is an additional language. These languages encompass Urdu, Welsh, Turkish and Spanish. The celebration of other languages and cultures was evident throughout the nursery in bilingual signs and other displays. A substantial amount of communication between children and staff, and between the nursery and parents/other visitors, was visual and photographic. There was a current focus on looking at and drawing flags of the world and a plan to connect with children in Spain via email. Parental involvement was also evident through photo displays.

Disability

This was briefly touched upon by the group in discussion of the provisions made by each

country to accommodate children with disabilities in early years services.

3. Beatlie School, West Lothian

For children aged: 3-18

Capacity: 59

Number of staff: 40

Discussion points

Diversity

Delegates were told by the headteacher that West Lothian is a relatively small authority, that diversity is a broad topic encompassing gender, ethnicity, poverty, and disability and that there are examples of all forms of diversity in West Lothian. However, disability was a dominant theme in the discussion of diversity during the visit.

Additional support

Beatlie supports children with additional needs, with an emphasis on early intervention to provide children with the best opportunities to achieve. There is a presumption of mainstreaming – some children will go on to mainstream education with support, if this is appropriate for them.

Workforce

The headteacher gave a summary of staff qualifications and skills, and also referred to the range of other, non-education professionals who work within the campus. She referred to this as a 'joined up approach' and talked about the importance of working in partnership to provide intensive treatment for the children at Beatlie.

4. Greendykes Child & Family Centre, Craigmillar, Edinburgh

Service profiles and delegate discussion points

For children aged: 0-5

Capacity: 52

Number of staff: 31

Overview

Greendykes offers a different service to that provided by many local authority or private nurseries; staff there are supporting the whole family, not just the child. Some children get full-time provision, some get part-time, depending on the needs of the child and family. The most vulnerable families are entitled to full-time provision. The Centre supports children from the immediate locality but also children from other areas in the east of the city, such as Portobello. There is a bus service to pick up these children. A recent HMIE inspection awarded the Centre an 'excellent' rating in every category.

Discussion points

Diversity

Eighteen out of 52 children attending Greendykes have additional support needs, and there are a variety of reasons that they are at the nursery. Some have parents who are coping with drug addiction, mental health problems (often these two issues are linked), disabilities, or domestic abuse. There is an ongoing cultural diversity programme throughout the nursery. Parents are invited to become involved. The Centre also has links with Shakti Women's Aid with the aim of sharing information about supporting Muslim families.

Learning

There are separate rooms for children aged zero to 18 months, 18 months to three years, and three to five years. The children each have a personal learning plan from the day they start at Greendykes. These plans can be

accessed by the children and parents at any time. They can take them off the shelf and look at them and discuss them with the nursery officer. The personal learning plan continues up until the children start school. Information relating to the first term at school will be recorded then the plan will be closed. These plans are very useful for many reasons, including child protection. All policies relating to the nursery are available for parents to read or they can ask to discuss them with staff members. There is a pamphlet available about Curriculum for Excellence for parents.

Workforce

The nursery is staffed by nursery officers and there is a teacher available for one-and-a-half days a week. The nursery officers are trained to work in every room. They are very experienced and have been instrumental in identifying children who may have additional support needs. On Wednesday afternoons there is a crèche facility to enable the nursery officers to do other jobs. They can engage in outreach, take part in training (there is an ongoing programme of child protection training) or they might be needed to help one of the families. They might accompany a mother who is very shy to go to a gym class, or go with a parent to the housing benefit office, or be involved in children's hearings. A significant amount of Continuing Professional Development has to take place because the staff have such a range of responsibilities. Staff also carry out a lot of work voluntarily. For example, the little house in the grounds of the Centre was recently painted entirely by staff including the unit manager.

Additional support needs

Speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, and occupational therapists also spend time at the centre. Programmes are designed by the therapists and then

Service profiles and delegate discussion points

carried out by the nursery officers as part of their daily routine with the children. On Saturdays and Sundays the nursery is used for the Kidzone Club. Children with additional support needs can take part in activities there.

Parent services

There are many services offered to the parents of the children at the nursery. There is a group worker with links to projects such as Women against Violence and local drugs treatment projects. They can learn baby massage, which helps with bonding and attachment. They can go to parenting support groups to build up their confidence. They can access reflexology and Indian head massages, and take part in arts and crafts and cookery lessons. There are also IT classes and child behaviour groups. Some of the activities are made possible by fundraising and some by student placements.

The nursery also provides a homework club for siblings of the children in the nursery. Children can attend until the age of seven. They get help with homework but also take part in fun activities. Parents can practise cooking or learn skills such as how to bath a baby in the small house at the Centre. The house is also used by local projects addressing drug addiction or domestic violence issues.

There is a drop-in room in the nursery building for parents. Parents can come in and help themselves to a cup of tea. This is a safe environment. It also means families who can't afford to put on their heating can keep warm. Parents can stay and go into the playrooms with the children – there is a Stay and Play programme. There is an International Breakfast Club for parents on a Friday. There is also a washing machine which can be used by parents, some of whom are Travellers and might not usually have access to one.

For parents whose children do not get a place at Greendykes but are still in need of family support there is an outreach programme, run by the nursery officers. There are parent support groups and Parent Early Education Partnership (PEEP) groups. The PEEP groups provide a specific programme of early intervention, aiming to enhance the parents' knowledge and skills, and the children's home environment. The PEEP groups are age-banded. Many of the parents have needs themselves. Parents lacking the self-confidence to join a group may be visited by nursery officers as part of the home visiting service.

Greendykes places a strong emphasis on the voices of parents – parents are encouraged to get their views across and there is a real effort to act on their suggestions if possible. It was clear from the visit that staff want to ascertain what the parents' needs are and how they can be met.

Working for Inclusion: the Diversity Dimension

"In order to deliver high quality services for children and their families, it is also vital that we have a highly skilled and well-trained workforce who are appropriately supported, valued and rewarded."

Adam Ingram MSP, Minister for Children and Early Years

A one-day seminar, *Working for inclusion – the diversity dimension*, concluded the study visit. The seminar examined what is meant by 'diversity'; looked at what qualities, values and ethics are required to work with diversity; considered the implications of diversity for workforce roles, qualifications and development; and explored how early years services could be more representative, in terms of diversity, of the communities they serve.

Central in strengthening services for parents and young children is the role of the early years workforce. The seminar gave service providers and practitioners the chance to 'think outside the box' about this issue in particular, as part of a debate that will have an impact at local, national and European levels.

The nature of diversity, the values needed to incorporate it and the role of legislation all came under scrutiny as delegates joined practitioners from across Scotland to discuss the role of the early years workforce and the contribution it can make to addressing poverty and promoting social inclusion. Cross-sector working, improved status and the recognition of vital skills were identified as essential to moving forward as an early years workforce committed to addressing issues of diversity in early years provision.

Adam Ingram, Minister for Children and Early Years, drew attention to the significance of children's early years in setting the pattern for adolescence and adult life. He said that improving the early years experience could

address social problems, and argued that the Early Years Framework was setting a clear direction for social policy in Scotland.

Work is already underway through initiatives such as the Family Nurse Partnership programme, the 'Go Play' fund, which makes play opportunities more widely available, and new initiatives to support the central role of effective parenting, Ingram said. He also drew attention to the need for a highly skilled and well-trained workforce. This was being addressed by the hundreds of lead practitioners now studying for the new BA degree in Childhood Practice and the development of teacher education courses with skills specific to the early years, he argued.

"What is most needed is a change in thinking and a change in focus," Ingram told delegates. "We need to make sure systems and procedures recognise, and are better aligned to, the needs of the child and his or her family."

The key, Ingram suggested, is a strong and sustained spirit of partnership. "This is not about national government dictating what should happen locally in every detail," delegates heard. "The new approach recognises that delivery of improved outcomes, for the most part, is in the hands of local partners – not just our local authority partners but also NHS Scotland, the third sector and others."

Robust review systems, cross-sector support in implementing plans and improvements, and stronger community planning partnerships were seen as having a vital part to play in involving the whole workforce – including support staff and families – and taking the agenda forward.

John Bennett, of the Organisation for

Working for Inclusion: the Diversity Dimension

Economic Cooperation and Development's Directorate for Education, and co-leader of the cross-European research element of the Working for Inclusion programme, looked at the nature of diversity and how policies, particularly ones led by a social justice approach, can break down inequalities. Pointing out that services reflect the resources available, with under-investment in children's services leading to a low-qualified, low-paid workforce, he promoted a broader concept of early childhood services. This should embrace a holistic view of children and their families as the way to produce the type of workforce equipped to achieve diversity goals. In this approach the task of the early childhood professional includes social care as well as education, where graduate professionals are the majority among staff in early childhood centres and 'democratic professionalism' is practised.

Rami Ousta, Chief Executive Officer of Black and Ethnic Minorities Infrastructure in Scotland (BEMIS), identified four dimensions to equality and ethnic diversity: rights, representation, recognition and respect, stressing that equality does not equate to 'sameness'. Raising awareness of the right to equality and non-discrimination was seen as essential in eradicating stereotypes, as was the need for positive action to eliminate inequalities.

Practical inclusion through play is one of the keys to addressing diversity by disability, argued Margaret Westwood, Chief Executive of The Yard Adventure Centre in Edinburgh. She identified staff training as essential, citing P:inc, The Yard's own training programme, which was designed to address the fact that Scottish Vocational Qualifications in Scotland concentrate on care elements in relation to children with special needs but overlook play.

Perspectives from different providers on

working with diversity highlighted the need to build workforce capacity to address the issue, and the importance of engaging diverse communities in early years provision. Geri Smyth, reader in the Department of Childhood and Primary Studies at the University of Strathclyde, talked about the need for teachers to "help pupils cash in on the linguistic and cultural and social capital they bring to school. Teachers need to know the heterogeneity of experience outside school and to understand that".

The workforce does not currently reflect diversity among pupils in gender, language, ethnicity and disability, delegates heard. Working within the wider communities was considered essential, both to encourage young people from diverse communities into teaching and to explore what the wider community can bring to education and other cross-sector services. The importance of thinking creatively about ways to share skills from a range of professions, backgrounds, communities and cultures, was stressed by a number of speakers.

The need for a greater degree of integration among the full range of early years service providers – including support staff and families – was a common theme, along with training and investment in skills, particularly the need to improve training for teachers and other workforce members in handling complex additional support needs. It was also felt that equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice should be part of teacher training, as has long been the tradition for social workers and social care workers. An element of this has been built into the new Childhood Practice qualifications. Carole Wilkinson of the Scottish Social Services Council expressed the view that establishing integrated qualifications among the wider children's workforce is an essential first step in addressing issues of status and pay.

Working for Inclusion: the Diversity Dimension

There was discussion around the question of how best to put policy into practice at local, national and European levels, in the light of current pressures on public spending. There appears to be unanimous agreement that investment in training and development should be maintained, with pressures and demands on services likely to be greater than ever.

Patricia Jackson, Consultant Paediatrician of NHS Lothian University Hospitals Division, identified as a key threat the possible diversion of funds into specialist services, and away from training people at a local level. She highlighted the need to share skills among practitioner groups and to take a wider, competence-based view of jobs across the sector.

Tackling deprivation, and early intervention, have been shown to be the best ways of achieving equal opportunities, according to Morag Alexander, Convenor of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, along with the levelling of the pay gap between men and women, a key factor in encouraging men into the sector.

Issues raised in further discussion included the need to value each child and young person as an individual and the need to move towards a multi-agency workforce through creative partnerships, with the ability to blur lines between individual professions if this meant a higher level of care could be available. Patience, openness, a non-judgmental approach, good training, understanding differences, empathy and an appreciation of parents' views were among the qualities and values listed as paramount among those working with diversity, along with building skills in, for example, racial awareness and combating prejudice. The heavy burden imposed by health and safety issues on people involved in care was highlighted, along with

the need to address unhelpful levels of risk aversion.

A final message from the seminar was that any measures to address diversity need to involve all those with childcare responsibilities, from parents to specialist practitioners, willing to work with and alongside each other and with the child at the centre. Diversity can tend to be seen as a challenge to be managed, whereas it should be viewed instead as a potentially valuable resource.

Conclusion

The study visit was a unique and valuable opportunity for delegates to make comparisons, learn from a range of services, hear about current practice in Scotland, and share insights and ideas.

Through the series of visits to services in Edinburgh, Glasgow and West Lothian and the one-day seminar *Working for Inclusion – The Diversity Dimension*, delegates were able to explore issues of diversity in the context of the project's overall theme: the role of the early years workforce in addressing poverty and social inclusion.

The contrasts delegates drew between their experience of working with diversity in their own countries, and what they found in Scotland, was of particular value. From these comparisons some key learning points and insights emerged:

The 'diversity of diversity'

The overriding theme that emerges from delegates' comments could be described as the 'diversity of diversity'. There is a powerful sense of the need to approach diversity from the point of view of its richness and its potential, rather than from the perspective of it being a problem or an obstacle. This informed many delegates' views on the way services were set up (ie with a mainstream or specialised approach), attitudes to additional support, workforce training, and the use of language in relation to diversity.

Lack of services for under-3's

While there was a consensus about the overall high quality of services for children aged three to five, some delegates highlighted the absence of services for children under the age of three. Italian delegate Gloria Tognetti commented that, "services for children from zero to two and for their families seem to be

lacking". This response identifies the wider problem of Scotland's highly fragmented early years services. Concern was also expressed about the capacity of some services to adequately involve families in the life of the nursery or children's centre. Perhaps because of the high value attached to family participation and the impact this has on practice in San Miniato, this was a particular concern for Italian delegates.

Additional Support for Learning

Responses from Italian and Norwegian delegates illustrated profound differences in policy approaches to children with additional support needs. Although there was often a presumption that children with additional support needs would go into mainstream education at a later point, in the majority of early years services visited there was a degree of segregation of these children, either in the form of dedicated facilities or through the provision of specialised learning programmes in services where children with ASN made up a proportion of the nursery community.

Italian delegates suggested that children with additional support needs should be part of mainstream education from the earliest point, while the Norwegian delegates' approach to this issue reflected their commitment to universal services. Commenting on specialised services for children with ASN in Scotland, Wenche Rønning said: "[In Norway] the children who, for whatever reason, need extra attention receive the support needed within ... universal services."

The issue of additional support naturally relates to the project's overall theme of diversity and how to address social inclusion. The example of San Miniato tells us that a policy of involving children with additional support needs in learning from the outset of life can be highly effective, particularly in the

Conclusion

context of a service aided by a powerful commitment from the local authority. In the case of Norway, commitment to diversity – and by extension policy around additional support for learning – is entrenched by legislative frameworks. As Wenche Rønning states, “These frameworks help ensure children’s rights and are tools for trying to implement the principle of ‘equity through diversity.’”

Many delegates felt strongly that, when looking at additional support needs, the view that the “problem resides with the child” must be countered. Indeed, it was seen as crucial that the education system was flexible and responsive to the child’s requirements, rather than the child being seen as problematic within the educational context.

Race and language

At a session with Glasgow City Council’s Race Equality Officer Samir Sharma, delegates heard about the council’s priorities for race equality work: addressing attitudes to race in the early years, and working with parents to improve understanding and knowledge of racism. Sharma stressed the need for partnership working to educate children and families about race equality, and about the key role headteachers could play in establishing an ethos of respect for diversity within schools.

Many delegates commented that they found the workshop surprising and thought-provoking. Overall delegates’ responses implied that race equality was not a high-profile or widely discussed issue in their home countries. However, in some cases this may have been due to issues of language: Norwegian delegates commented that ‘race’ would not be used as a term in Norway and that difficulties surround the use of racial terminology there.

These observations about racial terminology appear to be linked to broader issues about the language of diversity. The Norwegian delegates articulated strong views on the use of language in relation to diversity, suggesting that the terminology we use to describe and discuss diversity has the power to shape attitudes and behaviours. It is clear that sensitivity to the language of diversity may be viewed as an important ingredient of the one-school, universalist approach favoured in Norway.

The workforce

Some of the most significant learning points from the study visit emerged from discussion of workforce development.

Delegates were consistent in their praise for the quality and commitment of staff they met during visits to services in Scotland. They also highlighted the range and depth of skills exhibited by staff.

The role of partnership working was a recurring topic in discussions of how to improve the approach to diversity in early years settings. At the Working for Inclusion seminar it was suggested that a multi-agency workforce built on creative partnerships, and with the ability to blur lines between individual professions, would ultimately be able to improve children’s experiences of early education.

The value of the social pedagogy model was also discussed as not only offering a holistic way of working with children and young people but also simplifying the qualifications structure in a way that could facilitate access to under-represented groups. However, there was also discussion of the importance of ensuring that the requirement for qualifications is appropriate and does not unnecessarily exclude some groups. In up-

Conclusion

skilling the workforce proper attention needs to be paid to facilitating access to qualifications and recognising prior experience.

It was clear that legislative frameworks – which all workers can refer to and be led by – have a crucial role to play in reinforcing shared values across the workforce. Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence and Norway's Framework Plan were cited as positive examples of these.

The study visits' conclusions point towards a vision for a radical restructuring of the workforce. Children in Scotland's Workforce programme *Working It Out* explores whether core skills and competencies, and shared conceptual thinking about children and childhood across the sector, could be the foundation for a unified system.

In Children in Scotland's November 2008 *Working It Out* newsletter, Maggie Simpson, director of childminding development at the Scottish Childminding Association, discussed this issue. She described a future workforce where "the persistent divisions between different parts of the children's sector workforce disappear", and added: "I would like people to say 'I am going into child and family services', rather than 'into social work' or 'into health'. At the moment people specialize before they have even begun."

Overall, delegates' feedback signalled a consensus that there are essential qualities, values and ethics required to work with diversity. Perhaps the most significant lesson to be drawn from this is the importance of not entrenching divisions between a specialised and a universalist approach to diversity. Instead, the priority should be ensuring that everyone has a shared understanding of the issues, and that everyone's perspectives and input is recognised as having equal merit. The

study visit proved that examining and comparing different workforce models can enable the early years workforce to address these issues, exchange ideas and develop enriching dialogue about the nature of diversity.

Acknowledgements

Children in Scotland would like to thank the programme researchers, Professor Peter Moss and Dr John Bennett, whose research informs this report.

We would also like to thank all the staff and services that participated in the study visit.

Services visited:

Edinburgh

Greendykes Family Centre
The Yard
Cowgate Under 5's Centre

Glasgow

Bridgeton Family Learning Centre
Castlemilk Family Learning centre
Deanpark Nursery School
Govanhill Nursery School

West Lothian

Murrayfield Language Unit, Blackburn
Child Development Center, Beatlie School,
Livingston

We are also grateful to the Working for Inclusion team, led by Children in Scotland, for compiling this report.

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Appendices

This report forms part of *Working for inclusion: the role of the early years workforce in addressing poverty and promoting social inclusion*. It is a European Union-wide programme funded by the European Commission and supported by the Scottish Government.

The programme

Working for inclusion is examining how improving the qualifications and skills of those working with our youngest children is helping to reduce poverty and improve social inclusion.

Taking place from February 2009 - January 2011, the programme will encourage and facilitate discussion and debate over the role of the early years workforce. It will enable greater, more extensive and effective dialogue between local and national governments, education and qualification providers, employers, practitioners and policymakers.

Programme partners

The programme is led by Children in Scotland in partnership with:

- La Bottega Di Geppetto, Italy
- Nordland Research Institute, Norway
- Comenius Foundation for Child Development, Poland

Research

The programme encompasses research, which will produce a clear picture of the qualification and skill levels in early years services and how these relate to levels of poverty and social inclusion. Research will take place

simultaneously in Scotland and the UK, Poland, Norway, Italy, Slovenia, France, Denmark, Portugal, Sweden and Hungary and will offer an overview of developments throughout the EU. Once completed, the data will contribute towards policy development at EU level as well as Scotland and the rest of the UK. The research is led by Professor Peter Moss and Dr John Bennett.

Study visits

Study visits in the four partner countries will address four key themes relating to poverty and social inclusion and the early years workforce. These visits will form the basis of a report on each theme, published by Children in Scotland on the project website (www.childreninscotland.org.uk/wfi), and publicised throughout member states at local and national levels.

Each partner country will provide the context for exploring particular key challenges within the early years workforce:

- Working with the child as an active agent in their own learning (Italy)
- Working with diversity, in particular ethnicity, language, disability and gender (Scotland)
- Inclusive workforce models for rural and remote areas (Norway)
- Exploring the role of the pedagogue in working in an inclusive way with children and families, across agencies and age groups (Poland).

Appendices

Study visit delegates

Institute for Family and Social Policy

POLAND

Anna Adamczyk Chmielewska, director of Municipality Social Help Center in Belzyce
Joanna Dolinska, main specialist, Social Policy Office, City of Warsaw
Teresa Ogrodzinska, President of the Board, Comenius Foundation
Monika Rosciszewska Wozniak, vice president of Comenius Foundation, Director of Comenius Academy (Training Centre)
Beata Tarlowska, main specialist, Department of Supporting Child Development and Preschool Education, Ministry of Education.

NORWAY

Elsa Eriksen Øverland, Bodø municipality, Deputy manager Dept for Kindergarten issues
Anne Kristiansen, Bodø University College, Associate Professor at the School of Professional Studies.
Morten Melå, Bodø Municipality, Leader Committee for Upbringing and Education
Wenche Rønning, Nordland Research Institute, Researcher
Ms Frid Sund, Nordland County Municipality, Advisor Dept for Education.

ITALY

Franco Doni, executive of Comune di San Miniato (Thursday and Friday)
Aldo Fortunati, President of La Bottega di Geppetto
Jessica Magrini, Staff of La Bottega di Geppetto
Barbara Pagni, Staff of La Bottega di Geppetto
Gloria Tognetti, Director of La Bottega di Geppetto

HUNGARY

Marta Korintus, Director of Research, National