



HOUSE OF LORDS

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Questions 98 - 112

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10.40 am

Witnesses: Ben Thomas

Valentine Mulholland and Sarah Bagshaw

Members present

Lord Sutherland of Houndwood (Chairman)
Lord Brabazon of Tara
Baroness Gould of Potternewton
Baroness Kennedy of Cradley
Baroness Massey of Darwen
Baroness Morris of Bolton
Baroness Noakes
Lord Patel
Lord Sawyer
Baroness Shephard of Northwold
Baroness Tyler of Enfield
Baroness Walmsley

Examination of Witness

Ben Thomas, National Officer (Early Years Education), UNISON

Q98 The Chairman: The first thing is: welcome, and thank you very much for giving us your time.

Ben Thomas: Thank you.

The Chairman: We are looking forward to the session very much indeed. Just to remind you and my colleagues that we are now broadcasting, so we are on air. A record will be kept and a transcript will be published. You will have an opportunity to see that record within a few days, should there be any points of correction or clarification. I urge you, informally, if there any points in retrospect you feel you would have wanted to make, or that we have not taken, or that you wish to work on a little bit further, do please get in touch and let us have a note of that.

Anyway, Ben Thomas from UNISON, thank you very much for being with us. We will just start. Obviously workforce is critical for you and your relationship with the whole process, and I wonder if you could speak a little bit generally about: what is the workforce like? How

well qualified? Are they diverse? Are they all female or are there some males, that kind of issue? Do you want to talk a little bit about that?

Ben Thomas: Yes, well, in so much as you can generalise about such a diverse and large workforce. I think you know that estimates tend to average around 400,000 to 500,000, depending on how you define the early years or childcare workforce. They are 98% female, so I think you can generalise on that element of it. The work has traditionally been low-paid and low-status. There is an underrepresentation of black or minority ethnic staff in the sector.

The Chairman: Can I just prod in there? Is that in relation to the actual group in front of them or more generally, in relation to the population?

Ben Thomas: In relation to the population. I think the last estimate I saw was that 10% of the workforce is from a black and minority ethnic background against 13% of the general population. So it is underrepresented in general. Obviously men are also underrepresented. In terms of the workforce themselves, what I would say is that they are generally a very dedicated and committed workforce and absolutely fantastic people to work with.

The Chairman: To follow up then. Qualifications: anything you want to say on that?

Ben Thomas: Again, depending on settings, I think at the moment about 85% are qualified to at least level 3 in the early years workforce and around 15% to 20% have degree-level qualifications, but obviously the preponderance of those are in the school early years sector.

Q99 Baroness Massey of Darwen: Could you say if you think that the current early years workforce can deliver the quality of education and care needed to reduce inequalities for children?

Ben Thomas: Not on their own, I do not think, no.

Baroness Massey of Darwen: Can you say more?

Ben Thomas: Obviously, it is a holistic environment in which children are brought up and the home environment will play a far greater part in educational or economic outcomes than early schooling. However, what appears to be the case is that high-quality early education can be a very good means of addressing those educational inequalities and outcomes. In terms of whether or not the present workforce is able to deliver that as best as it could, I would probably say it is not in the best place to deliver that. Some of that is to do with the issues, as you will have heard, around low status of the workforce and poor prior educational achievement of the workforce. The pool from which we draw the workforce has also traditionally been one where people have limited choices of other employment. In the context of what they deliver, given the resources that staff have, I think they do a good job in many cases. But I think there is some capacity to improve the quality of the current workforce.

Baroness Massey of Darwen: Would you agree that in the nursery schools, the quality of delivery tends to be higher than in other sectors?

Ben Thomas: Yes. Obviously I have a slightly vested interest in this, in that the majority of our members that work within early years are in the maintained nursery schools—maintained nurseries and settings. I think there are characteristics of those settings that intrinsically deliver better quality. Obviously we have the issue of a teacher-led provision but, historically, we have had a much more stable workforce; people stay longer and so we have stability in the relationship with the child. You also have a better-qualified workforce. I am from a public sector union and I believe in the public sector ethos. The commitment of the workforce is such that they are better rewarded as well, so you may consider them as more valued as a workforce, and generally they have better conditions of service. For example, they can take sick leave so they do not have to come into work when they are

sick—those sorts of things. I think, at least historically, there are a range of factors that maintained nurseries in school settings have—particularly in disadvantaged areas—that enable them to be more effective in reducing inequality in educational outcomes.

Q100 Baroness Shephard of Northwold: While we have been listening to evidence, we have heard a lot of calls for improved qualifications for childcare workers. Is that call supported by childcare workers themselves or would they perhaps see this as a bit of a threat, which for some of them would be understandable?

Ben Thomas: Speaking on behalf of UNISON members, we have very much supported the move to a fully qualified workforce. We were very disappointed that the recommendations from Nutbrown were not followed up by the Government, in terms of moving towards a fully qualified workforce. Again, speaking from the perspective of the public sector workforce, the majority of them—95%—are level 3 qualified, so it is less of a threat in a sense to see that they should not be qualified. Certainly from their view they see themselves as professionals in a professional occupation, and if you are a professional occupation you would expect someone to be qualified to undertake that role. We would not accept the idea that someone who has no qualifications could undertake the role as adequately as someone who is qualified. If only 50% of doctors were qualified, you would be pretty upset if your child went to an unqualified doctor. They would like to be seen as a profession. Certainly the nursery nurses would like to be seen as a profession equivalent to, say, a nurse, which, from their origins of NNEB, they were, and they have always supported the idea of a fully qualified workforce. Whether or not the qualifications are suitable or sufficient is a different question. From a workforce perspective, many of my members date back to NNEB and look at it as having a greater rigour than some of the current qualifications. But certainly their view is that they do support a fully qualified workforce.

Baroness Shephard of Northwold: Would you say that that support varies? You said yourself you mostly represent people who are in maintained settings. Would that support vary between the people you represent and private providers or childminders?

Ben Thomas: I feel less qualified to speak about childminders, and childminders are probably the area where there has been more resistance to a fully qualified workforce. You might link some of the decline in numbers of the childminding profession in the last 10 to 15 years down to almost a professionalisation: they needed to achieve a qualification; they needed to follow the early years foundation stage, and that was not what they wanted. They wanted a more informal arrangement with the parent or child. Obviously Liz is not here today but I know that, since the EYFS was introduced, there is professional pride among childminders that they are seen as equivalent, that they are seen to be deliverers of education and they do value the qualifications. One of the things that you will come onto about the childminder agencies is whether or not that de-professionalises them.

I have to say that, since there has been funding available for people to undertake further qualifications, and incentives for people to take up qualifications, the childcare workforce have leapt at that opportunity. The massive numbers that have undertaken qualifications in the last 15 years show an appetite for undertaking training qualifications and improving their practice. Generally they receive no financial reward for achieving those qualifications, because it is not related to improvements in their pay, and it is their intrinsic desire to improve their practice that has led them to undertake those qualifications and I think that desire remains. Obviously there are people that are scared by the prospect of not being able to qualify or pass their qualifications, but I think the general view is very much supportive of an improvement in qualification levels.

The Chairman: That is helpful. We will have Liz Bayram in at a later meeting so we will be able to get her full views on this.

Q101 Baroness Gould of Potternewton: In response to the Chairman's first question you gave us a description of the workforce as it is now, but with your experience what would you identify as an ideal childcare workforce? Appreciating and looking at the differing forms of providers, should they all have a balance? How would you achieve that balance in respect of qualifications, pay, status and conditions?

Ben Thomas: Yes, it is like you have given me the chance for a bit of blue sky thinking, but given our unreconstructed status as a public sector union you are probably not going to get an answer from an enemy of enterprise like myself. My ideal provision would be some form of state-run provision with universal free childcare, with a fully qualified workforce, with a proper career structure for early years workers, with good pay and conditions, access to a pension and annual leave—

Baroness Gould of Potternewton: I am sure that is everybody's ideal, but how do you get to that ideal?

Ben Thomas: I think we need a transformation, really. Obviously you have started this commission to look at affordable childcare and the role of the state in intervening in childcare, and I think some of it comes back to a societal issue about whether or not childrearing or early education is the responsibility of society or the individual. As a society, we take the view that education is a society responsibility. Historically, certainly in England, the case has been that early childcare has been an individual's responsibility. The tide seems to be turning as to whether the state has a role in intervention, but where we are at is probably not where you would start if you were planning the process. We have a very mixed provision. Obviously the majority is private sector; again, we have that issue of not wanting

education for profit but early education can be for profit. We have not had that debate in a sense as well.

How would I want things to be? I would want specialists in early education, more in the Nordic model of the social pedagogue, with expertise not just in teaching but in health, family support and child development. So a much more holistic approach, rather than this divide between care and education that we have at the moment.

Baroness Gould of Potternewton: You have mentioned the Nordic model, so obviously you have been looking at other countries and what they have done. Are there any other examples that you think that we might well be able to learn from?

Ben Thomas: If you have a bar at the top, you have the Nordic model. However, I think there are other examples within the more mixed economy of childcare that we have at present that are models you could adapt. For example, the Dutch model has a predominantly private sector provision but they have a national industry board and wage structures linked to qualifications. Price is the principal competition for parents, so while you can compete on cost that is going to outweigh quality for parental choice. If you have an industry standard linked to qualifications and a career structure—they have the same model in Australia, again very private sector orientated, and in some states of America—where you would set minimum standards linked to qualifications, so qualifications would be rewarded either at level 3, 4 or 5 and you could have a career structure for staff. Obviously there is a cost because you would want to see those levels above the minimum wage levels that are currently paid in the early years sector.

Q102 Baroness Walmsley: I think that brings us nicely to my question, which is: how should better pay and status for childcare and early years workers be balanced against efforts to

keep the cost down for parents, and where should the Government come in in that situation?

Ben Thomas: Obviously we would be in favour of much more supply-side funding and delivery. I went to a European conference about childcare and they asked the question, “If British parents pay the highest fees, why are British workers paid the lowest wages?” The conundrum is: where is the money going? It is not going to the workers and it is not benefiting the parents. There seems to be the missing billions. I think some of it is how we account for our childcare expenditure, whether we include money in the Working Tax Credit in the childcare element of that but, certainly, how we fund early years and support for early years is so complicated, I do not know anyone who understands it fully. The Government struggles to explain how it calculates its £14 billion investment in early years and what elements of it are there. You can use comparative GDP figures about the support given to childcare. Parents in Germany or Holland pay 15% of the cost while parents in England pay 75% of the cost. We say that we are making the same contribution towards childcare as these other countries, but why are the parents paying three times as much and the workers earning 50% less?

Baroness Walmsley: Why do you think?

Ben Thomas: Well, 65% or more of provision is provided to for-profit provision, so some of it is going to profit. Some of it is going to investment in buildings and infrastructure. Some of it, I think, such as state assistance in the childcare element of Working Tax Credit, parents do not view as Government funding. They just see it as a benefit entitlement and then they are spending it on childcare. I think there is an element of that. However, if you have that twin approach of encouraging women to return to the workforce for the economic benefits but also providing high-quality childcare, which is going to deliver improvements in educational

outcomes, then we need a shift change because at the moment we are driving expansion and costs. The race at the moment between politicians is what headline they can get to reduced costs for parents, not what they can do to improve the quality of provisioning for children.

Baroness Walmsley: If I can pick up on one more point. You just said parents sometimes see the Working Tax Credit and all that as part of their benefits and then they spend it on childcare. Do they always spend all of it on childcare or is there any leakage of that money into other areas?

Ben Thomas: It is not all designed for childcare. It is only the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. There is a childcare element.

Baroness Walmsley: Yes, that is what I meant. The part that is actually designed for childcare, does it all get spent on childcare or is there a way of not—

Ben Thomas: I think you have to provide evidence that you are paying that money towards childcare so, hopefully, unless there are cases of fraud and there should not be.

The Chairman: I think Baroness Massey wants clarification on it.

Baroness Massey of Darwen: It is a slightly different question. I have read and heard in various places that parents in low and middle income groups have little incentive to work, because of the high cost of raised taxes and reduction in benefits if they do work. Do you think that is so?

Ben Thomas: Obviously there is the link between the two: if you are going to return to work, how do you return to work? A lot of women who return to work are earning less money than when they left work after having children. So obviously there is that and, if you are paying £400 or £500 a month for childcare for a single child, what is the benefit in you working? If there is anything more complicated than sources of childcare funding, it is calculating

Working Tax Credit for a family. I have tried. I was trying to explain to a group of school workers about their potential benefit entitlements if they were term-time workers—what counted as 16 hours, what counted as 12 hours, what thresholds they met—and we were entangled by the end of the session. There can be disincentives, obviously, if you tip over these thresholds at which you either become entitled or no longer become entitled. There are thresholds within the system where it becomes a disincentive to return to work or to increase your hours.

Q103 Lord Patel: My question is related to some of the questions that we have already dealt with. It is to do with Government funding. If there was Government funding to raise qualifications, where do you think it might be most effectively spent? Would it be on direct funding of training or would it be by increasing the funding level for early education entitlement?

Ben Thomas: I would say it is best to directly fund the training. I think if you look at things like the Transformation Fund or the Graduate Leader Fund, which were spent directly into increasing qualification levels with money ring-fenced for that purpose, that was where the money was spent and it has had a tremendous impact in terms of improving the qualification levels in the early years workforce. Since those things have been removed, the number of people undertaking qualifications has fallen, I think, from around 35% five years ago to around 20% now. We have also had the removal of funding for further education courses or increases in fees for first level 3 qualifications.

In terms of your question, if you funded providers directly you have to provide an incentive for them to spend that money on training and at the moment there is no incentive for them to do that. You already have an 85% qualified workforce; the minimum ratio suggests that you only need 50% qualified. To recruit parents you are principally competing on cost,

location or availability, so what is the incentive to spend that money on training? It is probably limited, as a provider.

Q104 Baroness Tyler of Enfield: We touched earlier on the new childminder agencies. I think you have indicated you are happy to say a few words about that?

Ben Thomas: Yes.

Baroness Tyler of Enfield: First of all, what effect or impact do you expect the new childminder agencies to have and, to your knowledge, are these changes supported by the current childminder workforce?

Ben Thomas: Obviously we are not principally a childminder organisation.

Baroness Tyler of Enfield: No.

Ben Thomas: What do I think or hope? I hope they wither on the vine and that we hear little of them. I suspect they will have limited impact. From the trials that have taken place, there seems to be limited take-up and limited appetite from those people that participated in the trial to continue beyond the trial period. In terms of having heard Liz speak before on behalf of childminders, they are absolutely not supportive of the childminder agency model and, as far as I know, I have not met anyone outside Sanctuary Buildings who is.

Baroness Tyler of Enfield: Could I probe that for a minute, having been a bit involved in the legislation that took this through? Obviously the policy intent behind childminder agencies was to try to increase the numbers of childminders entering the profession and to improve quality. I would have thought they are very laudable aims. What is it that is preventing that from happening, given the experience you are describing?

Ben Thomas: One of the things I talked about earlier as a potential reason why the reduction in childminders has taken place in the last 15 years was, in some senses, formalising the childminder arrangement. I suppose that the agency model, where you are at arm's length

from that paperwork and that requirement to be inspected, may potentially have encouraged those childminders that were less willing to go through that process to return to the childminding profession. I think some of the evidence from Holland suggests that what happened, in fact, was that grandparents, who were undertaking the informal childminding anyway, registered with an agency, took on their grandchildren, and got paid for it instead of doing it for nothing. They see that as a failed outcome of the childminder agency model. Do I think it would do anything to improve quality? No.

Baroness Tyler of Enfield: Do you know when we expect any evaluation evidence from this initiative?

Ben Thomas: I do not. Obviously I know that the trials took place but I think only half of those that took part are going to participate beyond the trial period. I suspect that some of the political will for childminder agencies may have disappeared in the last reshuffle. Liz Truss came into office with this as one of her big ideas and one of the big changes that she wanted to implement. She is obviously no longer the Minister responsible and whether or not that energy will continue until May and beyond, I do not know.

The Chairman: That is very helpful because we will be having Ministers give evidence in due course and you are teeing it up.

Ben Thomas: What they say to you may be something different.

The Chairman: We have come across Ministers before; in fact, there might even be one or two around the table. Thank you very much. That has been a very helpful session. You have held the fort very well on your own and given us a lot more to think about. If you have any minor corrections or thoughts where you would to expand, please do get in touch with us.

Ben Thomas: Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you very much indeed.

Examination of Witnesses

Valentine Mulholland, Policy Adviser, National Association of Headteachers (NAHT), and **Sarah Bagshaw**, School Business Manager, St Bede Academy, Bolton.

Q105 The Chairman: We welcome our next two witnesses coming from the NAHT. One of you, Valentine Mulholland, works for NAHT and, Sarah Bagshaw, you have been brought along because of your experience with a particular school, one that we note, interestingly, was mentioned by the relevant Minister in a speech not very long ago as “a shining example”. We look forward to the session.

We are broadcasting—I remind you of that—and there will be a full written record that will be published. You will have the opportunity to look at that record for any minor corrections but, informally, if there are points that you wanted to expand on, and did not at the time, please do get in touch with us immediately and we can take that into the formal evidence. So welcome. Thank you very much.

Valentine Mulholland: Good morning.

The Chairman: Would you like to say who you are for the sake of the auditory record? Then they will pick up the voice and the wisdom.

Valentine Mulholland: Yes. I am Valentine Mulholland. I am the Policy Adviser for the National Association of Head Teachers. We are a trade union and professional association for school leaders.

Sarah Bagshaw: I am Sarah Bagshaw. I am the Finance Director of St Bede Primary Academy, of Primary Alliance for Learning teaching school, and for St Bede Childcare Charity. The charity runs five private nurseries, eight out-of-school clubs and the first childminder agency in the country.

Q106 The Chairman: Thank you very much. Clearly one of the chief points of focus on the work of the NAHT is in primary schools because a majority of your members have that background. In that case, I especially want to ask how far early education is doing a good job in preparing children for entry into primary schools—a big question.

Sarah Bagshaw: I think early years education is about making sure there is a smooth transition into schools. It is getting them used to the routine and the structure of the day. They follow the EYFS curriculum, which is very much a play-based background, and I think probably the most important thing that we find in our academy is making sure that these children are independent, that they can dress and undress, they can use the toilet, they can use cutlery, they have more independence of choice and they can decide which food they would like to select. There is an element of mark-making and writing available but not all of the children are actually at that stage of development at that time.

The Chairman: You mention that, interestingly, to say that that is not the main aim. Is it a part of what you do and, if so, is it easy to disentangle whether or not you are doing that as well as the—

Valentine Mulholland: I think one of the issues for schools in providing childcare is that there is quite a distinction between children up to two, two and a half, and three onwards. Three onwards starts to be more about education and development in that kind of educational way, whereas two and under is really childcare. I think schools predominantly are about education. For example, we have seen that about 40% of primary schools have a nursery class but they do not often go to two-year-olds or below. It is something that is obviously being encouraged as part of the additional funding for two-year-olds but it is quite a transition because it is a different approach.

Obviously the advantage—as Sarah has highlighted—particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, is that they get that structure. If the transition is within the same organisation, then that transition is a lot smoother. Also what we find is that children who have been in some kind of good-quality early years setting have already had the opportunity to have access to other professionals as well. I think it is important to remember that we have seen a decline in some traditional services, like health visiting, which can identify problems with children early on. A good early years provider can help to get families in touch with other support so that, by the time they are getting into education and into reception class, a lot of support has already been developed for them outside just the care and education.

The Chairman: If I can push you a little bit on that, are you underestimating what can be achieved with two-year-olds when you say “just childcare”, because is this not really part of a large civilising process? Most of the two-year-olds I have known, over two generations, need a bit of civilising and what it does is they learn social skills, informal education, and language for example.

Valentine Mulholland: Yes. I think it is just the balance of the emphasis, so yes I did not mean to suggest that there is no element of child development and support for that development, but there is a difference in that. It is not predominantly education.

Sarah Bagshaw: We notice a real difference between the very early two-year-olds and the rising threes. The early two-year-olds is predominantly more about replacing the main carer during that time and there is nappy changing, they will need naps, so there is a lot of hands-on care that is needed, whereas the rising threes we mix with our younger pre-schoolers. There is a marked difference between those ages. We have some two-year-olds coming in under the EYFS who are tracking at 0 to 11 months, and that is quite a challenge if you are

trying to cope with that within a school setting if they do not have experience of children of a younger age.

The Chairman: Thank you. I do not want to make a big issue of it.

Baroness Massey of Darwen: What is the intake of your children in Bolton? I know Bolton fairly well. I come from Darwen so it is next door. What is the intake? How would you describe it?

Sarah Bagshaw: In terms of my settings?

Baroness Massey of Darwen: Yes.

Sarah Bagshaw: We have five nurseries, one is a 101-place setting, one is a 91, one is 81, one is 32 and one is mid-80s. There are always more numbers of children than those on the roll because not all of them take full-time places.

Baroness Massey of Darwen: What is the parental background?

Sarah Bagshaw: It is an area of deprivation.

Baroness Massey of Darwen: All right, okay.

Q107 Baroness Walmsley: To some extent you have answered the first part of the question, but is it working? Have schools seen any improvement in school readiness as a result of the introduction of the free early education entitlement? Do you think the impact has been any greater in more deprived areas compared to more affluent areas?

Valentine Mulholland: I will start on this and then Sarah can talk a little bit more with the experience of working in deprived areas. Our members have found there is quite a mixed bag. It depends very much on the quality of provision and predominantly the provision is still in PVIs. We believe that high-quality provision will definitely narrow the gap and some children are coming into school with a higher baseline. In primary schools we are starting to see that when primary schools are inspected we are getting feedback that Ofsted inspectors,

when faced with a primary school that has a very low baseline—so children with very low levels when they come in—are saying to those schools, “You need to do more work with your local PVIs, your local childcare providers to improve that baseline”, which is pretty challenging in some areas where they could be coming in from 10, 20 different childcare providers with very different approaches. That has been the motivation for some of our members being quite radical about looking at getting involved in the provision for two and three-year-olds, because then they have better control.

We will talk about it a little bit later—Sarah will talk about the fact that there are some real issues with the funding for provision in schools—that some schools are having to make the decision that where they can they will subsidise, with a view that they will catch that up in key stage 2 where they might get better outcomes if they get that better result. With high-quality childcare then, definitely, we are seeing an improvement in school readiness and we are seeing an improvement in children’s outcomes.

Sarah Bagshaw: Obviously I am from an area of deprivation so I cannot really speak about other types of areas, but we have noticed a high impact and improvement in the children coming in, especially with the two-year-olds that we would not have been able to take into our care or would not necessarily have chosen nursery care at that age until they became a little bit older. We can generally tell a marked difference between children who come straight into reception without formal childcare of some sort. They are a lot less independent. We felt it was important to capture these children as early as possible, which is why we set up our first nursery in 2003.

Obviously we have the benefit of having the same senior management team within the early years settings as well within the academy, so we have a very, very smooth transition through and we can highlight all of the special needs and work with the external agencies and

capture any issues quite early. Otherwise it is left to the reception teacher in the first term. Rather than concentrating on the education they are trying to care more about the independence and some of the more basic issues that the children have.

Valentine Mulholland: At the same time as we have had early years education, in some areas we are definitely getting members saying to us that there is an increase in children coming into reception who are not toilet trained and who struggle to eat, so the introduction of free school meals for reception children has been a challenge because some children do not know how to use cutlery. There are these parallel social issues happening as well in areas. At the same time as we have more provision, other children are coming in less school ready than they might have been 10 years ago.

Baroness Walmsley: Yes, I am one of those who think that perhaps we should not be talking about school readiness but about whether schools are ready for children. I wonder if you feel that where schools do have an early years setting, which they run themselves, they are more realistic about what they can expect from children in those very early years.

Sarah Bagshaw: I think it gives you a real good knowledge of the children and all the different development stages. As I say, it is important that you highlight any problems early so you can deal with that. It gives us the opportunity in our childcare settings, even though we have EYPs in setting we do not choose to move to the 1:13 ratio for the younger children, four-year-olds; you really need a much smaller ratio. We keep to the 1:4 for the two-year-olds and we keep to the 1:8 for the pre-schoolers. We use our EYPs to promote quality and planning within all of the rooms, and that makes a real difference for us.

Baroness Walmsley: It is quite early now to evaluate the free two-year-old entitlement, but do schools expect to see an improvement in—let us call it—school readiness for those children that have undertaken the two-year-old entitlement?

Valentine Mulholland: I suppose the evaluation of the three-year-old entitlement was that only for one in six of the children who were accessing that, was this new provision. A lot of it was shifting the cost of it rather than that. So, yes, we support that entitlement as our members do and NAHT does directly but it will take some time. It is very much about the quality of provision, and currently we are seeing that in some parts of the country—and London is the classic—where by November last year only half of two-year-olds had access to the free provision because there were not enough providers.

It will take some time before we see that but, yes, we welcome it and we do feel that it is going to support children as they enter reception.

Sarah Bagshaw: We have seen a benefit from the children that we have managed to take in earlier as two-year-olds when they go into the pre-school room. We have seen that benefit a little earlier within the early years setting.

Q108 Baroness Massey of Darwen: I find all this very interesting about school readiness, care and education, the words that we are playing with here. Are schools the right place for two-year-olds and three and four-year-olds? Would we not be better putting more into parental education to help them with child development rather than taking it over from them, or do you work with parents such a lot that that does not worry you?

Sarah Bagshaw: We have a high level of involvement with the parents in early years settings anyway.

Baroness Massey of Darwen: Can you tell me a bit about that?

Sarah Bagshaw: Yes. Each of the children has their key workers and learning journeys that they work on and they communicate regularly with the parents. Obviously, because they are brought into the childcare setting rather than perhaps left in the yard to walk in themselves,

you have that point-to-point contact, and we have our EYPs and our senior team that are quite experienced in working with any parents that perhaps need a little help.

Valentine Mulholland: We have had the experience over the last 10 to 15 years with Sure Start and children's centres. A lot of our members became involved in supporting and running or working in partnership with children's centres, and that did provide some opportunity to work on wider parenting, even for parents with babies, and not necessarily just parents who had their children in childcare but those who needed support with wider parenting. Sure Start centres to some extent have seen quite a decimation; we have some areas where 50% of them have been closed, and I have been to schools where they have fabulous Sure Start children's centres premises that were not being used. All the the capital funding was made available. The revenue funding has been a casualty of the recession.

We have seen that as a model and the initial evaluation of Sure Start—there has been a subsequent evaluation and I can come back to you on that—was that they did not have an enormous impact in terms of children's outcomes. They have had good impact in terms of parents' confidence, so that work with parents was quite successful. But we can come back to you with the detail of the Sure Start evaluation because that was the model. Sure Start was very much about reaching parents in communities.

Baroness Massey of Darwen: What about provision that covers, for example, hours during the week or school holidays? How does that wraparound provision work if you have it in your system?

Sarah Bagshaw: Obviously, in terms of schools in general, whether schools are the right place I would say that for some schools it is if they have the space and they have the early years knowledge. For us, in terms of the wraparound, we felt that it was very important to provide parental choice for the parents. Not all parents can cope just with term-time only on

shorter hours. Many need 7.30 am to 6 pm, 52 weeks of the year. This is where we have set up a private nursery under our charity arm on almost the same footprint as the school. That provides the 52 weeks care for the parents that need it, but then they also support the academy nursery by providing the wraparound care for people that prefer more of the term-time side and just need the occasional support.

Baroness Massey of Darwen: Does that work?

Sarah Bagshaw: It works very well.

Baroness Massey of Darwen: Good.

Valentine Mulholland: There is not a model that can work for all schools and I think that is a key issue in terms of schools. Some schools are already offering before-school clubs and after-school clubs. Some schools are 8 am to 6 pm operations, but we have to remember that a lot of primary schools are still quite small. On average they have 350 pupils, a couple of forms of entry, so it would be quite difficult to extend the overheads to cover 8 am to 6 pm just for a nursery class.

In terms of the desire of schools to get involved, some of them clearly are but we have a wider issue of space in a lot of primary schools. We have a major challenge in terms of school places because we have seen a baby boom. So by 2017-18 over 9% additional primary school places will be needed nationally. In some areas that is up to 40% in some of the London boroughs but also other areas, like Peterborough and Reading and other areas.

A lot of schools have seen every bit of available space being used to increase class sizes. We are seeing portacabins. We have members that have construction projects and, before the construction project is finished, a further expansion is being planned. So within that context it can be difficult. Early years is not just an extra classroom, it is changing facilities in a different way. It is a use of space, which is very different from children in reception. Some

schools are barred just because the capital cost would be so extensive. That is where we have seen some of them partnering with early years independent providers, or setting up their own independent providers. I think Sarah's school are more of a rare example, but some are trying to be creative but are more limited by what is possible by their site.

Baroness Massey of Darwen: Do you know of any consortia of smaller schools that would use wraparound together? Does that exist?

Valentine Mulholland: I am sure that that will exist in some areas. We have an increasing number of our members who are choosing to federate with other schools, so they are joining together. Obviously those of our members who are in academies are often part of a wider federation but they are not always geographically close to each other. Where they are, then there are opportunities.

The Chairman: Thank you. We may come back and ask you if you have any more formal evidence on numbers, so be prepared.

Q109 Baroness Shephard of Northwold: I think we have had an answer to this question, but the question is: is there a desire among schools to expand their provision of free early education. I think the answer is yes, is it not?

Valentine Mulholland: Yes, in some schools where the circumstances are right.

Baroness Shephard of Northwold: You have given us very good illustrations on the reservations that some schools may have because of their situation. One small point I would add is that, in many areas of the country, 350 in a school is huge and 35 may be more like it. If you have 35, that may or may not be immeasurably more difficult; it may not be but it could be. I do not think you can tell us any more. I do not know what you think, Lord Chairman.

The Chairman: That has been very helpful, which is why we might come back to you on a more precise analysis of any numbers that you have.

Baroness Shephard of Northwold: There is another question, which is: would such an extension require further training of staff? You have told us about the barriers schools would have in expanding their provision and the variation. The answer is yes, is it not?

Valentine Mulholland: In terms of training?

Baroness Shephard of Northwold: Yes.

Valentine Mulholland: Again Sarah will elaborate, but we are looking at a range of skills for early years . NAHT's view is that there should be the ability to have early years teachers, particularly where there are three-year-olds and up. We support early years teachers in those settings, not just early year professionals. We also do need to see people who have worked through early years training in a particular way. It is not an automatic thing for teachers to move into provision of childcare. The training needs and the support are quite different for schools that might have only provided reception onwards, and most of them understand that.

The other big issue that can act as a barrier is the funding—and again I think Sarah can elaborate a bit more—but in your example of a small rural school, there is a break even beyond which you simply cannot make that work. We have seen even in larger schools that people have not fully appreciated the vagaries of the funding.

Sarah Bagshaw: In terms of the funding, one way that I know that has been suggested of making it work is to move to the 1:13 ratio and, as I say, we do not feel that that works. In terms of whether the schools want to look to expand into this provision, I know a number of schools that looked at it as a bit of a two-way benefit at the start, in terms of being a bit of a money egg, and also as a way of capturing the children early, and did not realise the actual

costs involved. Some dropped out because of the costs. The highest cost is the staffing and if you start taking people on with school terms and conditions—such as occupational, maternity pay and sick pay—it can get really competitive and really, really expensive and difficult to compete against the private providers. That is where it is difficult.

Q110 Baroness Gould of Potternewton: Can we continue the theme of funding? There is an extension of the provision of early education in the schools and, of course, it has to be of good quality for all the children, from the young ones to the older ones, and, as you said, it is not just a question of putting in an extra classroom. From your experience, Sarah, when you decided to take on that extension what impact did it have on the school budget? How did you balance that with the other services in the school? Did it affect other pupils, other things that were happening in the school or not?

Sarah Bagshaw: We built it up slowly. We started with a neighbourhood initiative grant to start off the nursery. We made a distinct choice at that point to separate it away from the school at the time and to set up more market-based terms and conditions for the staff. As I say, we grew that provision slowly so it had very little impact on the school budget. Now we are at a size where we are all enjoying the economies of scale, where we can support each other with more of a support team than perhaps a normal primary school of our size would not be able to do, because we share expertise across the charity and across the academy so we benefit from that.

Baroness Gould of Potternewton: So there has been no diminution of any of the services that you currently provide in order to be able to provide it?

Sarah Bagshaw: No, there has been an enhancement. We are now able to have within the school our own qualified IT team and finance team. We have more of our deputy and our three assistant heads out of class to do all the monitoring for the observations. This is why

we feel we have managed to maintain our Ofsted outstanding, in both our academy and our venues, because we have that expertise that is able to free the time up from day-to-day activities.

Baroness Gould of Potternewton: I hope you are not unique. I hope there are lots of schools where this is happening. Can you say how much this is happening in other schools and what are the barriers that might prevent it happening in other schools?

Valentine Mulholland: This school is a bit of an example. We do know that some of our schools are obviously involved in nursery provision and some of them have partnerships with PVIs. I think, as a result of the three-year-old funding and the two-year-old funding, more have gone into that. We know that there is only a few hundred. I do not have the exact figures. I am not sure anybody does. But there is only a few hundred according to the DFE figures that are involved in those age groups and I think it is really difficult to make it happen. Your previous speaker was talking about terms of employment for childcare workers. Where they are within a school and it is not a separate charity, that in itself creates quite a lot of administration, different accounting and so on. Where it is within the school, then schools pay staff according to the local authority—we think that is quite basic but it is still better than a lot of PVIs do—or along the schoolteachers' pay and conditions document. Obviously we are a union as well, and we think they are reasonable terms and conditions that should be expected for working with children but quite often that is at a higher cost than can be done by PVIs. This is what your commission is about, but I think there is a fundamental problem about the fact that a lot of private provision relies on very low wages and terms and conditions that are not ideal. Schools will not go down that road in a school setting. They might have for the greater good of the children to look at it with a partnership with a PVI.

The Chairman: I am deducing from what Sarah Bagshaw told us that to plan an expansion of this kind requires access to significant management skills and that has to be there as part of the process, and many schools would not have that. There might be another way of providing that expertise.

Lord Sawyer: Sarah, how do you handle the pay and conditions issue in your consortium?

Sarah Bagshaw: Within our nursery we obviously keep an eye on the job centre, the job market just to see the rates of pay. We have a very low turnover of staff within our venues and nearly all of our senior managers that teach at the nurseries have moved up the ranks from unqualified. We provide a lot of training support, and we would prefer somebody to work their way through the nursery and get on-site experience and then move up to EYP or even EYT. We will support whatever they need rather than get somebody with perhaps a psychology degree who is fast-tracked for three months coming in as an EYT. That is one of the reasons why we set up our teaching school.

We are going to concentrate more on the early years side and try to provide that training and expertise but, while they are getting accredited qualifications from a university, provide them on-site access to our nurseries to get some hands-on training.

The Chairman: I am keen to move on. Baroness Tyler?

Q111 Baroness Tyler of Enfield: I would like to pursue a little bit further the issue we have already been talking about, which is the model of co-locating private and voluntary sector childcare settings within school premises, both the benefits of it and also the scope for doing more of it. We heard quite a lot at previous evidence sessions about this. It was generally thought to be a very interesting model that provided a lot of flexibility. Indeed we have had some follow-up evidence from Ofsted, which suggests—I only saw this before the meeting—there are 4,500 PVI providers currently located on a school site. I will be honest, that figure

surprised me. It seemed large to me. But it did suggest that there was scope for scaling this up and I want to get your reaction to that.

Sarah Bagshaw: In terms of the site, obviously with the Ofsted requirements the younger children require more space per child. So you cannot get as many two-year-olds into a classroom as you would be able to get for primary school children, not even the three to four-year-olds. We have dealt with a lot obviously. I know Valentine has said about space being an issue, and it is an issue in many primary schools that we have experienced. We do a number of collaborations with other schools in the area for our out-of-school clubs. We provide out-of-school clubs on seven other school site settings, so we have the experience of working in partnership with a different senior management team and it does have more challenges than when you are the same management team running on the same site.

What we found is obviously when you first set it up you make losses in at least the first year, while you are trying to set this up, and sometimes when they start to see the numbers coming through the door they are very quick to try to raise the rent, which could have some detrimental effects on early business viability and they quickly forget about the losses you had first made. Sometimes they do get used to the service you provide and then you are a little bit of a nuisance when they are a bit pushed for space.

There a lot of negotiations that always continue to happen when you are working with another partnership with sometimes a bit of a silo mentality between the two.

Baroness Tyler of Enfield: Valentine, you seemed to be suggesting earlier on that perhaps there was not so much scope for scaling up these sorts of models.

Valentine Mulholland: It does depend on the areas, but as I said many of our members are struggling and many local authorities are really struggling with school places. There is not enough capital investment in school places.

I am surprised by that figure from Ofsted. I am surprised that that is located on the same premises. I think there are partnerships. As I say, I think some of it is a legacy of Sure Start and the children's centres. Quite a lot of our members do manage children's centres from way back, but they are not necessarily delivering the full childcare offer that a PVI might offer. So yes, I am quite surprised by that figure.

There is pressure on our members, even in terms of growing pressure in terms of outcomes. From 2016 we see that there is going to have to be a reception baseline. Most of our members do that anyway when children come in, and there is growing pressure on them from the inspection and accountability regime to say, "What are you doing to improve your reception baseline?" Particularly in areas of deprivation, that sort of push to make sure that where children are coming from is good quality is there. The moral purpose of schools is such that, if they think what is out there is very poor, then many of them will want to get involved in it if they can, but there are still some real barriers in terms of funding.

One of the big issues is that the funding per child across the country varies enormously and the funding for PVIs and schools varies enormously. We have examples where PVIs get more than a school setting would do. The funding is complex anyway. If we want to encourage good-quality provision, I think we need to look at some kind of funding formula that is a little bit fairer across the country.

The Chairman: We have time for one last question in this session, so Lord Brabazon.

Q112 Lord Brabazon of Tara: Thank you, Lord Chairman. Would the introduction of qualified teacher status for early years teachers be welcomed by the profession?

Valentine Mulholland: It would be welcomed by NAHT as part of our manifesto, which is called *Owning what is ours*. We think early years is an incredibly important period for children and the fact is that there has been a move away from early years teachers to some

extent. The requirement for early year teachers is something we support, so we think early years teachers should continue to be one of the professionals who are working with early years.

It does not necessarily mean that we think that is all the people that should be working in early years setting. We support Sarah's point about the people who have developed through the role and the need for a very clear career and qualification structure that underpins the role and that is not only a degree qualification. But we do need professionals who understand child development and pedagogy really well and who have had that formal teacher training education and training in it.

The Chairman: Thank you very much indeed. I know you are provoking many, many more questions than we have time for but we may send you some of these for comment. That has been a very helpful session. We are interested in the national picture and the specific example that you have brought along, so we appreciate it. You will have a copy of the transcript very soon and so react fairly quickly if you can. Thank you very much.