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Longitudinal Study of Early Years Professional Status: an exploration of progress, leadership and impact Final report

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This research report was commissioned before the new UK Government took office on 11 May 2010. As a result the content may not reflect current Government policy and may make reference to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) which has now been replaced by the Department for Education (DfE).

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Executive summary

The Longitudinal Study of Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) was a three-year study commissioned by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) in 2009. It set out to investigate if EYPS was achieving its aims by examining the following areas:

- a) Early Years Professionals' (EYPs) views on their ability to carry out their roles since gaining Early Years Professional Status.
- b) Early Years Professionals' practice in relation to:
 - i. outcomes for children
 - ii. impact on leadership roles in early years settings
 - iii. impact on other aspects of early years settings, such as the quality of practice and interactions, as well as relationships with parents and other agencies.
- c) Early Years Professionals' career pathway and views on their career trajectory including any motivations or intentions to change setting, role or career.
- d) The extent to which Early Years Professionals have, or have not, undertaken (or plan to undertake) any further training or professional development.
- e) The issues faced by Early Years Professionals in integrating children's perspectives into their approaches to improving the quality of provision.

Methodology

The study had two main components:

- A national questionnaire survey of Early Years Professionals designed to elicit information about the extent to which the introduction of Early Years Professional Status had met workforce development aims in relation to career prospects, professional development and professional status. To date this is the largest and only national survey undertaken. The first survey was undertaken in January and February 2010 and received 1,045 responses, representing almost 30 per cent of the national total of Early Years Professionals at the time. The second survey was undertaken in September and October 2011 and received 2,051 responses, which represented 25 per cent of the total population of Early Years Professionals at the time.
- Case studies of 30 early years settings in which Early Years Professionals from different backgrounds and with different levels of experience were employed in a range of leadership roles. A subset of six settings was also selected to explore Early Years Professionals' engagement with children's perspectives.

Key findings from the surveys are summarised below:

1. Impact of Early Years Professional Status on professional development

Findings from the study highlight the very positive impact of Early Years Professional Status in supporting workforce development across the early years sector. Over three-quarters of Early Years Professionals stated that gaining Early Years

Professional Status has increased their interest in their own professional development¹:

- Novice Early Years Professionals (with less than three years' experience), middle leaders in private settings and Early Years Professionals with qualified teacher status (QTS) were the most positive about having become more interested in their own professional development. Early Years Professionals who were owners/managers were the least positive, compared to the other groups.
- Early Years Professionals were involved in providing a wide range of professional development activities, both in their own and other settings.
- Overall, just under 50 per cent of Early Years Professionals routinely led CPD activities in their settings. In addition, one-fifth, mainly more experienced practitioners, reported routinely leading activities outside of their settings.

2. Impact of gaining Early Years Professional Status on career prospects

Those at earlier stages in their careers consistently rated the impact of gaining Early Years Professional Status on their future career prospects more highly than those who were more experienced. This was particularly strong in relation to gaining employment and improving their career prospects in their current settings:

- Over three-quarters of Early Years Professionals (77 per cent) believed that gaining Early Years Professional Status had improved their career prospects.
- Nearly half of Early Years Professionals (47 per cent) saw themselves continuing in their current role, with the next most popular options being to take on some form of training and development role (20 per cent), or a leadership/management role (15 per cent) in the early years sector.
- The main career barriers were low pay (66 per cent), the limited number of roles available for Early Years Professionals in the early years sector (55 per cent) and lack of an obvious career path (52 per cent).

3. Impact of gaining Early Years Professional Status on professional status

The introduction of Early Years Professional Status has improved the professional status of practitioners in the early years sector. This improvement, however, does not appear to be replicated in the attitudes of other professions or groups:

- Eighty-five per cent of Early Years Professionals stated that gaining Early Years Professional Status had improved their sense of professional status.
- Three-quarters felt it had increased their credibility among colleagues, with those in voluntary and community settings being the most positive and those in local authority settings being the least positive, compared to other groups.
- Two-thirds of Early Years Professionals felt that other professionals had little understanding of Early Years Professional Status and 91 per cent felt that, in

¹ Percentage data is taken from the study's surveys, predominantly the second national survey of Early Years Practitioners. The surveys form separate reports.

general, people outside the early years sector did not understand it.

4. Early Years Professionals as leaders in settings

Early Years Professional Status has created a cohort of Early Years Professionals who are more willing and confident about taking on a leadership role in their settings and who felt better able to make improvements in quality in their settings, as the following findings from the second national survey indicate:

- Fifty-eight per cent of Early Years Professionals felt that achieving Early Years Professional Status had increased the likelihood that they would take on a leadership role.
- Eighty-seven per cent of Early Years Professionals stated that Early Years Professional Status had given them greater confidence in developing colleagues' knowledge and skills and nearly as many felt it had helped them become better at identifying and developing colleagues' good practice.
- Eighty per cent of Early Years Professionals felt that gaining Early Years Professional Status had improved their ability to carry out improvements in their settings.

Key findings from the case studies are summarised below:

5. Approaches to practice leadership and improving the quality of provision

Early Years Professionals defined their approach to practice leadership primarily in terms of improving the quality of pedagogical processes in their settings. This meant they predominantly focused on interactions between staff and children, planning, and the quality of the learning environment. In those settings that made educationally significant improvements, or sustained high levels of quality throughout the research, Early Years Professionals focused on four key outcomes. These were:

- a) strategically assessing the quality of the current provision and relating this to an overall vision of quality*
- b) establishing a common understanding of the improvements that were required and developing norms around quality*
- c) developing, leading and evaluating professional development activities that focused on improving process quality*
- d) enhancing practice leadership capacity in the setting.*

In achieving quality improvement, effective Early Years Professionals adapted their approaches to practice leadership in line with their settings' needs and capabilities and to meet the challenges of improving and sustaining the quality of practitioner interaction with children:

- The main contextual factor that shaped Early Years Professionals' approach to practice leadership was the existing leadership capacity in a setting. Three distinct stages of practice leadership were identified: emergent, established, and embedded.

- The other key contextual factors were the existing quality of provision in a setting, its size, characteristics and the resources available.
- In smaller settings, Early Years Professionals significantly improved the overall quality of interactions by a combination of modeling, mentoring and formal professional development.
- Larger, more complex settings, where Early Years Professionals did not interact directly with children for substantial parts of their working week, needed other staff to develop practice leadership skills more collectively.
- In the most effective settings, practice leadership had become formalised and embedded in the settings' culture and leadership structures.

6. Early Years Professionals improving and sustaining practice quality

The study explores and describes how Early Years Professionals are improving and sustaining practice quality through pedagogical processes and wider leadership:

- Early Years Professionals were observed to operate as practice leaders themselves and to foster practice leadership across their settings.
- The greatest improvements in the quality of provision in settings were seen where both these elements were demonstrated
- Early Years Professionals have a wide range of formal leadership positions. A formal leadership position may support an Early Years Professional's impact on practice quality, but the study shows that informal leadership can also be influential.

Summary

In summary, findings from the study highlight the very positive impact of Early Years Professional Status in supporting workforce development across the early years sector in England. Early Years Professional Status is creating a cohort of practitioners who are more willing and confident about taking on a practice leadership role in their settings. They are exercising a range of approaches to practice leadership, contextualised to the settings in which they operate, and improving the quality of practice in general.

1. Introduction and rationale

The Longitudinal Study of Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) was a three-year study commissioned by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) in 2009. The study had a range of interrelated aims. Primarily, it set out to explore the following areas:

- a) Early Years Professionals' (EYPs) views on their ability to carry out their roles since gaining EYPS.
- b) Early Years Professionals' practice in relation to:
 - i) outcomes for children
 - ii) impact on leadership roles in early years settings
 - iii) impact on other aspects of early years settings, such as the quality of practice and interactions, as well as relationships with parents and other agencies.
- c) Early Years Professionals' career pathway and views on their career trajectory including any motivations or intentions to change setting, role or career.
- d) The extent to which Early Years Professionals have or have not undertaken (or plan to undertake) any further training or professional development.
- e) The issues faced by Early Years Professionals in integrating children's perspectives into their approaches to improving the quality of provision.

These aims were shaped by the existing knowledge base around EYPS, research into effective leadership and pedagogy in the early years and the overall policy priorities that underpinned the development of EYPS. In the following sections, a brief overview of this context, the research base and how the study was designed is provided.

2. The policy context and research base for the study

2.1 The policy and delivery context

2.1.1 Early Years Professional Status

EYPS was launched in 2007 and originally heralded in the Department for Education and Skills *Children's Workforce Strategy* (2006) which committed to:

'The establishment of a standard for the professional skills, knowledge and practice experience to be required of someone taking a co-ordinating role will help bring coherence and structure to workforce development across the early years, and will dovetail with the development of the integrated qualifications framework. It will articulate a clear ambition for career progression routes which enable the sector to 'grow its own' professionals.' (DfES, 2006: 30)

EYPS was part of a range of measures to develop a more professional early years

workforce that would raise the status of work with pre-school children. It was also linked to other quality improvement efforts in the sector such as the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage (DCSF, 2008), which featured strongly in the first of the 39 standards in the original EYPS framework (CWDC, 2010: 99):

'Candidates for Early Years Professional Status must demonstrate through their practice that a secure knowledge and understanding of the following underpins their own practice and informs their leadership of others.'

***S1** The principles and content of the Early Years Foundation Stage and how to put them in to practice.'*

EYPS developed out of a growing awareness of the link between practitioners' levels of qualification and the quality of provision, highlighted in the Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) study (Sylva *et al*, 2004). This study concluded that, while all preschool provision appeared to enhance Key Stage 1 learning outcomes for children, the overall quality of provision appeared to be higher in 'graduate-led' settings. The Effective Leadership in the Early Years Sector (ELEYS) Study (Siraj-Blatchford and Manni, 2006) built on the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) and the later Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY) (Sylva *et al*, 2010) study, identifying in particular settings where leadership appeared to enhance later outcomes for children. These three studies are key context for EYPS. This is most clearly reflected in the areas of leadership emphasised in the standards, informed by the ELEYS findings, in particular in their emphasis on the importance of leadership for learning.

At the time of the EPPE study (Sylva *et al*, 2004); there were relatively low numbers of graduate leaders in the sector as a whole, particularly in the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) settings that formed the majority of the provision. Additionally, there was limited coverage of child development and care routines for the under 5s in teacher training in England. This situation contrasted sharply with the training of the workforce in countries such as Denmark and New Zealand (Nurse, 2007; Miller and Cable, 2008). The government's ambition, at the time, was for every children's centres to have an EYP by 2010 and for other settings to have an EYP by 2015, settings in disadvantaged areas to have two EYPs. The vision was ambitious:

'The early years sector was being asked to undergo transformation from largely unqualified to graduate level leadership in less than 10 years – a process that has taken other professions more than 50 years to achieve.'
(Hevey, 2010: 161)

EYPS was also seen as important in challenging early years practitioners' perceived lack of status: *'There seems to be no other profession where such uncertainty has existed [...] Early years practitioners currently struggle with a range of vague and ambiguous titles'* (McGillivray, 2008: 252). These ambiguities arose in part because of the historical cultural divide between nurseries led by early education professionals and those led by care professionals. The development of EYPS was in part an attempt to integrate these perspectives and to shake off the wider

perception of early years practitioners as being primarily unskilled carers (Lloyd & Hallet, 2010).

2.1.2 How has Early Years Professional Status been delivered?

During the period of the longitudinal study, there were four main pathways to achieving EYPS with a common, consistent assessment process. The Validation Pathway (Pathway 1) allowed those graduates with experience and training in early education to gather evidence over a four-month period to demonstrate their competence against the standards. The Short Pathway (Pathway 2) was similarly intended for experienced practitioners who might need some additional training over three to six months to ensure competence across the standards and across the 0-5 age range. The Long Pathway (Pathway 3) offered a top-up from foundation degrees in Early Childhood Studies to a full degree in addition to the requirements of EYPS over up to 15 months. The Full Pathway (Pathway 4) was an intensive year-long course for graduates with backgrounds outside early years. In addition, a fifth undergraduate pathway for those on Early Childhood Studies Degree courses was introduced in September 2009 on a pilot basis in four universities.

The delivery contracts for EYPS were reviewed and retendered by CWDC in 2011. EYPS was re-launched nationally from January 2012 with four revised pathways: the Undergraduate Entry Pathway; the Undergraduate Practitioner Pathway; the Graduate Practitioner Pathway; and the Graduate Entry Pathway (DfE, 2012).

Eleven different organisations were originally approved by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC), in 2006, to pilot the four EYP pathways and assess EYPS. These were a mixture of universities and private training providers. This group expanded to 31 higher education institutions (HEIs) and four private training providers, in 2007, to provide national coverage and a number of informal partnerships were developed to extend the reach of providers (Hevey, 2010). When the revised pathways were introduced in 2011-12, eight consortia were contracted to offer nationwide coverage. These continued to be comprised of a mixture of HEIs and private training companies. There is no published research comparing the different providers. Some internal studies by different providers have focused on aspects of programme delivery and the emerging identity of EYPs, but until this study there were no evaluations of changes in EYPs' practice as a result of the programmes (Hevey *et al*, 2007).

CWDC data recorded that, by the end of 2009, 3,387 practitioners had achieved EYPS (Hadfield *et al*, 2011), increasing to 8,372 in 2011 (Hadfield and Jopling, 2012) and 9,365 by June 2012 (Nutbrown, 2012). These figures suggest a positive response from practitioners to the introduction of the status. There has been a steady increase in the percentage of settings with an EYP since 2007.

2.2 The research base

This section sets out the main areas of research that informed the design of the longitudinal study and highlights the gaps in understanding it was intended to fill. It commences with a brief review of the different notions of quality in early years and

outlines the model of quality used in the study. It then considers effective leadership in the early years in general before finally moving on to explore the current knowledge base around EYP leadership and impact.

2.2.1 Quality in the early years sector

To understand the impact of EYPs on the quality of provision in the early years sector, it is important to define clearly what is meant by quality and how it should be assessed. Fenech (2011) describes three waves of research into quality and early childhood education and care since the 1970s. The first wave was concerned with evaluating the effects of non-maternal care on child development. The second began to examine how quality was constructed in early childhood provision and is associated with the development of rating scales, such as the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) and the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS), both of which have subsequently been revised (Harms *et al*, 1998 and Harms *et al*, 2003). The third wave took a more ecological approach, investigating the effects of children's individual characteristics and families on quality and outcomes.

Notions of quality in effective early years provision have been the subject of much debate in recent years. Mathers *et al* (2012) recognise that this is in part because debates encompass research-based measures, professional standards (including inspection frameworks) and the views of stakeholders (such as parents, children and providers). These three broad categories are each associated with a range of potential definitions of quality and means of measurement.

Furthermore, different notions of quality arise primarily because of the various perspectives of those making judgments and the types of measures and frameworks they use. Perspectives may come from 'insiders', such as practitioners, and 'outsiders', such as inspectors and researchers. They may be 'bottom up', in that they include the views of children and practitioners, or 'top down', from the perspective of owners and funders (Katz, 1995). Measurements of quality tend to be categorised as either objective, being a single agreed measure of what constitutes quality, or relativist, being derived from a range of criteria that vary depending on the stakeholders involved.

Proponents of the objective approach argue for quality assessments to be based on '*a collection of measurable characteristics in the childcare environment that affect children's social and cognitive development*' (Siraj-Blatchford and Wong, 1999: 10). Supporters of a more relativist approach hold that quality is '*a constructed concept, subjective in nature and based on values, beliefs and interest, rather than an objective and universal reality*' (Moss and Pence, 1994: 172). As objective measures allow more scope for comparison between settings they tend to be favoured by researchers and inspectors, but they are restricted in that they include only what can be measured consistently and reliably. More relativist approaches are founded on more holistic judgments that view quality '*as a subjective, value-based, relative and dynamic concept*' (Dahlberg and Moss, 2008: 5). However, although such judgments are more able to capture a wide range of perspectives, they also leave themselves open to criticism for being so specific to individual contexts that they cannot provide general assessments of quality which can be linked to nationally defined standards

or outcomes for children (Mathers *et al*, 2012).

Reviewing quality in relation to the EPPE study, Sylva (2010) draws attention to Munton *et al*'s (1995) preference for combining different quality indicators, instead of relying on individuals' judgements of quality. Three dimensions of quality are identified and discussed: structure (facilities and human resources); process (the everyday educational and care experiences of children); and outcomes (the longer term consequences for children). As Sylva notes (2010: 71), measuring outcomes is complex and necessitates longitudinal research to investigate the progress and achievement of children in a number of settings: *'Using objective, measurable definitions of quality has produced a wealth of research showing a clear relationship between the quality of early childhood provision and children's developmental outcomes'*.

Sylva's (2010) perspective is important because it highlights the relationship between input measures of quality, in this case structures and processes, and output measures of quality, outcomes for children. In the longitudinal study, this distinction was used to understand the relationship between EYPs' impact on key input measures and the likely effect this would have on later outcomes for children. Its methodology, therefore, was based on objective assessments of the quality of settings' processes, input quality and the role that EYPs played in improving these over time. The EPPE findings (Sylva *et al*, 2004) were then used to identify which of these input measures would be most likely to result in improved, long term outcomes for children.

2.2.2 Defining EYP leadership in relation to improving the quality of settings

The starting points for defining the nature of EYP leadership and the range of leadership activities in which leaders were involved, were the original EYPS standards (CWDC, 2010) where the leadership role was defined as:

'...catalysts for change and innovation: they are key to raising the quality of early years provision and they exercise leadership in making a positive difference to children's wellbeing, learning and development.'
(CWDC, 2010: 17)

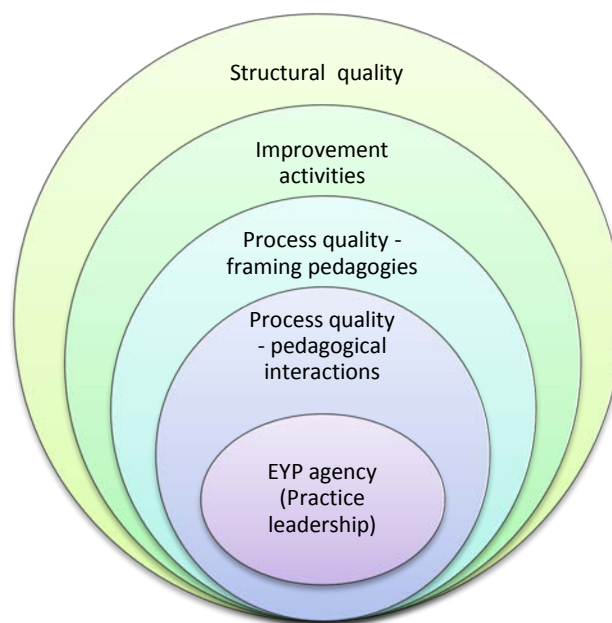
Beyond linking EYP leadership to improvements in quality and outcomes, the standards recognised that, in practice, what this entails will vary from setting to setting, depending on local circumstances. This lack of clarity is also reflected in the research literature: *'As the EYP role develops, it is EYPs themselves who are helping to shape our understanding of leadership'* (Whalley, 2012: 4). This has led to a growth in the number of terms used to describe EYP leaders. They have been described as transformational leaders who, as 'change agents,' motivate others towards higher goals (Miller and Cable, 2011: 16). Their leadership has been also compared to existing models such as pedagogical leadership (Heikka and Waniganayake, 2011) and 'leadership for learning' (Siraj-Blatchford and Manni, 2006). In this study we started to define the areas in which we would look for EYPs' leadership by developing an EYP-centric model of quality improvement. This model

would allow for comparative analyses across settings with very different characteristics, in which EYPs occupied a range of formal leadership positions.

2.2.3 Practice leadership and quality in the longitudinal study

This model was developed to focus on those areas of quality in a given setting that could be influenced by the EYP and measured objectively over time. The model illustrated in Figure 1, therefore, has at its centre those aspects of the settings (the input measures) that all EYPs should be able to influence by exercising their individual agency. At its peripheries are those aspects of quality that required them to adopt more formal and strategic leadership roles, or to exert greater collective agency in order to effect substantive improvements. The model is therefore a 'bottom up model' that emphasised those aspects that all EYPs could influence regardless of their position in the leadership structure of their setting. It was also an externally objective model in that it was based on the quality of the interactions in settings and environments being measured repeatedly throughout the study by researchers who used standardised observations schedules.

Figure 1 An EYP-centric model of improving quality in settings



The model, therefore, provides a way of investigating the nature of EYP leadership in practice. It does so by focusing on issues of quality and its improvement. As the study progressed, the term 'EYP agency' was replaced by 'practice leadership'. Practice leadership encapsulates improvement activities, led by an EYP, which focus on improving process quality in a setting or settings. It recognises that such activities are bounded by wider structural issues which the EYP may, or may not, be able to influence. The effectiveness of EYP practice leadership is measured by improvements in the overall quality of the processes in a setting. This helps to differentiate it from organisational leadership, which has a much broader remit.

The model distinguishes between process and structural quality and is based on those elements of provision that previous research has shown to have an impact on outcomes for children. Two aspects of process quality, defined as '*the actual*

experiences that occur [...] including children's interaction with caregivers and peers and their participation in different activities' (Vandell and Wolfe, 2000) were compared across all settings in the study. These two distinct, but interrelated, aspects were pedagogical interactions and framing pedagogies. These have been adopted from the REPEY study (Sylva *et al*, 2010: 43) which defined pedagogical interactions as *'specific behaviours on the part of adults'* and pedagogical framing as *'the behind-the-scenes aspects of pedagogy which include planning, resources, and establishment of routines'*. These were used to differentiate between improvements in background aspects of practice and practitioners' interactions with children, building on prior research into professional development, curriculum innovation and leadership. Previous research, primarily in the area of school improvement (e.g. Reynolds, 1999; Hopkins, 2001) has emphasised that supporting practitioners to change their practice with children is more difficult than getting them to adopt changes that only affect their planning or preparation.

The model also recognises that changes in process quality will depend on the scale and depth of EYPs' practice leadership, particularly their involvement in improvement processes such as staff training and curriculum development. Their practice leadership is limited and also potentially enhanced, by structural factors such as staffing ratios, levels of staff qualifications, funding for equipment and working conditions (Mooney *et al*, 2003) that can determine their effectiveness. These structural factors are set further away from the EYP in Figure 1 in order to indicate that they are less amenable to direct influence by individual EYPs' practice leadership. The following section provides a more detailed account of the evidence base for each aspect of quality in the model.

Process quality: pedagogical interactions

In the *Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years* (REPEY) study (Siraj-Blatchford *et al*, 2002: 7), pedagogical interactions were defined as:

'...face to face interactions practitioners engage in with children; they may take the form of cognitive (mainly sustained shared thinking, direct teaching and monitoring) or social interactions (mainly encouragement, behaviour management, social talk and care).'

The REPEY study determined that a key aspect of high quality interactions, and the main difference between those settings it defined as 'good' and those defined as 'outstanding', was the extent to which practitioners engaged in sustained shared thinking (SST). According to Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva (2004: 147), this involves:

'...Episodes in which two or more individuals "worked together" in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities or extend narratives. During a period of sustained shared thinking both parties contributed to the thinking and developed and extended the discourse.'

The importance of SST to the quality of pedagogical interactions led to its inclusion as one of the core principles of learning and development in the EYFS (DCSF, 2008). All practitioners working with young children under five in England are therefore

currently expected to engage in SST. There is a strong correlation between the quality of interactions and the framing pedagogies in use. REPEY found that SST was much more likely to occur when children were interacting 1:1 with an adult or with another child and that freely chosen play activities often provided the best opportunities for adults to extend children's thinking (Siraj-Blatchford *et al*, 2002).

Process quality: framing pedagogies

As discussed earlier, pedagogical framing encompasses the behind-the-scenes aspects of pedagogy, including planning, resources and the environment and the establishment of routines. Evidence from the EPPE study (Sylva *et al*, 2004) also suggested that learning environments with a strong focus on both planning for individual learning needs and promoting understanding of cultural differences were effective in developing children's cognitive, social and behavioural development and helped to achieve better outcomes for all children. The REPEY study demonstrated that the most effective early years settings achieved a balance between the opportunities provided for children to benefit from teacher-initiated group work and the provision of freely chosen yet potentially instructive play activities (Siraj-Blatchford *et al*, 2002).

Alongside pedagogical interactions, the EYFS also addressed aspects of process quality and, in its statutory framework for the organisation of settings, there was a requirement that: '*Providers must ensure that there is a balance of adult-led and freely-chosen or child-initiated activities, delivered through indoor and outdoor play*' (DCSF, 2008: 37). Beyond the provision of a 'balanced' curriculum, high quality pedagogical framing includes developing stimulating pedagogical environments and curricula that emphasise literacy, mathematics, science/environment and that cater for children of different genders, cultural backgrounds, abilities and interests (Sylva *et al*, 2004).

Structural quality

For many EYPs, affecting the structural quality of settings will be problematic unless they are owners or senior members in settings. This is because improving on aspects of settings, such as staff to child ratios and staff qualifications and training, requires considerable influence over resources and policy. Knowledge and understanding of how structural issues have an impact on quality in early childhood settings have been considerably enhanced by a number of recent studies, in particular the EPPE study (Sylva *et al*, 2010) and the GLF evaluation (Mathers *et al*, 2011a; 2011b) in the UK. These studies also provide detailed summaries of the wider literature concerning structural issues, such as staff qualifications and training, which will briefly be discussed here.

There is clear evidence that high quality early childhood education and care is linked to having a highly qualified, well-trained workforce. The highest quality provision has been found in settings that were led by a graduate, in particular by a teacher. For example, in investigating outcomes for children in the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative, Mathers and Sylva (2007) found that the strongest predictor of positive behavioural and social outcomes for children was the involvement of a qualified teacher. The EPPE study (Sylva *et al*, 2004) revealed a strong relationship between

the qualifications of the setting manager and the quality of the setting and the Millennium Cohort Study (Mathers *et al*, 2007) also found that the childcare qualifications of staff were a predictor of quality of provision, especially in aspects of provision which foster children's developing language, interactions and academic progress.

The number of trained staff in a setting and the type of training undertaken has also been found to be significant. Siraj-Blatchford *et al* (2006) found a positive correlation between higher proportions of formally qualified staff in a setting and higher quality provision, while Mathers *et al* (2007) found that having a high proportion of unqualified staff had a negative effect on quality. The impact of more staff training and qualifications is also reported in research based in the US and Northern Ireland (Peisner-Feinberg & Burchinal, 1997; Melhuish *et al*, 2006). The GLF evaluation (Mathers *et al*, 2011a) also reported findings that the specific content of staff education was related to the quality of the setting (for example, Howes *et al*, 1992). Thus, the qualifications of staff working in early years seem to have an impact on interactions between practitioners and children, the responsiveness and warmth shown by the adult and the social and language development of the child.

Furthermore, while the clear relationship between structural issues and process quality has been demonstrated above, research by Melhuish (2004), for example, found that impact was magnified when some of the structural variables were combined. In this study the adult-child ratio combined with staff qualifications produced a greater effect in terms of quality. Higher levels of education, training and salary, combined with a lower level of staff turnover, produced corresponding measures of higher quality care.

2.2.4 Practice leadership that has demonstrated an impact on quality

This section focuses on the relatively limited amount of research evidence relating to EYP leadership which has emerged from a comparatively small research base (Aubrey, 2011). This emerging evidence base, both in the UK and internationally, explores the notion of practice leadership that underpins the EYP's role as a 'practice leader' and 'change agent' (Whalley, 2008).

The EYP's new and complex leadership role has been defined in various ways. Hallet and Roberts-Holmes (2010) described them as '*leaders of learning*'. Kagan and Hallmark (2001) identified a number of key EYP leadership approaches, including community leadership and pedagogical leadership. Recent research by Heikka and Waniganayake (2011) explored EYP's dual role of leading practice and acting as change agents in early years settings. They investigated how the study of pedagogical leadership in early childhood education needs to be informed by approaches that are sensitive to the ways in which EYPs develop others' leadership by distributing responsibilities. They related leading practice to the concept of pedagogical leadership, which they define as:

'...taking responsibility for the shared understanding of the aims and methods of learning and teaching of young children from birth to 8 years. In these discussions, teachers have a significant role and responsibility to ensure that

the educational pedagogy employed matches children's interests, abilities and needs' (Heikka & Waniganayake, 2011: 500).

They also make a strong case for more rigorous research into pedagogical leadership in early childhood settings, arguing that early childhood leadership involves combining both pedagogical and distributed forms of leadership, as leaders are responsible for creating a community that fosters learning and communication. They assert that, in practice, pedagogical leadership *'has to be considered within the full extent of leadership roles and responsibilities expected of today's early childhood leaders'* (Heikka and Waniganayake, 2011: 499)

These findings resonate with outcomes from the ELEYS study suggesting that 'distributed', 'participative', 'facilitative' or 'collaborative' models of leadership are effective in early years settings (Siraj-Blatchford and Manni, 2006: 19). There is therefore an important distinction to be made between EYPs as leaders and their approach to developing leadership capacity. This distinction is important in another key debate in respect of the extent to which a formal position of power and authority is required to implement change (Seibert *et al*, 2003). Hard (2004) distinguishes formal leadership influence, which is dependent on an individual's position in a formal leadership structure, from the influence of informal leaders who may not hold a recognised leadership position. This was explored in detail in the longitudinal study.

The connection between pedagogical leadership and distributed leadership is significant because, in order to be effective, pedagogy has to be shared, communicated and evaluated throughout a setting. Pedagogical leadership therefore has a collaborative and co-operative function (Heikka and Waniganayake 2011). Siraj-Blatchford and Manni (2006) found that, in effective settings, the leadership qualities of contextual literacy and commitment to collaboration and to the improvement of children's learning were strongly represented. Effective leadership practices identified in the study included identifying and articulating a collective vision; ensuring shared understandings, meanings and goals; encouraging reflection; and encouraging and facilitating parent and community partnerships (Siraj-Blatchford and Manni 2006: 15). In a study of leadership in children's centres, Sharp *et al* (2012) developed a model of system leadership, identifying how leadership operated beyond single settings along with identified eight core behaviours displayed by highly effective children's centre leaders in work that is broadly similar to Siraj-Blatchford and Manni's (2006) typology.

In this study, the approach adopted was to scope EYPs leadership activities in and beyond the settings they worked in. A key distinction was also made between EYPs as 'practice leaders', often regarded in isolation, and their support of 'practice leadership' in settings. This more social, rather than individual, view of effective leadership sees it as being 'stretched across individuals' and is analogous to Spillane *et al*'s (2004) notion of distributed leadership where formal and informal patterns of leadership come together and interact.

2.2.5 Children's perspectives and improvement processes

EYPs' engagement in a wide range of improvement processes was explored in the case studies in the longitudinal study (see section 3. Methodology). One aspect of their work in this area was explored in more detail in six settings, looking at how they used and responded to children's perspectives (CP) to inform their practice and improve the quality of their provision. The term 'children's perspectives' encompasses the various concepts of child consultation, participation, children's voice and listening to children, each of which resists clear definition. Recognising the perspective of young children is part of a culture of respect and listening to children, adults and families in the early years. It is also set within a broader recognition of children's rights. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) gives children the right to be listened to in all matters that concern them.

However, as Lancaster (2010) notes, it is still expected that adults will take responsibility for decision-making while giving due weight to the child's perspective. The adult is expected to consider the child's age, maturity and competence, which means that a child's entitlement is bounded by and dependent on the adult. Focusing on EYPs in this context, Davies and Artaraz (2009) found that the factors that influenced child participation included the EYPs' assumptions about childhood and competence, the setting itself and the policy context, although they admitted that these were complex and multivariate. They also found that many EYPs felt that it was sufficient to offer children limited choices to fulfil the need to consider the children's perspectives. Armistead (2008) found that there were few established resources or routes to enable children's perspectives to be considered at setting level and, in relation to children's experiences of the EYFS, Garrick *et al* (2010) noted that many children were not involved in planning their learning and had limited ownership of their learning journals, for example.

The approach adopted in the longitudinal study was to work with EYPs on the issues they faced in helping children to articulate and in listening to their perspectives, re-articulating their perspectives to others and responding to them in the context of improving the quality of provision. It focused on how EYPs reacted to the tensions and barriers inherent in responding to children's voice and, particularly, the disparities between children's and EYPs' perspectives on the nature of the provision in settings. The findings of the children's perspectives strand are presented in a separate report.

2.2.6 Impact of gaining EYPS on practice leadership

The longitudinal study set out to explore how gaining EYPS had affected not only practitioners' skills, status and careers, but also their approach to practice leadership. A limited number of small scale, qualitative studies have explored the impact of gaining EYPS. A study by Lumsden (2012), based on research with EYPs from one training provider between 2007 and 2010, found that they regarded EYPS as a positive step towards raising the sector's standing and enhancing aspects of quality. She also suggested that EYPS enabled EYPs to work holistically at the intersection of integrated professional teams, for example as children's centre leaders, occupying this space more flexibly and comfortably. Both Lumsden (2012)

and Simpson (2010) created a more nuanced portrait of EYPs, which was explored further in the longitudinal study. According to Simpson (2010: 278), this:

'...refutes a simplistic notion pervading this policy – namely, that by introducing a new status those acquiring it will automatically take on the role of 'change agent' with "responsibility for leading and managing play, care and learning" in their settings.'

Lloyd and Hallet (2010) explored the perspectives of 20 EYP candidates on the Long Pathway with one training provider. They draw attention to the value of establishing a unifying identity, with the candidates speaking of the need for a 'collective voice' and 'shared agencies'. They argued that EYPS had not developed all the characteristics of professionalism, notably accreditation by a professional body and formal pay structures, and that this had perpetuated traditional divisions in the workforce, some of which are reflected in the longitudinal study.

Alongside these studies, there has to date only been one other national study which explicitly set out to explore the impact of gaining EYPS: the national evaluation of the Graduate Leader Fund (Mathers *et al*, 2011a; 2011b). Commissioned by the former Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the study was undertaken between 2007 and 2011 to evaluate how funding to increase the qualifications of the early years workforce had contributed to raising the quality of settings, predominantly in the PVI sector. The study was based on a matched sample design in which the impact of graduate practitioners was compared to that of graduates who had obtained EYPS. It was based on assessments of quality in settings, using early childhood rating scales at two points, separated by two years. These assessments were complemented by in-depth case studies of 12 settings.

The key findings from the GLF evaluation were that gaining EYPS generated significant improvements in the quality of provision above and beyond having a graduate leader: *'Settings which gained a graduate leader with EYPS made significant improvements in quality as compared with settings which did not'* (Mathers *et al*, 2011a: 93). Improvements related most strongly to direct work with children, such as support for learning, communication and individual needs, reflecting the role of EYPs as *'leaders of practice'*. It was also suggested that three interrelated factors *'leadership and skills; the EYP's position within the setting; and the extent to which the role and remit of the EYP was defined and agreed'* contributed to an association between the EYP and settings' ability to implement improvements successfully (Mathers *et al*, 2011a: 8). The evaluation also established that EYPS' impact on quality was more closely related to learning interactions and communication than to the nature of the environment. However, its limited qualitative elements meant that GLF evaluation was not able to ascertain in detail what specific leadership practices and understandings contributed to this improvement in quality, a gap that this longitudinal study was designed to address.

Summary: research base

Overall, there is fairly limited research exploring how leadership in early years settings is enacted. Research tends to rely on surveys and interviews with leaders

that explore their day-to-day roles, responsibilities and characteristics rather than observing their leadership practices and relationships with others (Aubrey, 2007; 2011). Research is often based around studying leaders who have been deemed effective because they work in outstanding settings (see, for example, the REPEY and ELEYS studies). This type of leadership research is limited in that it fails to unpick whether the leadership characteristics and approaches in such settings could be equally effective in improving the quality of settings which start from a much lower quality base. This argument has been extensively rehearsed in the school improvement and effective leadership literatures concerning the type of leadership required to 'turn around' failing schools (Fullan, 2006) and move schools from being 'good to great' (Collins, 2001).

There is an emerging consensus as to what constitutes effective leadership practices in early years settings (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2006; Ofsted, 2008). It mirrors many aspects of effective leadership in schools resulting in gains for pupils (Robinson, 2007) and of other pathways to impact (Resnick, 2010). This consensus highlights the need to develop and maintain a focus on outcomes for children among staff; the importance of CPD which aims to improve the quality of provision and outcomes; and the role of planning and evaluating the quality of interactions and the curriculum. One of the difficulties in identifying a generic set of characteristics of effective leadership is that different circumstances appear to require different skills and attributes. Leadership is located in a specific context and situation. This point is particularly relevant to EYPs who operate as leaders and change agents in a wide variety of contexts, for example as childminders in private nurseries or in children's centres.

The key issue for the longitudinal study was that there was little research that investigated the effectiveness of key dimensions of early years leadership across a range of settings that varied in their quality of their provision. The longitudinal study set out to fill such gaps in current research. It did so by first delineating the scope of EYP leadership through linking it to improving process quality. It then defined it as 'practice leadership', that is leadership aimed at improving pedagogical interactions and framing, encompassing all improvement activities – from modelling and curriculum development to changing the learning environment. Unlike previous research, by linking practice leadership with objective measures of process quality, the study did not have to rely on leaders' perceptions of their leadership and its effectiveness.

The study began its exploration of effective practice leadership by measuring and categorising the overall improvements rates of 30 settings, baselining and then re-assessing the quality of processes in each setting over three years. The leadership characteristics and practices associated with different improvement trajectories were then analysed. This enabled the effectiveness of various approaches to practice leadership in a range of settings to be compared. The aim was to gain a fuller understanding of practice leadership and the barriers EYPs encountered in leading practice. The sample of settings used in the case studies contained a much higher proportion of settings ranked as 'satisfactory' by Ofsted than was present in the

sector as a whole. This allowed the ways in which leaders adapted their approach to settings that varied in the quality of their provision to be considered.

3. Methodology

The study had two main components:

- A national questionnaire survey of EYPs which was designed to elicit information about the extent to which the introduction of EYPS had met workforce development aims in relation to career progression, professional development and professional status. It provided information about EYPs' job roles, workloads, pay and their distribution across the early years sector. The first iteration of the survey was undertaken in January and February 2010 and the second in September and October 2011.
- Longitudinal three-year case studies of 30 early years settings in which EYPs from different backgrounds and with different levels of experience were employed in a range of leadership roles. A subset of six settings was also selected to explore EYPs' engagement with children's perspectives.

3.1 The national surveys

The two surveys were designed to provide an overview of the impact of EYPS on professionals and to allow for two sets of comparisons to be made during the period of the study. The focus of the first survey was to understand how the EYP population had developed as different pathways were introduced and whether their experiences and aspirations had changed as EYPS became more established. The second was to enable a cohort analysis of the changing characteristics, aspirations and experiences of those who completed both surveys. Both surveys attempted to address the following areas:

- biographical and demographic data about EYPs and the settings in which they work
- impact of gaining EYPS
- professional development and training
- ability to influence change
- EYPs' professional status
- EYPs' career aspirations.

The first national survey went live between January and February 2010 and received 1,045 responses, representing nearly 30 per cent of the national total of EYPs at that time. This sample was broadly representative of the total population of practitioners with EYPS based on gender, ethnicity, geographical distribution and the pathway used to achieve EYPS. The second national survey had the same set of overall aims, although more detailed information was sought in some areas following analysis of the responses to the first survey. The second survey went live between September and October 2011 and 2,051 responses were received, which represented 25 per cent of the total population of 8,372 EYPs at that time. The sample was, again,

broadly representative of the total population of practitioners with EYPS based on gender, ethnicity, geographical distribution and EYPS Pathway.

3.2 Case studies

Data was collected in 30 case study settings over a three-year period between October 2009 and March 2012. The cases were selected to provide evidence from a cross-section of early years settings and to explore the impact of professionals who had gained EYPS via a range of pathways and who occupied different leadership positions in these settings. The sample of case study settings changed slightly during the course of the study. Four reserve list settings were brought into the case studies ahead of the third setting visits to replace settings that had voluntarily withdrawn and to increase the representation of EYPs who had undertaken the Full Pathway (pathway 4) owing to the limited population of EYPs who had undertaken this pathway at the beginning of the study. The number of EYPs in settings fluctuated a little during the study but, by the final visit in March 2012, there were 41 EYPs distributed across the 30 case study settings which included 12 private daycare settings, 10 children's centres, five voluntary/community settings and one independent setting, plus two childminders. Seven settings had more than one EYP. Full details of the sample settings can be found in Appendix 1.

3.2.1 Visits to settings

Each setting was visited on at least four separate occasions, apart from one which withdrew from the study just ahead of the fourth visit and another which could not be visited during the period of the fourth and fifth visits because of the EYP's illness. Most settings were visited five times. The main objective of the fifth round of visits in March 2012 was to target settings where it was necessary to collect additional data to produce enhanced accounts of impact or to fill gaps in the existing evidence base. Table 1 below indicates the schedule of visits undertaken and Table 2 gives additional information on the tools referred to in Table 1.

Table 1 *Visits to settings*

Visit	Data collection
<i>Visit 1</i> Oct-Nov 2009	Orientation interview with EYP(s) and manager Partial ITERS/ECERS
<i>Visit 2</i> Jan-Feb 2010	Interviews with EYP(s) and manager Full baseline ITERS/ECERS Baseline PCITs
<i>Visit 3</i> Nov-Dec 2010	Interview with EYP(s) Interim ITERS/ECERS Interim PCITs Post-PCIT interview with practitioners Focus group with practitioners SNA questionnaire
<i>Visit 4</i> Oct-Nov 2011	Interview with EYP(s) Final ITERS/ECERS Interim/final PCITs Post-PCIT interview with practitioners SNA questionnaire
<i>Visit 5</i> March 2012	Validation interview with EYP(s) Final ITERS/ECERS (if not done in Visit 4) Final PCITs (some settings) Post-PCIT interview with practitioners SNA questionnaire (some settings)

3.2.2 Data collection

As Table 1 indicates, the case studies were based on interviews with EYPs, managers and other practitioners, direct and indirect observations of practice and the learning environment, social network analysis (SNA) of the settings and documentary analysis of policies and data collected from the settings. Table 2 outlines the tools used and data collected. The use of the observation and social network analysis tools is described in more detail in Appendix 2 and information on data collection tools is included in Appendix 3.

Table 2 *Data collection tools*

Activity	Tool	Total undertaken
Observations of the learning environment	ITERS-R, ECERS-R and ECERS-E environmental rating scales plus additional scale for outdoor environment	30 ITERS-R 61 ECERS-R 59 ECERS-E
Observations of interactions between practitioners and children	Practitioner-child interaction tool (PCIT)	260
Interviews with EYPs	Semi-structured interview schedule	139
Interviews with setting manager (if not EYP)	Semi-structured interview schedule	43
Interviews with practitioners	Brief semi-structured interview schedule focusing on PCIT observation undertaken immediately beforehand.	78
Social network analysis of all staff in setting	Questionnaires focusing on professional networks and professional interactions among practitioners in setting(s)	At least 10 per setting (over at least two visits)
Group interviews with practitioners	Semi-structured interview based on SNA	30 (visit 3 only)
Reflective journals	Completed by EYPs between visits and used in interviews to reflect on progress between visits	All EYPs in the study
Setting documentation	Included policies, CPD records, Ofsted reports, impact assessments, EYFS profiles.	All settings

3.2.3 Children's perspectives

As the research was intended to explore a range of good practice in working with children's perspectives, the six settings selected for this strand of the study were: rated 'outstanding' or 'good' by Ofsted; already engaged in children's perspectives work to some extent; willing to participate in the research; representative of a range of settings and EYPs (for example, setting type and EYPS pathway). The methodology was designed to provide opportunities for the EYPs to be active participants in the process and to observe the researchers working with the children. The researcher visited the setting for a day and, after speaking to the EYP and introducing himself or

herself to the whole group of children in the setting, was taken on a guided tour around the setting by a group of children selected by the EYP. The children were encouraged to take photographs of their favourite places and activities before taking part in a group interview in which the photographs were used as prompts. The EYP was then interviewed about the children's interaction with the researcher; their own engagement with children's perspectives activities; the issues they faced in supporting children to articulate their views and responding to them personally and how they engaged other staff in such activities.

3.3 Conceptual framework

In order to meet the aims of the study, a conceptual framework was developed to direct the research design and data analysis. It needed to be expansive enough to allow adequate exploration of the impacts of gaining EYPS on practitioners but also sufficiently focused to elaborate how these practitioners affected the quality of the provision in the setting(s) in which they worked. The framework also helped to clarify the interconnection between these two phenomena.

At the study's inception a relatively broad framework was developed to encompass both of these overarching aims. It covered three elements:

- EYPs' professional identity
- agency
- impact on settings, quality and outcomes for children.

3.3.1 EYPs' professional identity

Professional identity is a broad construct covering multiple aspects of individuals' sense of self as well as how they are constructed and perceived by others. In the study, the aspect of identity that was of particular interest was how EYPs viewed their role as practice leaders and change agents.

The initial analysis of the responses to the first national survey of EYPs suggested that the impact of gaining EYPS on practitioners' professional identity in these areas depended on the maturity of their existing professional identities. The overall impact of gaining EYPS on an individual's professional identity as practice leader was regarded as passing through three broad stages, although it should be emphasized that this is not necessarily a linear process and more experienced practitioners may move directly to the later stages. These stages were:

Becoming - This relates to the period during which the practitioner is undertaking EYPS. Changes to their identities here are mainly based on the impact of the pathway on their confidence, skills, current knowledge and understanding and therefore mainly relate to changes to them as individuals. Generally, the less experienced the practitioner, the greater and more extensive were the perceived impacts on their professional identity.

Being - This covers the period during which an individual becomes established and recognised as having gained EYPS in her or his setting(s), by managers, colleagues and the wider professional network. Changes to the EYPs' professional identity at

this stage mainly relate to new professional status being recognised socially and professionally.

Developing - If an EYP's professional status is recognised in his or her setting(s) or wider professional contexts, this allows the EYPs to take on different responsibilities and interact with new groups of people. As a result, the sense of professional identity will continue to develop. At this stage, the degree to which the EYP feels supported and 'liberated' to take on new roles and responsibilities and engage in new professional relationships is crucial.

3.3.2 Agency

Agency was defined in this study as the ability of participants to enact their developing sense of themselves as practice leaders in the settings and professional networks in which they operated. Specifically, this was reflected in the approaches they adopted (and the difficulties they faced) in effecting improvements, from generic change management approaches in areas such as planning or observation to specific curriculum innovations, for example in language and literacy.

EYPs' agency was regarded as both individual and collective in nature, in that they were able to take direct action themselves, but were also able to draw down support and resources from settings and from their own professional networks to effect change and improvements. Figure 2 illustrates how they might be able to mobilise support in settings using their roles in both formal and informal leadership structures. It also encompasses the professional networks from which they might receive indirect assistance, such as emotional support or advice or direct support, for example when members of their networks run training in their setting(s).

Figure 2 EYPs' individual and collective agency



3.3.3 Impacts on settings, quality and outcomes for children

The effect of EYPs' agency on settings was discussed in relation to two impact categories:

- aspects of the environment that previous research has shown to have an impact on young children's learning and development (framing pedagogies)
- overall quality of provision in the setting (in this study primarily process quality, i.e. framing pedagogies and pedagogical interactions).

The approach to quality adopted in the study has already been discussed in the previous section, but is discussed briefly again in this context.

Outcomes for children

Previous research (notably the EPPE, REPE and ELEYS studies) has identified aspects of process quality that resulted in long term, positive outcomes for children, for example, sustained shared thinking in the case of pedagogical interactions and the use of ECERS-E sub-scales relating to mathematics and diversity in framing pedagogies. This evidence base means that increases in these behaviours and practices can be treated as 'proxies' for subsequent improvements in outcomes for children. In the model these proxies are embedded in the overall process quality categories, but in the following discussion they are addressed separately in order to explore whether improvements in process quality are likely to result in improved outcomes for children in the long term.

Overall quality of provision

This is based on the 'EYP-centric' model of quality improvement illustrated in Figure 1 above, which focused on the interrelated, areas of pedagogical interactions and framing pedagogies.

This conceptual framework structures the analysis and findings section that follows.

4. Analysis and findings

The following analysis draws on both case study and survey data. The first section, which focuses on the impact of gaining EYPS, primarily draws on data from the two national surveys. The following sections, 'Impact on settings, practitioners and children' and 'Patterns of improvement across the settings', primarily draw on data from the case studies.

4.1 The impact of gaining Early Years Professional Status: Becoming, being and developing as an Early Years Professional

This section of the report focuses on Early Years Professionals' perceptions of the impact of gaining EYPS on their own and others' practice and is based on the data from the two national surveys of EYPs. These separately published survey reports (Hadfield *et al* 2011; Hadfield & Jopling, 2012) cover a much wider range of impacts and provide a broad range of workforce data. In this section the primary data is drawn from the second national survey, as the second survey covered similar issues to the first, but in more depth and with a larger sample of EYPs.

The impact of gaining EYPS is a process that unfolds over time as people undertake different pathways at various points in their careers. As discussed earlier, the impacts change over time as (and if) their new status is recognised by others and provides them with opportunities to develop their practice leadership. The impact of gaining EYPS on practitioners was analysed as going through three broad stages described as 'becoming', 'being' and 'developing' (see Section 3.3.1). These stages indicate that following an EYPS pathway may improve an individual's knowledge and skills but, once EYPS has been gained, impact also depends on whether others recognise and value the status.

As practitioners enter pathways at different points in their careers with wide variations in their levels of knowledge and skills and experiences of leadership, the impact of gaining EYPS is also highly variable at an individual level. The most important factors that affected the impact of gaining EYPS on an individual were their levels of prior experience, their role in a setting and the types of setting in which they worked. In order to illustrate these variations, a set of six 'cameos' of key groups of EYPs was created from the data collected in the second national survey. These cameos are composites of the responses of sub-samples of EYPs, designed to be representative of distinct groups in the EYP population, rather than the survey population as a whole. The six groups, which overlapped to some extent, are described below.

Six groups of Early Years Professionals

a. The novice

Bringing more graduates into the early years workforce was one of the aspirations of EYPS. This group contained EYPs with fewer than three years' experience of working with children under five when they undertook EYPS and who did not have a directly relevant degree, in that their degree study did not include elements concerned with

child development or education (total number of EYPs in this group = 98). Novice EYPs with a directly relevant degree were excluded from the group. Novice EYPs were typically aged between 26 and 35 and achieved EYPS through the Full Pathway in 2011. They were most likely to work as early years workers or senior early years workers in a private setting rated good by Ofsted, having been in that role for between one and three years.

b. The owner/manager

One of the biggest single groups to gain EYPS and probably the group most likely to be in a position to support and fund the next generation of EYPs, was made up of EYPs who were owners and/or managers of private day nurseries (EYPs = 362). This group was typically aged between 36 and 45 with 8-15 years' experience of working with children under five. The owner/manager EYP was most likely to have gained EYPS through the Short Pathway in 2011, having worked in their current role in a setting rated good by Ofsted for over ten years.

c. The homegrown middle leader

This group consisted of 'homegrown' EYPs, room leaders and senior early years workers who were employed in their current setting before they gained EYPS. They worked directly with children for at least two days a week and had over four years' experience of working with children under 5 (EYPs = 346). These EYPs were based in private, voluntary/community or local authority-funded settings. They typically had 8-15 years' experience of working with children under 5. Middle leaders in private settings were generally younger (typically 26-35) than those in voluntary/community (36-45) or LA-funded settings (46-55). They were most likely to have gained EYPS via the Short Pathway (private and LA settings) and the Long Pathway (voluntary settings) in 2011 and to have worked in their current role for 1-3 years in a setting rated good by Ofsted.

d. The EYP with QTS

A large proportion (468 in total) of EYPs had Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) before they gained EYPS. This cameo helps to explore how the members of this highly qualified group who were still room-based (working as room leaders, senior early years workers or early years workers) benefited from gaining EYPS (EYPs = 79). They were typically fairly young (26-35) with 8-15 years' experience working with children under 5. They were most likely to have undertaken the Short Pathway in 2010 and to have been in their current role in a private setting rated good by Ofsted for 1-3 years.

e. The under 2s worker

There is a general perception that EYPS tend to work with older children (aged 3-5). This cameo highlights EYPs, excluding childminders, who worked more than two days a week with children aged under 2 (EYPs = 190). Such EYPs were most likely to be aged 26-35 with 8-15 years' experience of working with under 5s. They had typically gained EYPS through the Short Pathway in 2011 and had been in their current role for 1-3 years in a private setting rated good by Ofsted. They were slightly more likely to have been senior early years workers or room leaders (38 per cent) than owners/managers (36 per cent).

f. The childminder

The working conditions of childminders with EYPS make them a distinct group from other professionals and this cameo group illustrates how gaining the status has affected them (EYPs = 50). Childminders tended to be older than most of the other cameo groups at 36-45 with 8-15 years' experience of working with under 5s. They had typically gained EYPS through the Long Pathway in 2011, were rated outstanding by Ofsted, and had been in their current role for over ten years.

The cameos are used to illustrate and explore a number of key questions in the survey regarding the impact of EYPS upon early years professionals against the background of the overall outcomes of the second national survey.

4.1.1 Impact of gaining Early Years Professional Status on Early Years Professionals' leadership

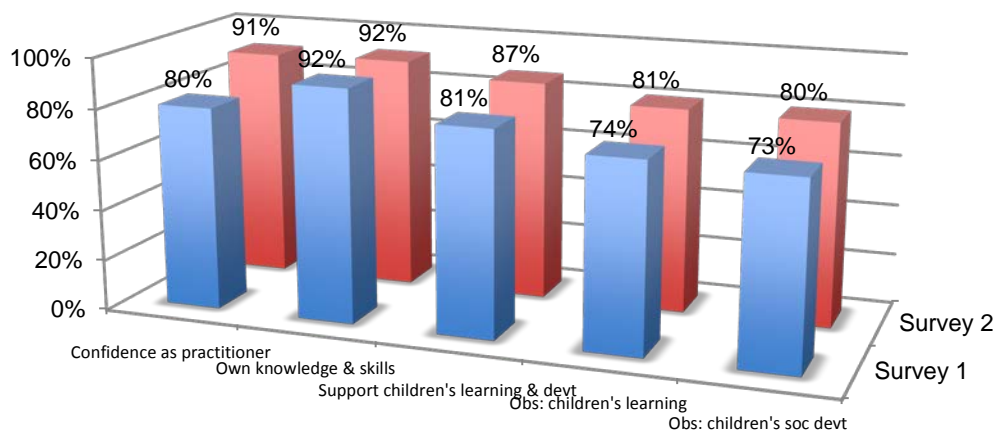
In this section the cameos are used to illustrate the impact of gaining EYPS on professional's ability to lead. The focus is on three aspects, in part based on Rodd's (2001) model of leadership:

- **technical knowledge and skills** including their understanding of child development and curriculum; pedagogy; assessment and feedback and how to train colleagues effectively
- **interpersonal skills** communication with colleagues; ability to influence colleagues and others and work with parents and other agencies
- **professional confidence, status and identity** and how this linked to their sense of agency and ability to improve practice.

Impact on technical knowledge and skills

The greatest impact of EYPS reported by practitioners across the cameo groups in the second national survey related to their professional knowledge and skills. This was followed by their confidence as practitioners (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 *What impact has gaining EYPs had on you personally? (agree and partially agree responses)*



Overall, ninety-one per cent of EYPs stated that EYPS had increased their confidence as a practitioner and 92 per cent stated that it had helped them to develop their knowledge and skills. In the cameo groups these responses were most likely to come from novice EYPs and childminders in the 'becoming' stage, where 98 per cent agreed or partially agreed that EYPS had increased their knowledge and skills, but similar responses were also widespread among more experienced EYPs. Indeed, increased confidence was most commonly cited as the greatest gain across all of the cameo groups. In the open response survey questions, when EYPs were asked to explain their choice of the biggest impact of EYPS, some nuances between cameo groups were revealed.

Owners/managers, who were more likely to be in the 'developing' stage, tended to focus on the impact of EYPS on reintegrating new aspects of theory and research into existing knowledge, re-evaluating what they currently saw as good practice and providing a basis in theory for reaffirming aspects of their practice:

'[EYPS] gave a 'refresher' in current thinking and practice and importantly the link between theory and practice and the research currently being conducted in the field of early years. My 'beliefs' were challenged at times and this has supported my development.' (Manager with 31+ years' experience, Validation Pathway, Survey 2)

'Gives me more theory to back up my practice when talking to parents and staff.' (Manager with 8-15 years' experience, Early Childhood Studies Pathway, Survey 2)

'I feel that it has helped me gain respect for my skills and abilities, which has allowed me to support my staff effectively.' (Children's Centre Leader working with under twos and with 8-15 years' experience, Short Pathway, Survey 2)

In contrast, novice EYPs moving from the becoming into the being stage were more likely to relate their growing confidence to developing new knowledge and skills, especially if they had come from a different profession or were new to the early years sector:

'I came from a nursing background, but I worked hard to increase my knowledge even before commencing EYPS. The EYPS has really helped me gain further skills and knowledge and because of this my confidence has really increased.' (Room leader with 0-3 years' experience, Long Pathway, Survey 2)

'Since my first degree was in a non-related field, the long pathway to EYPS helped me to increase my knowledge and skills in the areas of child development, leadership and management and safeguarding.' (Manager with 0-3 years' experience, Long Pathway, Survey 2)

There were also clear distinctions between cameo groups in relation to their ability to support children's learning and development. Almost all novice EYPs (97 per cent) and childminders (96 per cent) felt EYPS had had an impact in this area, compared to 86 per cent of owners/managers and homegrown EYPs in LA settings, and similar patterns were detectable in relation to their use of observation to assess both

children's learning and their social development. In addition, less experienced EYPs were more likely to highlight the skills they had developed through EYPS in developing others, such as '*learning strategies in how to develop those skills [in colleagues] and to use those skills for the benefit of the team*' (Room leader with 0-3 years' experience, Short Pathway, Survey 2).

EYPS also appeared to have had an impact on EYPs' attitudes towards and engagement in their own professional development. The percentage of EYPs who believed that gaining EYPS had led to them take a greater interest in their own professional development increased from 71 per cent in the first national survey to 79 per cent in the second. Responses were most positive among novice EYPs, middle leaders in private settings and EYPs with QTS (all 85 per cent), whereas only three-quarters of owners/managers and EYPs working with children under two agreed with the proposition. There were greater variations in relation to CPD plans: only just over half (51 per cent) of novice EYPs and 61 per cent of EYPs working with under twos had personal CPD plans, compared with three-quarters of owners/managers, childminders and middle leaders in LA settings.

The issue of the extent to which EYPs had access to the professional development they required also attracted a range of responses. Overall, over two-thirds of EYPs (69 per cent) agreed that they had access all or most of the time. This applied to 84 per cent of EYPs with QTS and 79 per cent of owners/managers but to only just over half of novice EYPs (56 per cent) and 59 per cent of EYPs working with under 2s. However, 83 per cent of novice EYPs and 81 per cent of EYPs working with under 2s agreed that their CPD was directly related to the work they did in their setting(s) all or most of the time.

Among survey respondents as a whole, staff training events and learning conversations with peers were the activities most commonly associated with changes in EYPs' practice. However, there were again wide variations among the cameo groups in that 60 per cent of owners/managers and half (51 per cent) of EYPs with QTS felt that training had encouraged them to lead on an improvement area, compared with one-fifth of childminders and 39 per cent of novice EYPs. Similarly, almost half (43 per cent) of owners/managers and a third of EYPs working with under 2s said the same of learning conversations, compared with only 21 per cent of novice EYPs.

These findings were also reflected in the case studies, suggesting that many EYPs were enthused and supported by high-involvement CPD opportunities via EYP networks. However, there were considerable geographical variations in the extent to which such opportunities were available, particularly following the local authority funding cuts that characterised the final phase of the study.

Interpersonal skills

In the second national survey, 87 per cent of EYPs overall stated that gaining the status had given them greater confidence in developing colleagues' knowledge and skills. Greater confidence was also the most frequently cited impact by all the cameo groups. EYPs as whole also responded positively to questions focusing on the impact

of EYPS on their interpersonal skills in communicating with colleagues (82 per cent agreed or partially agreed) and on improving practice in the settings in which they worked (83 per cent agreed or partially agreed).

Owners/managers and EYPs working with children under two years of age were a little less likely than novice EYPs to highlight an impact on their ability to communicate changes to their colleagues. Homegrown middle leaders in private settings were more likely to emphasise impact on their ability to identify and develop good practice among colleagues than their counterparts in LA-funded settings and the other cameo groups. Questions regarding the willingness of colleagues to accept EYPs' ideas revealed lower levels of agreement across the board although, again, middle leaders in private settings were more positive (78 per cent) than other cameo groups (between 67 and 69 per cent). One of the homegrown middle leaders explicitly related this to a collaborative approach to improvement:

'I try to foster in all members of staff a more reflective approach to the way in which they practice so that together we all contribute ideas to the ongoing improvement of the way that we as a group work in developing our children's learning.' (Senior early years worker with 4-7 years' experience, Short Pathway, Survey 2)

Another homegrown EYP in a private nursery related her increase in influence to being more confident about confronting colleagues as they settled into the 'being' stage: *'Previously [I] didn't have the confidence to approach difficult situations'* (Room leader 4-7 years' experience, Full Pathway, Survey 2).

Asked about the impact of EYPS on the professionals' work in their setting(s), the use of evaluation techniques emerged most strongly, particularly among childminders, novice EYPs and EYPs with QTS, followed by their ability to carry out improvements in settings. Novice EYPs, more than other cameo groups, highlighted the impact on their ability to work with parents and carers more than other factors although, paradoxically, they were also the group most likely to feel that parents did not understand what EYPS meant (see below). Novice EYPs tended to highlight factors such as understanding the importance of working with parents and having the confidence to talk knowledgeably.

'I try and have strong partnerships with all my parents and gain good relationships with them. EYPS definitely showed me the importance of this. This has a huge positive impact for parents and children.' (Early years worker with 0-3 years' experience, Full Pathway, Survey 2)

The second national survey suggested that even experienced leaders reported an improved ability to lead developments in their settings and three-quarters of novice leaders thought EYPS had increased their ability to lead in their settings.

Overall, just under 50 per cent of EYPs routinely led CPD activities in their settings. More did so among owners/managers and fewer among novice EYPs. Similarly, one-fifth of all EYPs routinely led professional development activities outside their settings. Variations were also found in relation to the extent to which EYPs led CPD

for others. This related to levels of experience and authority. Thus, 75 per cent of 'developing' owners/managers regularly led CPD in their setting(s) compared to only a quarter (26 per cent) of 'becoming' novice EYPs (45 per cent of whom never did so) and less than a third (30 per cent) of 'being' middle leaders in private settings. Similarly, just over a quarter (26 per cent) of owner managers and a fifth of EYPs working with children under two regularly led CPD outside their setting(s), whereas over three-quarters of EYPs with QTS (77 per cent) and novice EYPs (85 per cent) never did so.

The two surveys also explored the challenges and barriers to improvement in detail. The power of culturally embedded traditions and expectations, reflected in colleagues' reluctance to change practice, was the most commonly cited challenge among EYPs as a whole and in all the cameo groups bar childminders, who often work in relative isolation. Other common challenges were colleagues' unreceptiveness to new ideas and the structural factor of lack of resources, which was the biggest challenge for childminders. The local context was the least commonly cited challenge.

Professional confidence, status and identity

An overwhelming majority of EYPs in the second national survey as a whole (85 per cent) identified an improved sense of their professional status as a key impact of EYPS. This response was more common among childminders (96 per cent), EYPs with QTS (95 per cent) and novice EYPs (90 per cent). Increased credibility among colleagues was also frequently cited, with similar levels of agreement among novice and manager EYPs (77 and 75 per cent respectively). Childminders (71 per cent) and EYPs working with children under 2 (70 per cent) appeared a little less convinced. All EYP groups were generally in agreement that large proportions of both parents and carers and, particularly, people outside early years did not understand what EYPS meant. This is helpful in putting some of the concerns raised by smaller scale research studies (for example, Willis, 2009; Hevey 2010; Lloyd and Hallet, 2010) into perspective, since the national surveys identified many of the same concerns about the recognition of EYPs and EYPS as they had.

Summary: EYPs' views of the impact of EYPS

In the second national survey as a whole, practitioners were extremely positive about the impact of gaining EYPS on them as practitioners and on their ability to carry out their roles. The most positive responses came from novice EYPs and childminders, who were more likely to be in the 'becoming' stage of realising their leadership potential, where EYPS was frequently associated with gaining fresh knowledge and expertise, rather than having the more confirmatory function it offered to 'developing' EYPs such as those already in leadership positions. The increase in positive responses from the first national survey perhaps reflected the increasing proportion of less experienced professionals in the overall population of EYPs.

There was an increase from 71 per cent of staff in the first national survey believing gaining EYPS had led them to take a greater interest in their own professional development to over three-quarters (79 per cent) in the second survey. This

response was higher among novice EYPs, middle leaders in private settings and EYPs with QTS. Responses also indicated almost universal involvement in formal professional development and/or training in the previous year. Among the cameo groups, this was most common among EYPs with QTS (97 per cent) and least common among childminders (88 per cent).

Overall, over two-thirds of EYPs (69 per cent) felt that they had access to the professional development they required all or most of the time. This was more common among EYPs with QTS and owners/managers and less common among novice EYPs and those working with children under two. Staff training events and learning conversations with peers were the most frequently cited activities that resulted in changes to EYPs' practice. This was more common among more senior and experienced EYPs, particularly owners/managers, and less common among novice EYPs and childminders.

Gaining EYPS had also improved EYPs' ability to work with their colleagues, with 87 per cent overall stating that the status had given them greater confidence in developing colleagues' knowledge and skills. This was more common among childminders and EYPs with QTS. In addition, the number of practitioners who felt gaining EYPS had increased their colleagues' readiness to accept their ideas increased from 49 per cent in the first survey to 67 per cent in the second survey. This was reflected in all cameo groups and particularly among middle leaders in private settings.

Overall, just under 50 per cent of EYPs routinely led CPD activities in their settings. This was most common among owners/managers and less common among novice EYPs. Similarly, one-fifth of all EYPs routinely led professional development activities outside their setting. This was slightly more common among owners/managers and less common among novice EYPs and EYPs with QTS.

Over 80 per cent of EYPs overall felt that gaining EYPS had improved their ability to carry out improvements in their settings. This was also reflected in the cameo groups, although novice EYPs were more likely to emphasise impact on their ability to work with parents and carers. Challenges centred on cultural issues, notably colleagues' reluctance to change their practice, and lack of resources. Despite this an overwhelming majority of practitioners (85 per cent) felt that gaining EYPS had improved their professional status. Childminders, EYPs with QTS and novice EYPs felt this most strongly. This suggests that the status has become more embedded in the culture of the Early Years Foundation Stage with both EYPs and staff ascribing some authority to it.

Findings from the case studies add depth to this picture, revealing how EYPs strategically used CPD as a tool to develop capacity in key skills in their settings and the extent to which staff meetings and modelling were used as means of supporting such development.

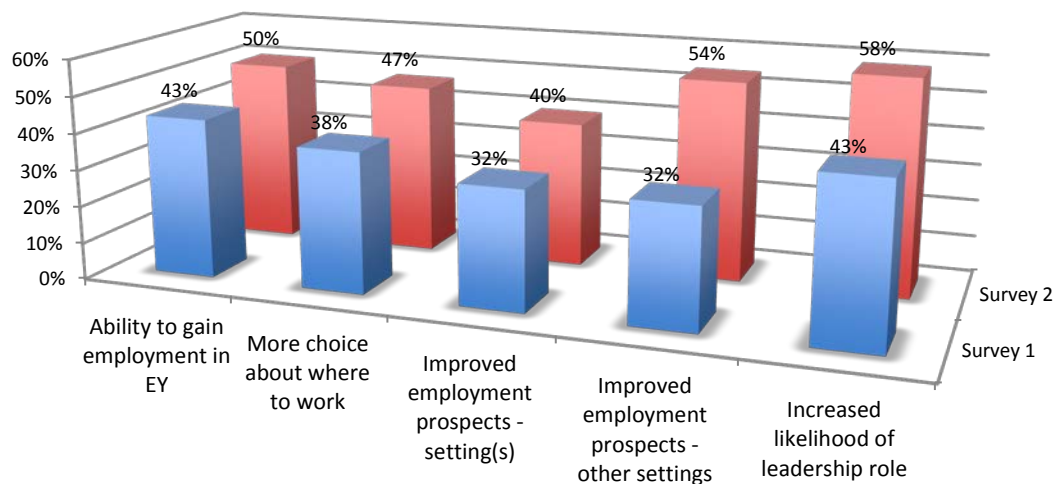
4.1.2 The impact of gaining EYPS on practitioners' career pathway and leadership trajectories

This section briefly outlines the career pathways and trajectories of EYPs, focusing in

particularly on whether gaining EYPS increased the likelihood that they would take on a leadership role. Here the key factor was EYPs' level of seniority. EYPs were initially asked about their motivations for undertaking EYPS in the first place. In the second national survey as a whole, the main reasons given were to increase their knowledge and skills (37 per cent) and enhance their professional status (34 per cent). Of the cameo groups, only middle leaders in LA settings and childminders placed more emphasis on enhancing their professional status than increasing their knowledge and skills. Status was the second most commonly cited reason for most of the other EYP groups, although novice EYPs thought enhancing career development opportunities more important and owners/managers nominated the statutory requirement to have EYPS. Improved pay was the least important motivation for most EYPs.

There was also a widespread belief among the EYPs surveyed that gaining EYPS had improved their career prospects and this was stronger than in the first national survey (see Figure 4). Over three-quarters of EYPs (77 per cent) believed that gaining EYPS had improved their career prospects in some way. Fifty-eight per cent thought that it had increased the likelihood that they would take on a leadership role. This was the most popular prospect among all cameo groups except owners/managers for whom the next most popular aspiration, improving their prospects of employment in other types of early years setting, emerged most strongly.

Figure 4 *EYPS and your career prospects (agree & partially agree responses)*



Overall, nearly half of EYPs (47 per cent) saw themselves continuing in their current role, with the next most popular options being to continue in the early years sector in some form of training and development role (20 per cent) or move into a leadership or management role (15 per cent). This was true of all cameo groups except novice EYPs. Finally, EYPs were asked about the major barriers to career progression in early years. Reflecting the outcomes of the survey as a whole, career issues were cited most frequently among all cameo groups and, within this, low pay was the issue most commonly highlighted across the board supporting and

extending similar findings from previous studies (such as Simpson, 2010; Hevey, 2010; Lumsden, 2012).

Summary: Career

In the second national survey as a whole, the main reasons EYPs gave for undertaking EYPS were to increase their knowledge and skills (37 per cent) and to enhance their professional status (34 per cent). This was also the case among all the cameo groups of EYPs. There was also a widespread belief among the EYPs surveyed that gaining EYPS had improved their career prospects, which was stronger than in the first national survey. Fifty-eight per cent thought that undertaking EYPS had increased the likelihood that they would take on a leadership role. This was also the most popular prospect among all cameo groups except owners/managers who were as a group, already in senior leadership positions.

Nearly half of EYPs overall (47 per cent) saw themselves continuing in their current role, with the next most popular options being to continue in the early years sector in some form of training and development role (20 per cent) or move into a leadership or management role (15 per cent). This was true of most cameo groups with the exception of novice EYPs. Finally, low pay was the most common career barrier both overall and among the cameo groups.

4.2 Impact on settings, practitioners and children

This section of the report focuses on the second of the major research issues that framed the study. It explores EYPs' practice in relation to:

- outcomes for children
- impact on leadership roles in early years settings
- impact on other aspects of early years settings, such as the quality of practice and interactions as well as relationships with parents and other agencies.

Although the survey findings indicated that EYPs felt that gaining EYPS had had a significant impact on their ability to lead and improve the quality of others' practice, survey responses on their own do not provide reliable evidence that gaining EYPS affects EYPs' leadership practices, the quality of settings or outcomes for children. Creating such evidence requires careful data collection and recurrent analysis over time of what EYPs actually do in settings, rather than what they say they do. It also requires repeated objective external measurements of the quality of provision in these settings. This section principally draws on the data collected from the longitudinal case studies that were undertaken in 30 settings between October 2009 and March 2012. Where appropriate, reference is made to the national surveys to provide some indication of how the characteristics of the settings and the nature of the leadership practices found within them related to provision in the sector and the wider experiences of EYPs.

4.2.1 Nature of the settings and EYPs' roles in them

The impact of EYPs as practice leaders occurs in particular early years settings and the nature of each setting affects both the type of leadership practices adopted and the impact EYPs try to achieve. It was therefore important that the cases selected reflected the diversity of the early years sector. The 30 settings selected to be case studies were chosen on the basis of the following criteria:

- type of provision offered
- sector they were based in (voluntary, private, independent, etc.)
- EYPS Pathway undertaken by the EYP
- characteristics including setting size and socio-economic context
- quality of provision as identified by the most recent Ofsted inspection.

The diversity of provision in the sector and the range of individuals with EYPS meant it was not practical to recruit an entirely representative sample of cases. Instead, the selection was made to maximise the likelihood of identifying the range of leadership practices adopted by EYPs and deepen our understanding of the types and scope of impact being achieved.

A detailed breakdown of the case study settings is provided in Appendix 1. However, in terms of setting type, the case studies covered the same range of provision as the survey sample, with the biggest single group (12) offering private daycare, followed by children's centres, voluntary/community settings, two childminders and an independent setting. Almost half of the settings were small² and 14 were rated satisfactory by Ofsted at the beginning of the study. This overrepresentation of satisfactory settings compared to the survey sample was intentional as it enabled concentration on settings in which EYPs were focusing on improvement.

Biographical details of the EYPs

At the start of the study there were 41 EYPs in the case study settings who had achieved EYPS. During the study, four EYPs left their settings and four practitioners either gained EYPS or were recruited having already gained EYPS, resulting in there also being 41 EYPs in place at the end of the study. At the end of the study four settings had two EYPs, two had three EYPs and one had four EYPs.

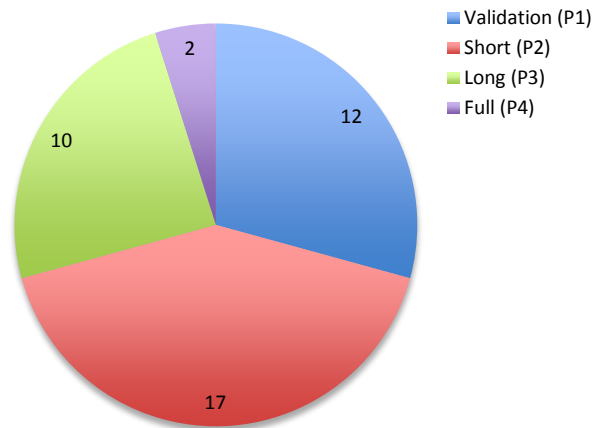
The experience of the EYPs ranged from only two years' experience of working with children under 5 at the beginning of the study to an owner/manager of a private setting with over 30 years' experience. The majority of EYPs were mid or late career professionals: 14 had 8-15 years' experience and 12 had 16-23 years' experience.

The EYPS pathway undertaken was one of the initial selection criteria for the case studies. However, due to the timing of the study, it initially proved difficult to recruit EYPs who had completed the most recently created pathway (Pathway 4: Full). Therefore, when the opportunity arose to revise the case study sample as a result of

² This report follows the GLF evaluation (Mathers *et al*, 2011a) in categorising small settings as those with 0-35 places for children; medium settings have 36-60 places and large settings have 61+ places.

having to replace four settings ahead of the third visit in October-November 2010, four new settings were recruited which increased the representation of Full Pathway EYPs to three (although one subsequently left the setting). Figure 5 provides a breakdown of EYPs by EYPS Pathway.

Figure 5 *Pathways taken by EYPs (March 2012)*



Detailed biographical descriptions of each of the EYPs involved in the case studies are provided in Appendix 1.

4.2.2 EYPs' positions in formal leadership structures and the scope of their leadership responsibilities

The initial visits and interviews with EYPs in the case study settings established the level and scope of the EYPs' leadership activities and how they fitted into the formal leadership structures of the settings in which they worked. It was important to clarify differences in the level and scope of these formal roles as they were likely to affect the EYPs' impact on a setting. Four broad levels were used, taken from the analysis of the first national survey, to categorise the EYPs' positions in the formal leadership structures of their settings:

- senior leader
- middle leader
- practitioner
- consultant.

Senior leader – here the EYP was at or near the top of the leadership/management structure of the setting. EYPs in this group were predominantly owners/managers, but also included deputies and managers of specific aspects of provision such as a crèche. There were three distinct sub-groups in this level of leadership. Those who were individually responsible for all leadership functions in the setting were categorised as **sole** leaders. EYPs who worked on a relatively equal footing with other leaders, whether they had distinct or overlapping leadership responsibilities, were categorised as being in a **co-leadership** role. The final group were those who operated as members of a senior leadership **team**, which took group decisions over the overall direction of the setting and led policy development.

Middle leader – here, EYPs operated at a level between those with overall responsibility for the setting and other practitioners with no formal leadership responsibilities. Their leadership was often restricted to specific aspects, such as curriculum development, or areas, such as a particular room, in a setting. They were not part of a senior leadership team if one existed in the setting. In this category, two sub-groups were identified based on how their leadership responsibilities were allocated.

Delegated middle leaders operated in a leadership/management structure in which they were given specific leadership roles by an individual above them in the hierarchy. Such EYPs' leadership responsibilities were directly related to the role or leadership post they held.

Distributed middle leaders operated in more fluid, or flat, structures. They might be given sole responsibility for an aspect of provision or this might be shared with others. In such cases, the roles EYPs held and the areas they led on were more dynamic, based on individual interests and expertise rather than designated roles. Crucially, such EYPs were involved in deciding on which aspects they would lead or 'follow' others. EYPs in this group included senior early years workers and room leaders.

Practitioner – here the EYP had no formal leadership role in a setting, but this did not mean they were not involved in leading improvements and developing practice. The social network analysis (SNA - see Appendix 3) undertaken during the study revealed a number of EYPs operating as informal leaders in their settings. EYPs included in the 'practitioner' group tended to be those who gained EYPs during the study or who worked in settings with multiple EYPs.

Consultant – the final category included EYPs who were not part of the leadership or management structure of a setting or settings. EYPs in this category had an advisory role in local authority-funded provision, for example in a children's centre working with a number of settings.

Leadership scope

As a number of the EYPs in the study led developments outside of their setting or worked across multiple settings, it was necessary to categorise the scope and location of their leadership activities. Three basic categories emerged:

- internal
- internal/external
- external.

Internal – the EYP's leadership was located in, and limited to, a specific setting.

Internal/external – EYPs were leaders in a specific setting but also adopted leadership roles in other settings or contexts. **Setting-based** external leadership took place in at least one other setting. This might have come about because they operated in a group of private nurseries or were leading in a children's centre nursery while also providing leadership input to associated settings. **Network-based**

external leadership was exhibited in networks, both formal and informal, of other EYPs or practitioners, typically childminders.

External – the EYP operated across a range of settings without a ‘home’ setting. EYPs were categorised as external leaders when they worked across multiple settings and occupied a position in the leadership/management structure of each setting. This distinguished them from **consultants** who were not part of any setting’s leadership/management structure.

Understanding both the level and scope of EYPs’ leadership was important in exploring their impact. This helped direct data collection towards those areas of EYPs’ professional activities which were most likely to show an impact. Analytically they were also important in understanding the issues these EYPs faced in achieving impact, from workload to exerting influence as an ‘outsider’: *‘It is hard to lead when some people are so experienced’* (EYP, LS04³).

Theoretically, these categorisations also contributed to the exploration of early years leadership. They helped in the exploration of the overlap and interconnections between system leadership (Fullan, 2004; Higham *et al*, 2009) where EYPs affected provision in whole localities and networks, organisational leadership in settings and practice leadership of certain aspects of provision. They also highlighted the problem of trying to conceptualise EYP leadership by making simplistic distinctions between strategic and practice-based leadership roles. In the case study settings, EYPs often operated simultaneously at both levels. Some held roles that included elements of both, while others held roles where the emphasis varied at different times and in different contexts:

‘They are all mashed together, although different lead practitioners might lead different areas of work, process of change, what we do, how we do it, reflect on it, come back to it. Sometimes you put things on hold. It’s part of the process of how we work. The team is used to that. So it [their approach to improvement] mostly runs alongside everything else we are doing and sometimes there are crossovers.’ (EYP, LS19)

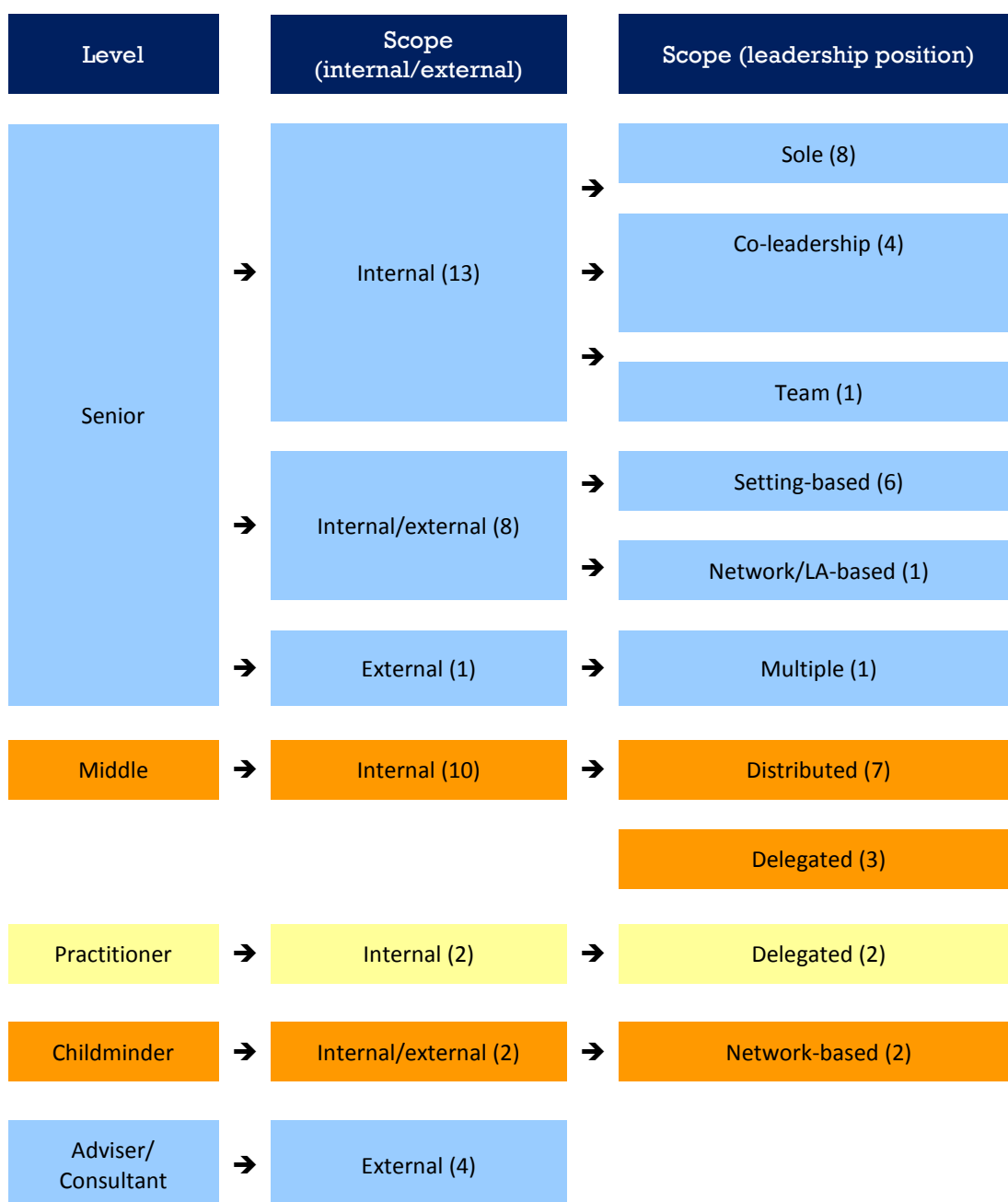
Therefore, an EYP may be acting at a strategic level in her or his main setting but taking a practice leadership role in another setting. Unpicking the demands associated with these different roles not only illuminated the practical realities of EYP leadership, but also highlighted the multiple and sometimes conflicting demands on time and capacity:

‘I wanted to be able to observe members of staff and have that two way dialogue which would help us improve practice as well [...] but time hasn’t allowed me to but we’ll have to drive forward and be more systematic.’ (EYP, LS04)

³ Case study settings are identified with a code beginning ‘LS’ and their characteristics and contexts are outlined in detail in Appendix 1. All names used in this report are pseudonyms.

Figure 6 provides an overview of the level and scope of all the EYPs' leadership responsibilities in the 30 settings.

Figure 6 *Level and scope of EYPs' leadership responsibilities*⁴ (March 2012)



Summary

The case studies reflected findings from both national surveys in that the majority of EYPs worked in private or voluntary/community settings. The career profile of case study EYPs also mirrored the survey sample, with mid-career EYPs with 8-15 years' experience emerging as the largest group, followed by those with 16-23 years'

⁴ See Appendix 2 for full details of EYPs' leadership roles and responsibilities. One EYP who was ill for the duration of the study has been excluded from Figure 6.

experience. EYPs working in settings rated satisfactory by Ofsted were deliberately over-represented in the case studies in order to focus on settings in which EYPs had more opportunities significantly to improve practice.

EYPs in case study settings were categorised into the same formal leadership categories used in the survey, senior and middle leaders and practitioners and two extra categories were added: advisers and childminders. Senior leaders formed the largest group in the second national survey.

The initial analysis of the EYPs' leadership practices revealed them operating at various leadership levels within formal leadership structures. EYPs occupied widely different leadership positions in settings, from being the most senior leader to not being part of the leadership structure at all. The scope of their leadership activities ranged from working across several settings to being in charge of a single room. In comparing their impact on quality, it was therefore important to distinguish between their role as system, organisation or practice leaders. These differences in level and scope became increasingly significant as the distinction between EYPs as practice leaders in their own right and their more indirect role in developing practice leadership as a whole in a setting became an important factor in explaining how they brought about improvement in their settings. The case studies revealed how a number of EYPs made significant impacts on the quality of their settings by developing others' practice leadership. When assessing the impact of an EYP in a setting it is important not only to consider changes brought about directly through their own practices, whether in their formal or informal leadership roles, but also to recognise how these practices affect leadership capacity at all levels, from individuals to teams of practitioners and the setting as a whole.

For the majority of EYPs, gaining EYPS had either consolidated their existing understanding of quality provision or provided additional support in areas such as articulating their view of quality or in leading change or professional development activities. Their engagement with the EYFS helped them develop a common understanding in their settings of the outcomes that were their aims for children. EYPS provided them with an improved understanding of how to achieve key outcomes for children in their settings and how to communicate these to others. Furthermore, the most effective EYPs were able to combine a number of quality frameworks and initiatives into an overall improvement strategy.

4.3 Patterns of improvement across settings

The longitudinal nature of the case studies provided an opportunity to monitor the quality of settings over time and to relate key trends and changes to the leadership practices and activities of EYPs. In order to determine what leadership practices, in which combinations, were effective in improving quality it was necessary to make baseline assessments of quality in settings and then monitor changes in these baseline measures over time in order to make an overall assessment of improvement.

4.3.1 Assessing process quality

The EYP-centric model of quality improvement already outlined in the discussion of the research base (see Figure 1 in Section 2.2.2) was used to make baseline assessments of process quality in the case study settings. This allowed comparisons of quality and improvement to be made across settings by focusing on aspects of all EYPs' practice leadership that could be influential regardless of their position in the leadership structures of their settings. The model divides process quality into the two distinct, but interrelated, areas of pedagogical interactions and framing pedagogies from the REPEY study (Sylva *et al*, 2010), outlined in Section 2. The model was used to assess improvements in quality across the 30 settings and make judgements about the relative effectiveness of different EYP leadership practices.

Observational data was the key to making baseline assessments of quality and judgements about whether settings had improved over time. The PCIT (practitioner-child interaction tool – see Appendix 3) assessed pedagogical interactions, including the frequency of instances of sustained shared thinking, which have been shown to affect the long-term outcomes for children (EPPE: Sylva *et al*, 2004). PCIT observations were made of EYPs' and other practitioners' interactions with children in up to four of the five visits to settings. Observations using the ECERS-R, ECERS-E and ITERS-R rating scales, which contain two sub-scales covering interactions but also a much wider range of framing pedagogical practices, were also undertaken. Baseline observations were undertaken during the first two visits and interim and final assessments were made during visits 3-5.

Changes in framing pedagogies were measured using the ITERS-R, ECERS-R and ECERS-E rating scales. Baseline, interim and final measures of quality were made by combining PCIT and ECERS-R or ITERS-R ratings for each setting (see Section 3. Methodology). The overall picture was that the majority of settings improved over the period of the study. The case study settings finished with a mean final quality score of 61.43, with a standard deviation of 5.30 (see Table 3).

Table 3 *Baseline and final quality scores*

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Baseline quality score	25	38.45	68.61	57.30	7.44
Final quality score	25	51.35	68.31	61.43	5.30

These final quality scores and the improvement made by each setting over the period of the study were plotted to create a quadrant diagram (Figure 7).⁵

⁵ This analysis focuses on 25 of the 30 case study settings. The two childminders (LS03 and LS32) were analysed separately to reflect their different contexts (see Appendix 5) and three further settings (LS12, LS17, LS51) were excluded from the analysis because there was insufficiently robust data to categorise them, owing to either EYPs or settings withdrawing from the study.

Figure 7 *Improvements in quality*

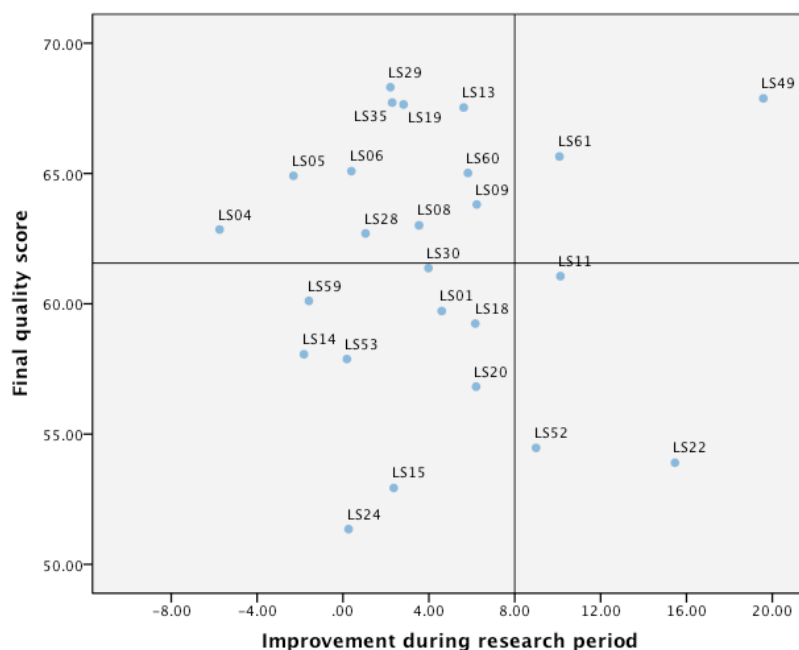


Figure 7 plots the final quality scores for the settings against overall improvement during the study. The crosshairs are created where the horizontal line, which indicates the mean final quality score overall (61.43), meets the vertical line, which indicates the point at which the overall rate of improvement was taken to be educationally significant (i.e. a score of 8.00 or above). The issue of educational significance is discussed in the following section (4.3.2), which also explores the settings' varying improvement trajectories in detail.

4.3.2 How significant were the improvements that were observed?

The small number of cases involved and the lack of either a matched sample of settings with no EYPs or a national data set or equivalent quality data make it problematic to make claims about the statistical significance of the improvement identified. The question of whether these were 'educationally significant' improvements, defined in relation to the extent to which they would be noticed by practitioners, children or parents in the setting, recognised by external inspection, or likely to have an impact on outcomes for children, is similarly complex.

As the study set out to establish objective external measures of improvement, it did not systematically collect and compare views on quality from practitioners, parents and children. One other available external and objective measure was available for comparison: the external inspection rating from Ofsted. Although such inspections cover a much wider range of areas than were considered in the study, overall there was a moderately positive correlation between the study's quality assessments and Ofsted inspection scores.

Firstly, there was a moderately positive correlation (0.30) between the baseline assessments of quality and settings' baseline Ofsted rating at the beginning of the study (see Appendix 4). This was stronger than for other variables tested, such as the

type of setting and its level of deprivation, except for the size of setting for which an almost identical strength of relationship was found. Table 4 indicates the mean baseline quality scores by baseline Ofsted rating group.

Table 4 *Baseline Ofsted rating against mean baseline quality score (25 settings)*

Baseline Ofsted rating	No of settings	Mean baseline quality score
Outstanding	4	61.7
Good	6	61.4
Satisfactory	12	53.4
N/A	3	58.8

Secondly, and more importantly, there was a stronger correlation (0.44) between the final quality scores and the Ofsted ratings for the 15 settings that were re-inspected during the study. Table 5 provides a breakdown of these settings' Ofsted rating at the beginning and the end of the study. (There were no settings rated 'inadequate' in the sample.)

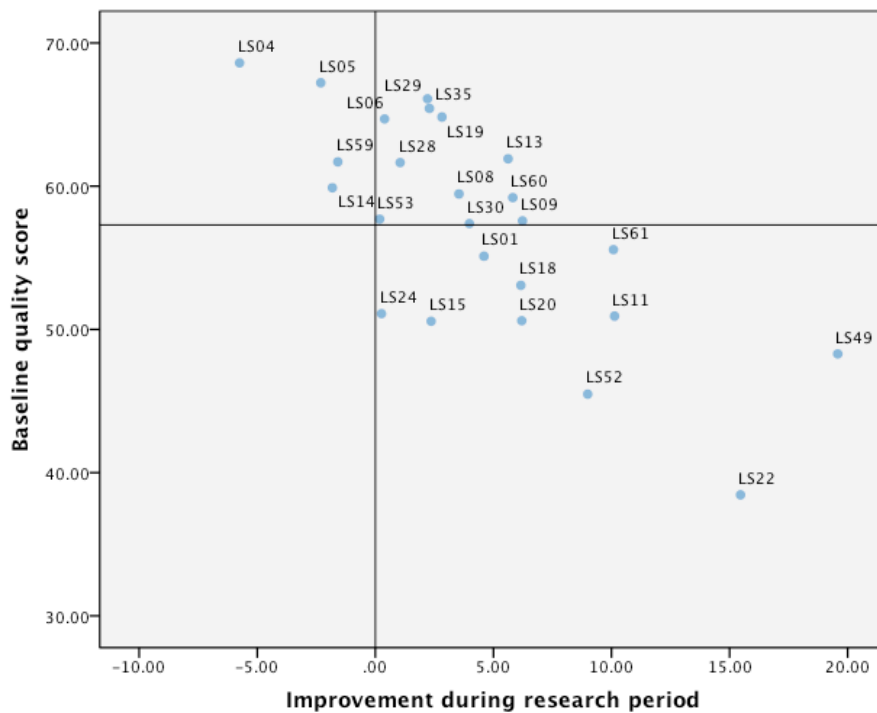
Table 5 *Ofsted gradings for case study settings at the beginning and the end of the study*

Grading 2009	Grading since	No of settings
Outstanding	Outstanding	2
Good	Outstanding	3
Good	Good	2
Satisfactory	Outstanding	2
Satisfactory	Good	6
Outstanding	not inspected since	2
Good	not inspected since	1
Satisfactory	not inspected since	4
N/A (multiple settings or not inspected)		3

Overall, these correlations provide some support for the claim that the improvements in quality measured in some of these settings were educationally significant in that they would have been noticed by external inspection.

The next measure of significance used was to compare the improvements measured in the study with other research studies. The most recent and directly comparable is the GLF evaluation (Mathers *et al*, 2011a, 2011b), as that too looked at EYPs' effect on quality. In the GLF study, an overall improvement of 1 point on the ECERS-R scale was taken as a significant improvement in the quality of provision. Applied to the overall quality scores in this study (which combined ECERS-R, ITERS-R and PCIT scores), this meant that a shift of 8 points (positive or negative) between baseline and final quality scores was regarded as educationally significant (see Figure 7 above). However, to understand the case study settings' variations in improvement trajectories, it is necessary to focus on their starting points, represented by their baseline quality scores (see Figure 8).

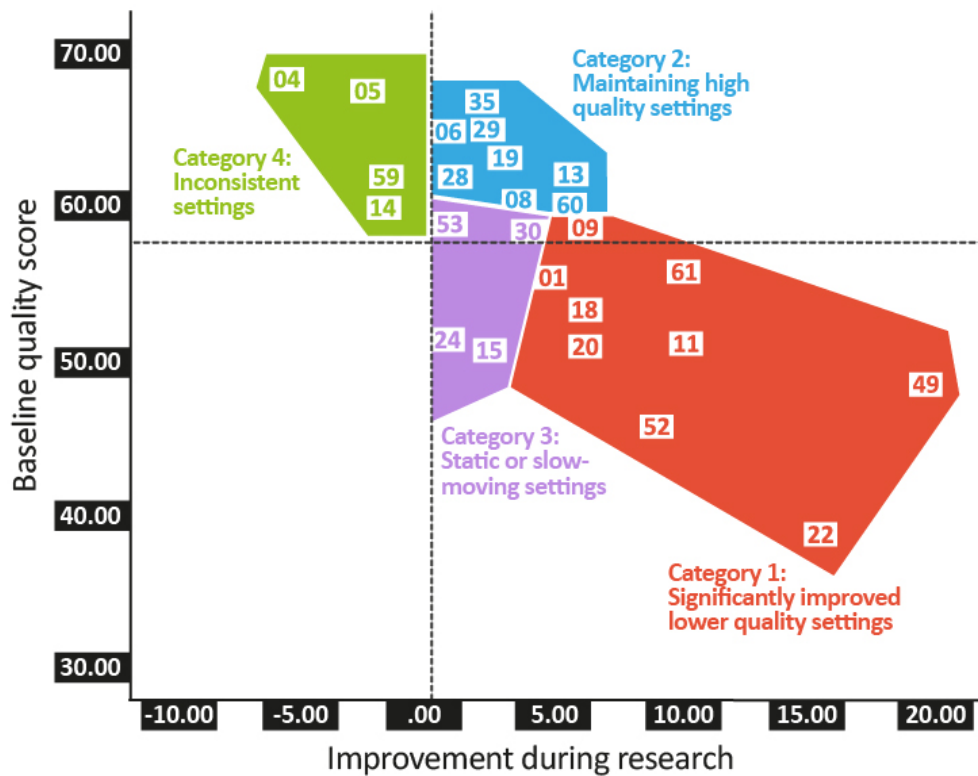
Figure 8 *Settings' baseline quality and improvement over time*



The improvement axis on Figure 8 indicates the extent to which the settings improved against their baseline measure of quality: the zero line indicates no overall improvement and a positive score indicates improvement from the baseline. The baseline quality score axis indicates the original assessment of the quality of the setting: the higher the score, the higher the initial quality of the setting. (The derivation of these scores from the observation data is outlined in detail in Appendix 2). The crosshairs are created where the horizontal line that represents the mean baseline quality score, which was 57.30, crosses the vertical zero improvement line, which indicates no overall improvement in quality over the length of the study.

Comparing these scores with the settings' final quality scores produced four key improvement categories which are mapped on the quadrant diagram in Figure 9.

Figure 9 Case study settings' improvement groupings



These four improvement categories were defined as:

Category 1 *Significantly improved lower quality settings*

Here the settings were originally below average but during the study they achieved educationally significant improvements in terms of either framing pedagogies or pedagogical interactions (and sometimes both). (LS01 LS09 LS11 LS18 LS20 LS22 LS49 LS52 LS61)

Category 2 *Maintaining high quality settings*

This group contained settings which were initially above average in terms of baseline quality and maintained their position during the study. (LS06 LS08 LS13 LS19 LS28 LS29 LS35 LS60)

Category 3 *Static or slow-moving settings*

These were settings with below average or average levels of quality initially which appeared to be making slow progress i.e. below the average final quality score and with below average improvement. (LS15 LS24 LS30 LS53)

Category 4 *Inconsistent settings*

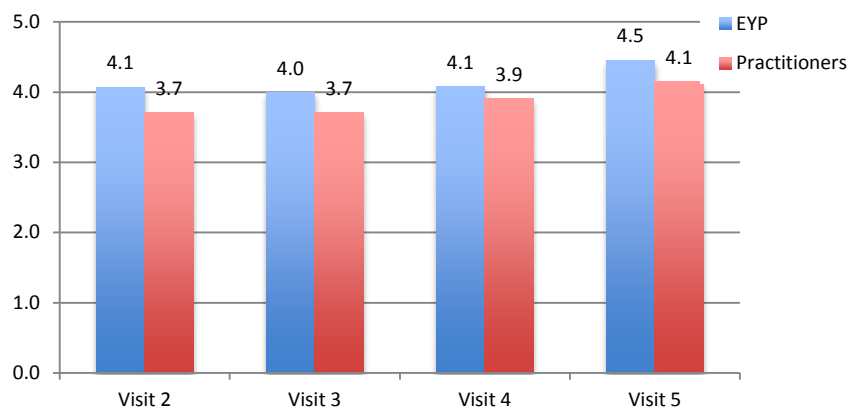
These settings initially exhibited above average quality but had negative improvement scores at the end of the study. (LS04 LS05 LS14 LS59)

As these categories indicate, the degree of quality improvement in quality scores varied considerably among settings, with those initially baselined at the lower end of the quality scale and generally rated by Ofsted as satisfactory showing the greatest levels of improvement. This was not surprising considering that those settings at the higher end of the scale were all rated by Ofsted as outstanding and therefore faced greater challenges in trying to improve their process quality scores. The four inconsistent settings, which showed a decline in quality over the period of the study, were all baselined at the middle to high end of the quality spectrum.

4.3.3 What part did changes in pedagogical interactions play in the overall pattern of improvement?

By aggregating the observational data across the 25 case study settings with comparable data, it was possible to identify some of the trends that contributed to the overall patterns of improvements and the categories. Taking the PCIT data, which measured the quality of pedagogical interactions, and comparing the PCIT quality scores of EYPs with those of other practitioners observed in their settings for each visit produced the following outcomes (Figure 10).

Figure 10 Overall trends in EYP and Practitioner PCIT quality scores (sensitivity, autonomy and cognitive challenge combined)



EYPs' scores for the quality of their interactions remained broadly constant across the study before increasing a little in the final visit, while the quality of other practitioners' interactions improved slowly but steadily after visit 3. The extent to which this improvement is due to the work of the EYPs is discussed in the following section in which different combinations of EYPs' leadership practices are related to improvements in practitioners' interactions.

Breaking the PCIT quality scores into their constituent elements gives a more refined analysis of which aspects of practitioners' interactions were improving over time.

Figure 11 Trends in EYPs' and practitioners' PCIT scores (sub-scales)

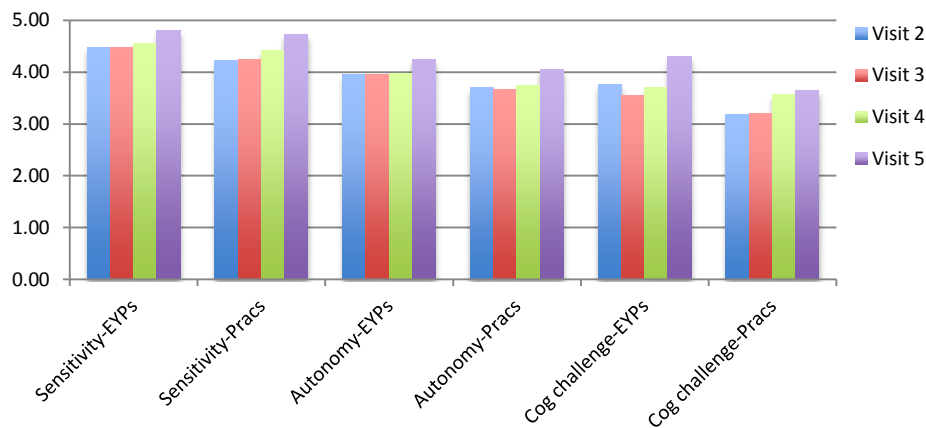
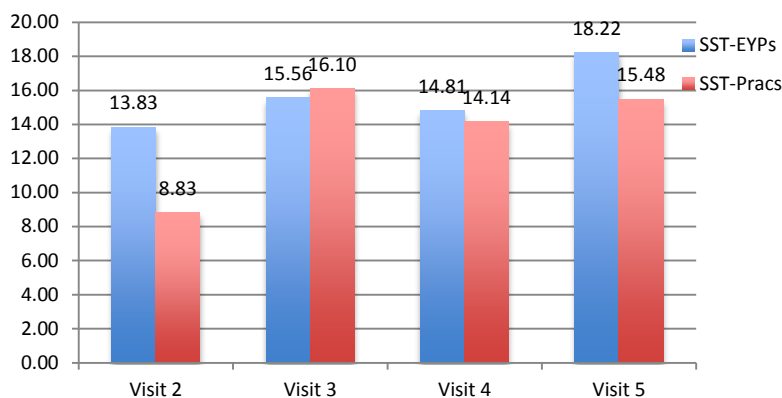


Figure 11 shows that the overall improvement trend in the quality of interactions for both EYPs and non-EYPs across the four visits was found in three of the four main aspects of interaction between practitioners and children the PCIT measured; sensitivity, autonomy and cognitive challenge (see Appendix 2 for detailed descriptions of these categories). Although the overall PCIT gap between EYPs and non-EYP practitioners remained constant, Figure 11 indicates that it narrowed slightly for the sensitivity with which the practitioner interacted with child (0.3 to 0.1) and for the degree of autonomy they gave them (0.3 to 0.2). However, the large initial gap between EYPs and practitioners in the key area of the degree of cognitive challenge they exhibited in their interactions actually increased slightly (from 0.6 to 0.7).

The final area the PCIT observations measured was the frequency of incidents of sustained shared thinking (SST). Figure 12 reveals a closing gap between EYPs and practitioners, although the fact that varying proportions of EYPs and non-EYPs were observed during different visits may explain some of the variance. Correlational analysis suggested a relationship between both the baseline levels of SST observed and baseline quality scores and the final levels of SST and the final quality score (see Appendix 4 for details).

Figure 12 Mean SST by visit (EYPs and practitioners)



4.3.4 What part did changes in framing pedagogies play in the overall pattern of improvement?

Previous research, such as the EPPE study (Sylva *et al*, 2004), demonstrated a strong correlation between the type of activity children are engaged in and the frequency with which sustained shared thinking (SST) is observed. Furthermore, small group and one-to-one interactions between practitioners and children were found to be more likely to generate incidents of SST than larger group sessions, which suggests a link between pedagogical interactions and framing pedagogies.

In the longitudinal study, both ECERS-R and ITERS-R data were used to make assessments of the quality of the pedagogical framing in each setting. ITERS and ECERS scales were used depending on whether EYPs' improvement priorities focused on children aged under 3, in which case the ITERS scales were used, or over 3, in which cases the ECERS scales were used. Settings observed using both measures showed gradual improvement during the study. The overall ratings were initially relatively high in comparison with other research (such as the GLF evaluation) possibly because of the proportion of settings classified by Ofsted as outstanding and also due to the increased frequency with which these scales are used by practitioners. In this study, seven of the case study settings used ECERS and ITERS regularly and eight used them occasionally. Such initially high overall ratings meant that only a limited range of improvement could be observed (see Figures 13 and 14).

Figure 13 *ITERS-R average baseline and final scores*

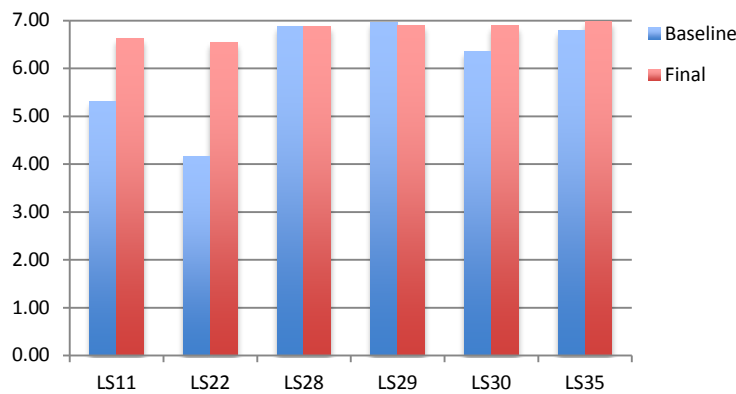
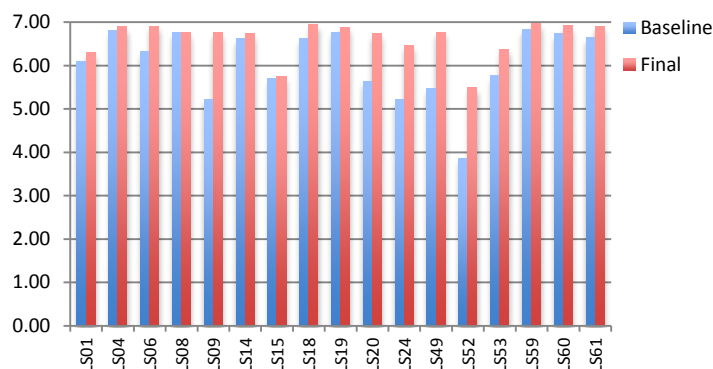


Figure 14 *ECERS-R average baseline and final scores*



The EPPE and REPEY studies (Sylva *et al*, 2004; Sylva *et al*, 2010) identified aspects of the learning environment that affected long term outcomes for children. These included higher quality scores on aspects of ECERS-E and ECERS-R, combined with staff seeing social and cognitive development as related. These environmental factors were linked to strong, well-qualified leadership offering focused support to staff which, alongside low staff turnover, combined to create a balance of adult and child-led activities, framed by the use of open-ended questions and SST (Sylva *et al*, 2010). The GLF evaluation suggested that, while there was a significant correlation between EYPS and improvements on the literacy, diversity and science ECERS-E sub-scales, this was not the case with mathematics (Mathers *et al*, 2011a; 2011b). It has been suggested that the focus on interactions in the EYPS programmes might account for this improvement and that mathematics requires more subject-specific input to change, although this has not been supported by the relatively high improvements in ECERS-E mathematics outcomes seen in this study (see Figure 15 below).

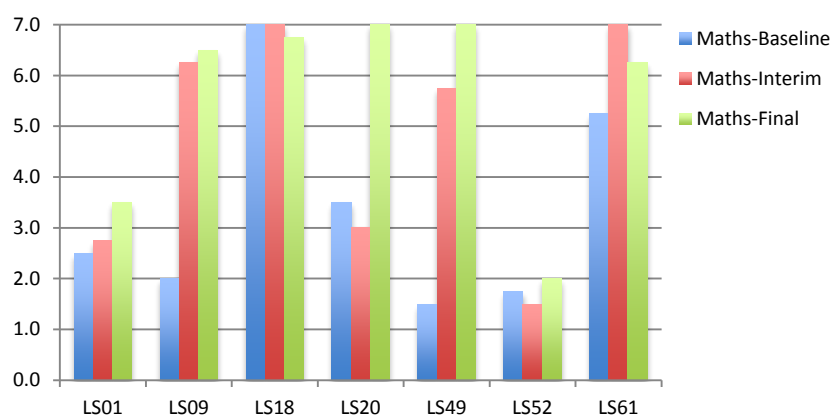
In light of this, analysis of some of the variations in individual sub-scales was undertaken to explore those aspects of the environmental framing pedagogies that might have supported an increase in the quality of pedagogical interactions.

For example, outcomes on the programme structure scale common to the ITERS-R and ECERS-R scales were analysed to determine the extent to which the settings had made improvements in how they organised provision. Programme structure incorporates the day's schedule; approach to free play; use of group play activities and provisions for children with disabilities in the room and/or setting. In terms of the categories identified in section 4.3.2 the ITERS-R observations for programme structure revealed consistently high scores in category 2 settings and improving scores in the two category 1 settings (no category 3 or 4 settings were observed using ITERS-R). The average level of improvement for programme structure from baseline to final observation (0.4) was lower than for listening and talking (1.1), which have been associated in previous research with improved outcomes for children. This was educationally significant here. However, the small size of the ITERS-R sample means that large improvements in one or two settings on a sub-scale (for example in interaction) had a disproportionate effect on average improvement. The larger sample of case study settings where ECERS-R observations had been undertaken offers a clearer picture. Here, averaged overall improvement from baseline to final observation were similar to the aggregated ITERS-R scores (0.5 on a scale of 1-7). Settings in categories 2 (maintained high quality) and 4 (inconsistent settings) consistently scored highly in programme structure, with improvements occurring in all but one of the category 1 settings and all of the category 3 settings.

Three other areas of pedagogical framing were also analysed in more depth, those identified by the EPPE study as being associated with positive long term outcomes for children. These were literacy, mathematics and diversity, assessed using the ECERS-E ratings scale in settings where EYPs were predominantly focusing on the older age groups. Here averaged improvements were a little higher overall, with settings scoring 1.2 for mathematics and 0.9 for both literacy and diversity. (It should be remembered that an increase of 1.0 or more was regarded as statistically

significant in the GLF evaluation (Mathers *et al*, 2011a). The highest improvements in mathematics were again seen in category 1 settings where five of the seven settings illustrated in Figure 15⁶ improved by an educationally significant margin, one declined slightly from a high starting point (LS18) and one remained very low (LS52).

Figure 15 ECERS-E mathematics scores for category 1 settings



In comparison, category 2 settings for which there were ECERS-E mathematics data improved less (but starting from a higher base) in all but one case. Two of the three category 4 settings with mathematics data declined slightly from a high starting point - the other improved slightly - and no clear pattern was detectable among the category 3 settings. This pattern was similar in relation to both literacy and diversity although category 3 settings also improved in respect of literacy, suggesting that triangulating the sub-sample of settings where ECERS-R observations had been undertaken with data from the ECERS-E observations confirmed the category distinctions, using the quality scores derived from PCIT and ECERS-R observations.

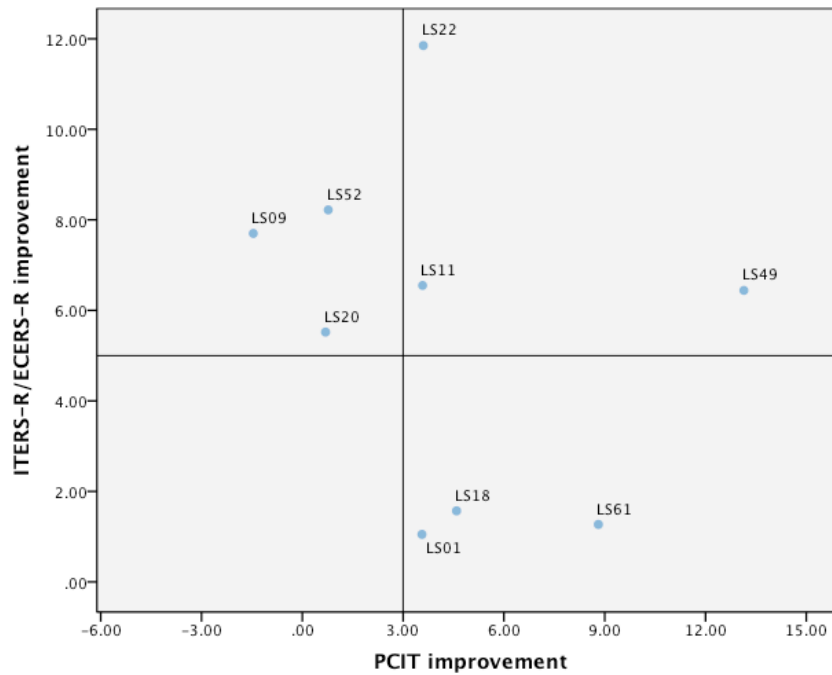
4.3.5 The relative importance of improvements to pedagogical interactions and framing

To unpick the relative importance and interactions between these two aspects of process quality, all the settings in category 1 which had shown educationally significant improvements in quality from below average starting points were re-analysed in more depth.

Figure 16 plots all the category 1 settings' improvements in their pedagogical framing, as measured by ITERS-R/ECERS-R against their overall improvement in pedagogical interactions (as measured by PCIT). Here the crosswires were created where the horizontal line, which marks an educationally significant improvement in pedagogical framing (an increase of 5 points or more from baseline to final ECERS-R or ITERS-R observation which is equivalent to the 1 point increase regarded as significant in the GLF evaluation), meets the vertical line, which marks an educationally significant improvement in pedagogical interactions (where an improvement of 3 points in the aggregated PCIT data was regarded as significant).

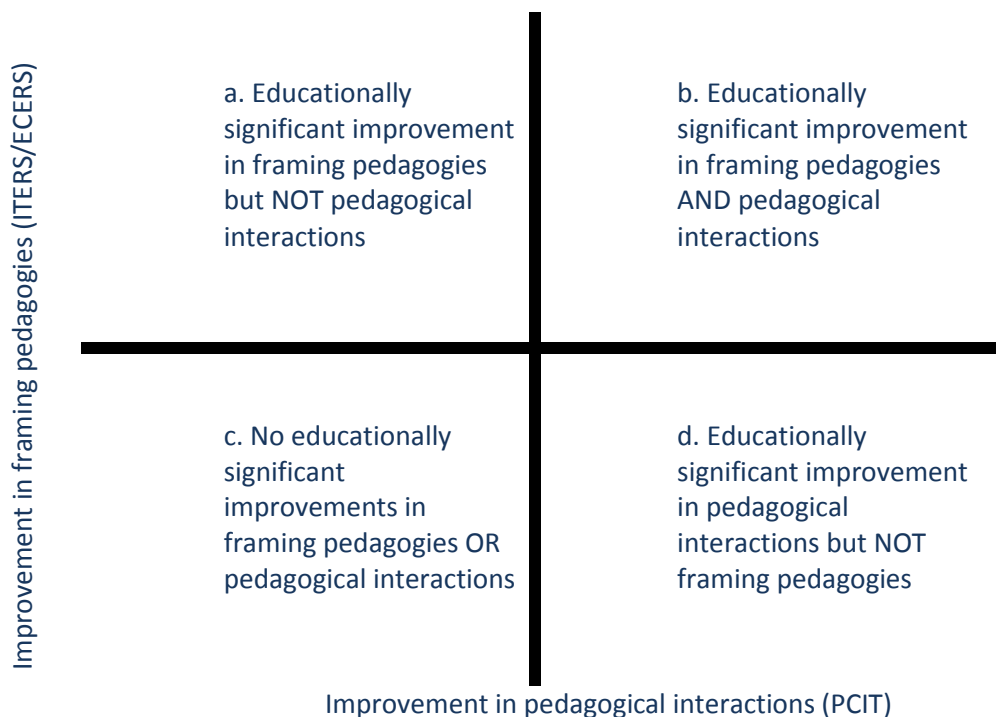
⁶ The other two settings in category 1 (LS11 and LS22) were assessed using the ITERS-R rating scale only.

Figure 16 *Category 1 settings' improvement on framing pedagogies (ITERS-R/ECERS-R) and pedagogical interactions (PCIT)*



This quadrant diagram therefore creates four sub-categories of settings that have shown educationally significant improvement over the life of the study.

Figure 17 *Improvement sub-categories*



The bottom left quadrant on Figure 16 is empty, indicating that all of the category 1 settings made educationally significant improvements in relation to either framing pedagogies or interactions. The top right quadrant indicates that three settings (LS11, LS22 and LS49) made educationally significant improvements in both areas.

The other six settings had made educationally significant improvements in either their framing or their interactions. The significance of this analysis is that the settings with the highest overall levels of improvement achieved this by improving both aspects of process quality and, for this reason, two of them are described in detail in the extended vignettes later in this report .

Similar analyses were made of other categories which demonstrated some interesting improvement patterns. In category 2 settings, which were already of high quality, gains tended to arise from improvements to pedagogical interactions rather than to framing pedagogies. Seven of these eight settings showed improvements on PCIT scores, three of which were educationally significant, suggesting that they maintained and increased already high improvement levels through focusing on interactions with children. Those that showed improvements in their framing pedagogies tended to be in areas, such as mathematics, which have been shown to have a positive impact on outcomes for children. This was further supported by the fact that the category 3 and 4 settings showed relatively small improvements in framing pedagogies in terms of ECERS-R and ITERS-R scores and, in the case of all but two settings which showed modest increases, declining scores in terms of interactions on the PCIT. Only one setting from these categories showed an educationally significant improvement (LS24 on ECERS-R) and this was matched by an almost corresponding decrease on the PCIT score.

Summary: patterns of improvement

The overall picture was that the majority of settings improved over the period of the study. There was a positive correlation between the baseline assessments of quality and settings' original Ofsted rating at the beginning of the study and between the final assessments of quality and the re-inspected settings' Ofsted ratings.

Four categories were constructed based on overall rates of improvement:

1. significantly improved lower quality settings
2. maintaining high quality settings
3. static or slow moving
4. inconsistent settings.

All nine settings in category 1 made educationally significant improvements in their process quality. These improvements were mainly due to EYPs focusing on pedagogical framing.

Over time, the gap in quality between EYPs' and other practitioners' pedagogical interactions narrowed. The gap between EYP and non-EYP interactions narrowed in the areas of sensitivity and autonomy. However, the gap between EYPs and practitioners in terms of the degree of cognitive challenge observed in the PCITs remained constant, demonstrating EYPs' difficulty in improving practice in this respect.

The trend in the ECERS-R and ITERS-R data was one of gradual improvement during the study. The subscales that contributed most to the improvement in ITERS-R were

for interactions and listening and talking and, for ECERS-R, in programme structure and interaction.

The settings that improved most were those where EYPs focused on improving both aspects of process quality: pedagogical interactions and pedagogical framing. The settings that improved in process quality also improved in those areas and in practices associated with positive long-term outcomes for children in the ECERS-E scale: literacy, mathematics and diversity all showed improvements as did the frequency with which practitioners engaged in sustained shared thinking with children. The highest improvements in mathematics were seen in category 1 settings: five of the seven settings for which there was data improved significantly.

4.3.6 Effective EYP practice leadership that results in improvements in quality

The four quality improvement categories into which all the settings were placed provided the starting point for analysing EYPs practice leadership. The analysis focused upon similarities and differences in EYPs' improvement practices within and across the four categories. These practices were analysed using constructs drawn from Siraj-Blatchford and Manni's (2006) research on effective leadership in the early years, (see 3. Methodology). As the EYPs occupied varying leadership positions in settings their practice leadership was explored at the following three broad levels, derived from research into professional learning (Hannah and Lester, 2009).

- **Micro:** here the EYP is focused on colleagues' individual learning and practice and on influencing their beliefs and values.
- **Meso:** here the EYP is focused on groups, teams and social networks, on improving their exchanges of knowledge and practice and affecting group norms and interactions.
- **Macro:** here the emphasis is on sanctioning and institutionalising knowledge of leadership, management and CPD structures. This level also included looking outwards for new and emergent practices and knowledge.

Social network analysis (SNA) was used to map the flow of relationships between EYPs and their colleagues and build up a picture of the professional community in each setting (see Appendix 2). By repeating the SNA it was possible, in some instances, to map the development of this community and the EYP's position in it. This allowed for a series of questions to be asked about the extent to which the EYPs had developed a viable professional community in their settings and the extent of the support that it offered to individuals. In terms of building a sustainable community, it also helped indicate how far they had managed to increase the number of practitioners prepared to act as 'knowledge catalysts' (Hannah and Lester, 2009) and create trusting, open, safe spaces in which practitioners felt able to take risks and modify their practice.

The overall development of practice leadership

Category 1 settings were the starting point for the analyses, as they had improved quality significantly. A detailed analysis of their improvement profiles had already created the four sub-categories of improvement illustrated in Figure 17. Analysing the EYPs' practice leadership activities identified two groups of practice leaders. In

the first group were those who had improved their quality ratings, primarily through the EYPs focusing on aspects of the framing pedagogy in the setting (LS01, LS09, LS11, LS20, LS22, LS52). In the second group were those who had shown the ability to make the most significant improvements in pedagogical interactions while improving pedagogical framing (LS18, LS49, LS61). The settings in this second group had achieved some of the most educationally significant improvements in quality in the study.

There were substantial overlaps between the two groups in terms of the leadership practices exhibited. With regard to the overarching categories of effective leadership characteristics and behaviour identified by Siraj-Blatchford and Manni (2006) there were more similarities than differences. What emerged from analysis was that it was more important to understand how they carried out these practices and which characteristics they emphasised in order to clarify the relationship between their practice leadership and their improvement trajectories. Analysis suggested that these differences in approach and emphasis arose less from variations in individual EYP's development as practice leaders and more from the influence of contextual factors (Spillane *et al*, 2004) that shaped the kinds of practice leadership that was possible, or required, in their settings. These key contextual factors ranged from the existing quality of provision, the resources to hand and a setting's size and nature to the role the EYP occupied in the setting and the extent to which they could engage in leadership rather than management or administration.

The main factor that shaped EYPs' leadership was the overall capacity for practice leadership in the setting and the maturity of this capacity. This capacity encompassed key factors: the extent to which EYPs had developed an understanding of what constituted high quality interactions and framing pedagogies in the setting; the degree to which improvement processes had become embedded and the establishment of an ethos and culture which supported learning, innovation and risk taking. If these understandings and responsibility for improvement processes had not spread out beyond the EYP then any gains in quality were fragile and potentially temporary.

'The changes are embedded, but if I left it wouldn't continue so this is where the delegation is needed. If I wasn't on the ball, it would stop. But this is probably down to me not delegating so I need to work on this. It's an important role because if I wasn't doing it, it wouldn't continue because the people in the rooms do also look after the children so that's their main focus. Without me looking at the learning, it would go back to that.' (EYP, LS13)

The two overall approaches to practice leadership identified in category one settings resulted from differences in overall practice leadership capacity and were termed:

(a) emergent/restricted in that practice leadership was not well developed and was restricted in scope in these settings

(b) established/comprehensive in that a broader notion of practice leadership had become established, even though it may still have been restricted to an individual EYP.

The analysis then moved on to those settings that had maintained high quality throughout the study. Settings in this group began the study with high quality provision and none showed significant gains in their approach to pedagogical framing, largely because their baseline scores were so high. Where educationally significant improvements did occur it was in pedagogical interactions, particularly in the area of cognitive challenge. What distinguished practice leadership in this category, which was evident in a number of settings (LS06, LS08, LS19, LS29), was the extent to which practice leadership had been integrated into formalised leadership structures and to which a commitment to improving the quality of pedagogical framing and interactions had been embedded into the culture and ethos of settings. This recognition led to the development of a third overall approach termed:

(c) formalised/embedded to indicate that practice leadership was recognised as a specific aspect of leadership in the setting and that substantial numbers of other practitioners had become engaged in improving process quality.

EYPs defined their approach to practice leadership primarily in terms of improving the quality of pedagogical processes in their settings. This meant they predominantly focused on interactions between staff and children, planning, and the quality of the learning environment and were heavily involved in providing support for other staff. In practice, EYPs were, therefore, engaged in a form of pedagogical leadership in that they led improvements in the quality of pedagogical processes in settings and set out to inform and enhance the pedagogical practices of others. In those settings that made educationally significant improvements to the quality of their processes or sustained high levels of quality provision throughout the research, EYPs focused on four key outcomes. These were:

- strategically assessing the quality of current provision and relating this to an overall vision of quality
- establishing a common understanding of improvements that were required and developing norms around quality
- developing, leading and evaluating professional development activities that focused on improving process quality
- enhancing practice leadership capacity in the setting.

The following section looks in detail at the three approaches, which are indicative of settings being at different stages of practice leadership development, by concentrating on these four outcomes. For each approach at least two settings are used to illustrate how practice leadership was enacted and to highlight the contextual factors that affected its development in the setting.

4.3.7 An emergent/restricted approach to practice leadership (LS01, LS09, LS11, LS20, LS22, LS52)

These settings were characterised by significant improvements to their pedagogical framing but much lower levels of improvement to the quality of their pedagogical interactions.

Strategically assessing the quality of the current provision and relating this to an overall vision of quality.

In these settings there was less evidence of strategic assessments of quality that were based on a coherent overall vision of process quality. They tended to use quite instrumental measures of quality based on outcomes for children drawn from external frameworks, for example by assessing children's progress through observations based around the EYFS framework: *'We went through one area at each staff meeting and highlighted where we were and looked at what we could do to be better'* (EYP, LS11). There were relatively few examples of systematic assessment of the quality of practitioners' interactions with children or of the environment and pedagogical framing. None of these settings made regular use of a research-based tool such as ECERS or ITERS to assess the quality of provision. In addition, the link between assessments of children and developing the curriculum or pedagogical interactions on offer was limited or in its early stages of development and was often a focus of change during the period of research.

'There is an evaluation that goes up on the wall every week of the children's learning. Although it's focused on the children and what they are learning, it actually reflects back on the key worker and the staff who have done that piece of work or were involved in that activity.' (EYP, LS20)

Overall, the focus on pedagogical framing appeared to be based on the need to get this in place before moving on to the more challenging area of interactions: *'At the moment [interaction] is not a priority but it is something I need to keep monitoring'*. (EYP, LS01)

In these types of setting if children's perspective work was developed it tended to be seen primarily in terms of expanding children's choices and access to resources and activities. EYPs were limited in their approaches to getting children to articulate their perspectives, tending not to have a developmental sequence of approaches and techniques.

Some of these settings were starting from quite low bases in terms of practitioner-child interactions and had gone through quite lengthy change processes to influence them:

'[Interaction] was flagged up first by Ofsted, which was 4 years ago, so that was something that we needed to improve on. [...] Originally it was getting the staff to be with the children at that level, moving around more and being aware of the children and where they were. And now the next bit, which has probably taken over a year, is to improve the quality of adults' interactions with the children, so we have got more quantity now, they are interacting more with the children, but now it is the quality issue of how they are interacting [that we are focusing on].' (EYP, LS20)

By the end of the study, many of these settings were looking at how to improve and assess the quality of their interactions with children. In one case, the EYP had a strong vision for the setting she owned but her focus was on the development of a

caring ethos within the centre, which she saw as an essential precursor to learning: *'They would never learn anything if they didn't have the social and emotional things in place to start with'* (LS11). This appeared to have prevented her from focusing on pedagogical framing and interactions.

However, the lack of a clearly articulated vision of process quality was also determined by contextual factors. For example, the process of developing a clear vision could be undermined by pressure to meet external improvement targets:

'All of the areas I identified are linked to the centre's improvement plan and are also linked to my performance management targets. The centre is also aware of the need to find ways to record and show the impact that the centre has on the local community.' (EYP, LS20)

Establishing a common understanding of improvements that were required and developing norms around quality

In category 1 settings, which were often initially working at relatively low levels of process quality, communication about what needed to be changed was often very direct and challenging:

'I would start out by observing practice and pinpointing things that are shouting out to me. Then [...] we would have a team meeting, I would air my views and what I'm thinking about doing and why, and get some feedback from the staff.' (EYP, LS09)

EYPs appeared to see this as a necessary stage in improving quality, which needed to be improved to a certain level, before the understanding of staff was sufficient for them to be given more autonomy:

'It was sort of quite directive to begin with, keeping it quite simple and quite specific about things. Now we are trying to get it so that it is less specific but more suggestive so that staff hopefully will then take on the suggestions and develop it themselves.' (EYP, LS20)

However, communicating what needed to be changed was not simply a case of articulating the problems and ways forward. At a micro level, especially with staff who might not have witnessed high quality provision before, EYPs recognised the need to model the interactions and behaviours they wanted to see, although a number struggled to find the time to do so.

'Her absence from the nursery restricts opportunities to model practice and offer support and guidance to staff in developing, implementing and reviewing change. This results in changes not being sustained; a point the EYP recognised during visit 2 where she expressed frustration at not being able to embed new initiatives and approaches.' (LS01 case report)

This was also reflected in another setting, where substantial improvements in elements of the framing pedagogies between visits 2 and 3 were initially reversed as

a consequence of the EYP leaving the setting before they had been embedded into practice.

'The interaction and developing relationships with children day-to-day needed to be addressed. But rather than that [being] something that just happened and then tailed off again, there needed to be some kind of system behind it that kept the momentum going and kept it building all the time.' (EYP, LS52)

However, the EYP continued to act as an adviser to the setting and, by the end of the study, there was evidence that the 'dip' in process quality had itself been reversed.

Developing, leading and evaluating professional development activities and improvement initiatives that focused on process quality

There was a strong practical commitment to providing ongoing training and professional development for staff. In keeping with their direct approach to communicating what needed to be improved, there was widespread reliance on traditional CPD approaches, generally explicit training based on a deficit model designed to fill gaps in practitioners' knowledge: *'We sit down in our staff meetings and talk and I also do presentations'* (EYP, LS22). A 'cascade' approach to sharing expertise was frequently used, with EYPs generally sharing the knowledge and insights they had developed from CPD or from their engagement with networks of EYPs. However, in some settings, EYPs struggled to provide in-house CPD because of other commitments and were reliant on the availability of free external training and the goodwill of staff to invest in their own development:

'If it was a course they wanted to do then that's fine; I can't always pay for it [...], if it were a course that needed to be paid for, then if it was in their own time at night, that's fine. If it was one that was through the day and you had to pay for it, then they would have to do that in their own time like a day's holiday or something.' (EYP, LS11)

EYPs in these settings did also address issues such as the development of sustained shared thinking and pedagogical framing issues such as the balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities. However, in contrast with settings in the other categories they tended not to be the subject of sustained interventions or to use high involvement development activities such as mentoring or observation and feedback.

'During visit 1, the EYP disseminated information relating to practice from the document 'Learning, Playing and Interacting' where she encouraged staff to spend a team session focusing on discussing the balance of adult-child interaction and exchanging ideas and thoughts relating to this issue. However this has yet to be taken further.' (LS01 case report)

Enhancing the practice leadership capacity in the setting

Although the majority of EYPs in these settings were senior managers, for many, practice leadership was still an emergent element of their role. The area in which gaining EYPS had had the biggest impact for them was in their approach to

leadership. EYPs had developed their understanding of the need to involve staff more widely in the process of change by being invitational and supportive of risk-taking,

'... [h]opefully by allowing people to feel that they can contribute, although sometimes their contribution is not the thing that we want and by giving them a say, opportunities to discuss where the vision is coming from. If they come up with an idea, you will allow them to carry on with it.' (EYP, LS20)

The ability of EYPs to provide or influence practice leadership at all levels from the macro to the micro depended on the nature of the settings, particularly their size and the EYPs' role in them. Thus, the manager of a small private nursery could influence practitioners' interactions with children because she was able to work hands on with children for up to four days a week and had a settled staff of seven (LS11). This was more challenging for a children's centre teacher working across two sites who was responsible for curriculum, planning and assessment but whose role was becoming more strategic (LS01). In another setting, in which the EYP described her role as *'the link between management and practice'* (LS52), the EYP emphasised the importance of challenging staff norms and expectations through encouraging them to reflect and try new approaches:

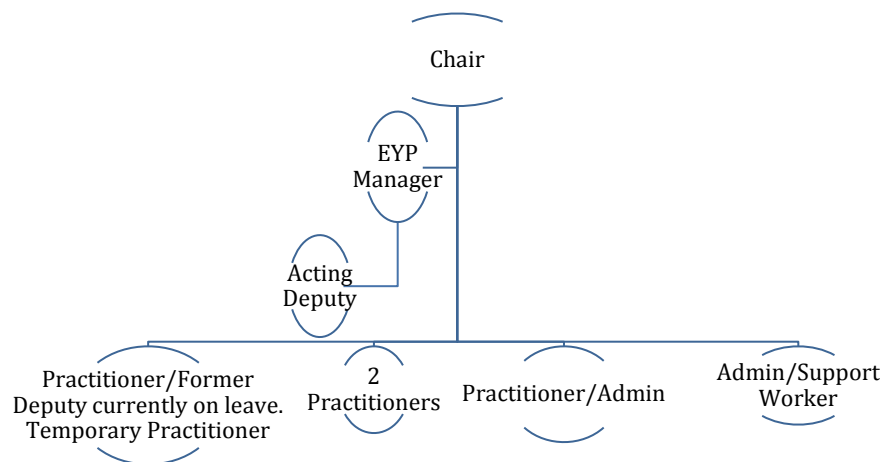
'It's really difficult because you don't want to sort of sit them down and say "I'm going to tell you how to talk to children". That's when the modelling issue came up again because it's like, "I'm doing this but are they actually paying any attention?" I feel that the staff I've got now are more receptive.' (EYP, LS52)

Overall, many EYPs in these settings had not established practice leadership beyond themselves and therefore found it difficult to work with the intensity required to bring about changes to all aspects of their settings' process quality. This is exemplified in detail in the following extended vignette which depicts the challenges faced by the 'lone', emergent practice leader in her attempts to improve provision in a small voluntary nursery in London.

Vignette 1: The lone practice leader (LS22)

LS22 was a voluntary setting in the lower floor of a community centre in a deprived area in London. Established in 2009 by the EYP and colleagues, it had 17 children on roll, mainly boys of African-Caribbean descent aged over 3. The majority of the children spent 10 hours a day in the setting which had a major refurbishment during the study. The fairly stable staff team had nine members, mostly from black or minority ethnic backgrounds including the EYP/manager (see Figure 18). Clara was the only EYP in the setting, having gained EYPS in 2007 through the Validation pathway. She had extensive experience, having worked for over 21 years with children under 5 and had been in post since September 2009.

Figure 18 *Formal leadership structure: LS22 (March 2012)*



Approach to practice leadership

Clara's approach to leading practice was initially fairly directive, as she had been explicitly recruited to improve provision quickly.

'I am the core of the setting. That is why they employed me because I have an EYP status. It's hard, very hard, but [...] we are now a united team and we work together for the good of the setting.'

Her confidence was founded on her understanding of good practice: *'When [staff] realise that the way they are doing it is outdated and it isn't working effectively, then they will switch over to what [I am doing]'*. Her practice leadership was also supported by an emphasis on both in-house and external CPD.

'We had a staff meeting and I talked about the development of the environment and I did a whole PowerPoint presentation to the staff [and] helped them to do some little exercises and activities within that. [...] Also I send my staff on various courses to implement and to ensure that the curriculum plan is stable and is firmly embedded in the whole nursery for the children's welfare.'

Focus for improvement

The setting's improvement focus was on curriculum planning:

'At the moment we are working on the EYFS [to develop curriculum planning]. Staff just now understand what the EYFS is all about. I asked an advisor teacher to come in, we will work on evaluation, observation, planning and the paper work that goes with it and how we can link everything together, including the environment, to enable children to have access to all the toys.'

This was supported by a systematic approach to monitoring improvements, particularly in relation to staff interactions with children:

'It's very rigid because I want to make sure that children are being interacted with and monitored regularly. Any issues lacking in practice will come up in meetings and [we will] discuss them and make sure that staff carry on interacting with children.'

However, this fairly directive approach also gave colleagues space to recognise what they wanted to improve and develop in their practice:

'I have to demonstrate how [the EYFS] works and for them to see the outcome of it. This is how I get them to run around my idea, I allow them to make mistakes. [...] As I watch things, they may come to me and say "So and so isn't working that way", so I say: "Have you done this? Have you done that?" "No, we have been doing what we were doing before". So I say, "Exactly, this is why it doesn't work and I have to allow you to see that it doesn't work in order for you to understand what I am giving you, the way I am pushing you forward.'"

Parental involvement

Clara's work with parents focused on improving their understanding of provision in the setting: *'As a manager, what I try to do is bring parents in line with how we do things'*, as well as managing and challenging their expectations:

'This change in curriculum planning impacted just on staff not parents. There are tensions, but the thing is, once the child reaches the age of three parents are expecting the child to know at least how to hold a pen and to even start writing or [be] able to count from 1-20. Or if you send the children with homework, they would appreciate that but they are just three or four years old. They are expecting eight year-old development from these children.'

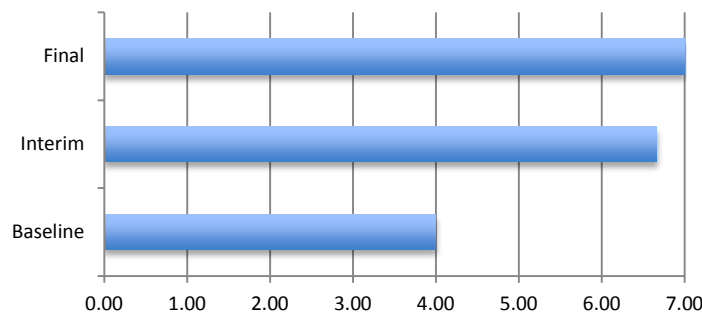
Impact on process quality

During the study, the setting's main focus was on improving pedagogical framing by re-working their curriculum planning to follow children's interests more using the EYFS to increase child-initiated activities:

'Each child has a focus each week. The activities are set around the children's interest so there is an indirect impact on children as result of making staff more focused on children's interests. [The staff] prefer it this way. They said to me "I am not going back to the old one, this one is easy, you can see what we are doing and we can see what everyone else is doing.'"

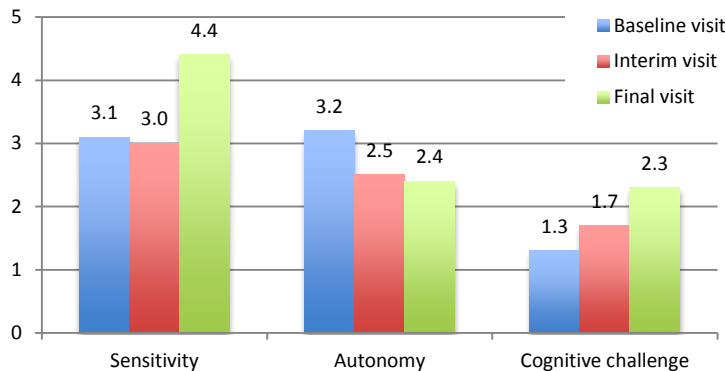
At the beginning of the study the setting was rated satisfactory by Ofsted. By the end it was rated outstanding. This judgement is supported by the fact that the setting showed some of the most significant increases in observed process quality, from one of the lowest starting points. Thus, the assessment of quality using ITERS-R originally produced the second lowest mean score (4.2) for ITERS-R or ECERS-R and moved to just below the mean for all settings (6.3), having shown the greatest improvement (11.9) of any settings on ITERS-R or ECERS-R. There was particular progress in listening and talking, one of the subscales associated with positive impacts on children’s outcomes (see Figure 19).

Figure 19 *Changes in listening and talking sub-scales on ITERS-R observations for LS22*



LS22 was also one of only three settings to have shown educationally significant changes on ITERS and ECERS **and** PCIT observations. As Figure 20 indicates, PCIT observations also improved significantly, again from a low base, in the areas of sensitivity and cognitive challenge but showed no increase in autonomy (see 3.0 Methodology for a discussion of these categories). However, the gap between the EYP’s and practitioners’ scores widened during the study, with the EYP outscoring practitioners by 1 point in each of these areas at the final visit. This gap was even greater in the area of sustained shared thinking, supporting the suggestion that there was still progress to be made in embedding the EYP’s improved practice in the setting as a whole.

Figure 20 *PCIT scores for sensitivity autonomy and cognitive challenge averaged for baseline, interim and final observations (LS22)*



4.3.8 An established/comprehensive approach to practice leadership (LS18, LS49, LS61)

These settings were characterised by significant improvements to both their pedagogical framing and the quality of their pedagogical interactions. They appear to represent an interim stage in that they had started to change their formal leadership structures and roles in ways that foregrounded practice leadership.

Strategically assessing the quality of the current provision and relating this to an overall vision of quality.

In these settings external frameworks, such as the EYFS, were used but were heavily mediated by EYPs, who interpreted how key ideas would look in practice and also underpinned them by drawing on wider theoretical understandings.

‘All staff use EYFS to do the planning [...] There is a lot of guidance through the EYFS that in itself sets a level of how to work, the areas you need to be covering. Then, we do lots of training for us and staff around small aspects of the EYFS and that feeds into the quality of understanding and how we implement it.’ (EYP, LS49)

EYPs in these settings also faced external pressures to shape their view of quality provision to match others’ expectations. Their confidence in their own professional theories of process quality helped them mediate and, to some extent, resist such conflicting influences, as one EYP whose nursery was part of an independent school explained: *‘In a setting like this, it’s about getting that balance in meeting the expectation of the school, the EYFS and the parent’s expectations’* (EYP, LS61). To establish and legitimise her view of high quality pedagogy, this EYP set out to introduce a pedagogical approach more closely based on early years practice into the school’s reception class. Her success reduced the pressure on her to change her way of working. Thus, in practice, the ability of these EYPs to establish a more expansive notion of quality depended on their ability both to develop norms in their settings and to deal effectively with external pressures to adopt more formal learning approaches.

EYPs in these settings tended to construct children’s perspectives as a form of consultation, during which they were trying to ascertain their views of current provision and ideas about how it could be improved. EYPs focused their work on encouraging children to participate in the consultations and had used a range of inclusive activities to develop children’s ability to express themselves, ensuring that they developed the language to do so:

‘The ethos runs throughout the nursery right from babies’ room so it’s a gradual process but begins with listening to babies and is the same for the under 3s as over 3s.’ (EYP LS 49)

Establishing a common understanding of improvements that were required and establishing norms around quality

In these settings, EYPs were less directive about what had to be improved: *‘The way she works with staff is not to give them the answer but to explore with them the*

options' (Manager, LS49). They focused more upon developing greater reflectivity and criticality amongst staff about their own practices and the provision on offer: *'The room leaders I wanted to be empowered and to be able to talk to staff, understanding what good practice was as opposed to "This is what we do here"'* (EYP, LS49). Developing such norms started with induction for new staff, who were gradually introduced to the setting's concept of quality provision. The setting's greater emphasis on practice leadership in their structures generated opportunities for much more individualised feedback on the nature of improvement required in rooms and from individuals.

'I have meetings with the key workers every month to discuss any issues, problems or ideas that we were thinking about to take them forward, but they can come to me anytime. In the meetings we discuss other issues like planning, paperwork and ideas that they may want [to try] to help support the children.' (EYP, LS18)

There was also a move away from blanket observations of all children to more targeted detailed observations that enabled more in-depth understandings of play and child development, as well as how their provision could influence this.

Developing, leading and evaluating professional development activities and improvement initiatives that focused on process quality

These settings had started to create their own distinct approaches to staff development. For example, in one setting professional development was designed to reflect and model the same values and pedagogical processes staff were being encouraged to use in their interactions with children.

'We feel very strongly about treating staff the way we treat children. So it's about respect, positive reinforcement, so if someone does something really nice we would say, "Wow! I loved the way you spoke to the children. I loved the way the children were interacting with you".' (EYP LS49)

They tended to use fewer transmission-based approaches to professional development and, where external training was used, they rejected the 'cascade' approach in favour of approaches like sending several staff members to the same session to build enthusiasm and momentum for change: *'Like the book area – you don't get the enthusiasm from your colleagues if you are just sharing your training with them. If they go on the training they will come back enthusiastic and keen to develop it.'* (EYP, LS61)

The emphasis in these settings was on high-involvement CPD approaches such as mentoring and coaching, buddying systems, action learning and peer observations. Such approaches encouraged greater professional autonomy and supported staff in exchanging knowledge and insights with each other. As practice leaders, EYPs still led the activities but they encouraged other staff to share their learning, particularly through modelling: *'Role modelling which is incredibly important [is] a huge way to show staff good interaction and we work really hard with that. The thoroughly experienced staff are encouraging the less experienced staff.'* (EYTP, LS 49)

Such approaches created a much wider range of learning relationships than could be facilitated by the lone practice leader. However, there were still relatively limited opportunities for staff to become involved in development and improvement processes as the emphasis tended to remain on merely consulting staff on areas of concern.

Enhancing the practice leadership capacity in the setting

Establishing additional practice leadership capacity was a developmental focus in these settings whether it involved encouraging a junior EYP to take on a leadership role: *'[The manager] said to me, "You can lead good practice within the setting – you don't have to have the official title" but it would be nice* (EYP without leadership responsibility, LS61) or completely re-configuring the senior leadership team around the idea of practice leadership:

'After completing EYP I was asked to join the Leaders Learning Together network – a monthly meeting for 9 months focusing on quality. As a result I have now identified senior leaders in each room. Because of benefits of having [the EYP] in the bigger room, I think it is important that each room does have a leader.' (Manager, LS18)

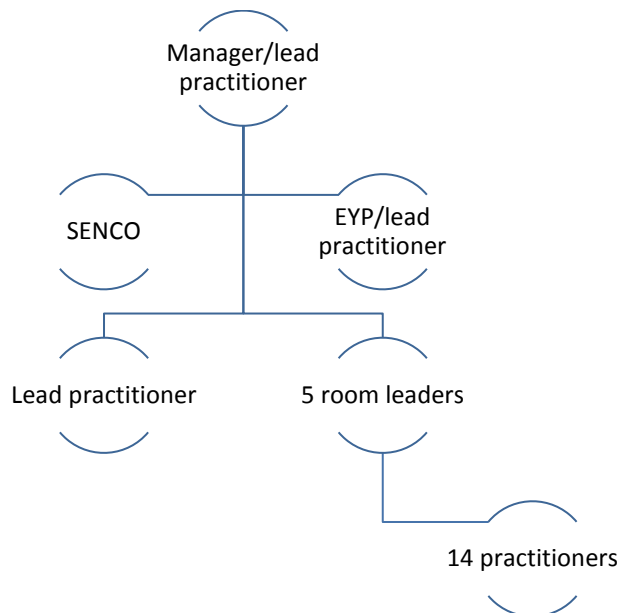
After the Manager also gained EYPS, she became more involved in practice in the setting and began to share more responsibility for planning and the curriculum with the existing EYP: *'My role as practice leader has helped me promote the importance of team work and sharing thoughts and ideas to achieve a shared goal [...]. We now talk a lot about thoughts and ideas and what we plan to do next'* (EYP, LS18).

The acceptance of the need to develop practice leadership depended on the EYP either occupying a senior leadership role or having their capacity to lead improvement recognised by a senior leader. The second vignette outlines the details of how a manager worked in partnership with an EYP who had developed the ability to influence practice leadership at all levels of the setting, to encourage room leaders to take on more responsibility and establish practice leadership more widely.

Vignette 2: Establishing practice leadership at all levels (LS49)

LS49 was a voluntary setting located in a five-story Victorian house in a deprived part of London. At the end of the study, 58 children were registered of whom two-thirds were White British. A small number of the children had learning difficulties or spoke English as an additional language. There were 24 members of staff and turnover was fairly high during the study (see Figure 21), with six new staff replacing fairly inexperienced staff during one six month period. There were three members of staff with EYPS: the lead practitioner, the family liaison officer and one of the room leaders. As a lead practitioner, Nena was part of the leadership team and highly experienced, having been working with children under five for nearly 20 years and in post for 11 years.

Figure 21 Formal leadership structure: LS49 (March 2012)



Approach to practice leadership

Along with the setting manager, Nena's role and title changed to 'lead practitioner' when she gained EYPS. This signalled an explicit move away from deputising for the manager towards working more equally with practitioners:

'We work closely together, we are both lead practitioners, we do lots of training together, we support each other on a daily basis. I would describe my leadership and [Nena's] leadership as equal. [...] We do delegate responsibilities but recently we have tended to do more empowering to get the staff more confident about the decisions they make.' (Manager/lead practitioner)

Nena and the manager worked hard to develop strategies to ensure that staff and all those involved in the setting had a shared and clear expectation of the type of provision they were trying to develop and the values that underpinned it.

'We do a lot with vision. [...] We invite staff to come along and hear what we say to parents so that they know what our practice is about, which is one tiny way of doing that. We have staff who have been here for a long time and they are fully on board and they believe that in the same way we do with passion.' (EYP)

They also placed a strong emphasis on professional development, mixing internal provision with external training and using a range of high involvement professional development processes.

'Mentoring and coaching is a huge part of what I do now, leading practice and having a really good knowledge of the EYFS, encouraging staff to use it as much as possible on a day to day basis and to help [them] with their planning and evaluation and stuff. [...] We need to give new staff lots of good role modelling, lots of workshops to get them hopefully to see the values that we have.' (EYP)

Their emphasis on supporting new staff and improving staff retention led to the introduction of a buddy system. This system was initiated by Nena and focused on ensuring that Level 3 practitioners could access support and advice from an experienced practitioner who was outside the management team

Focus for improvement

The empowerment of room leaders was the main focus of change. It was both a response to the problem of high staff turnover and intended to encourage room leaders to take on more responsibility for improving the quality of provision and a more consistent approach to their practice leadership: *'It's about staff reflecting on what their roles are about'* (EYP). To support the emergent practice leadership of the room leaders Nena developed a series of leadership workshops for them that she ran in-house but which were developed from leadership training she and the manager had attended that emphasised the importance of reflecting and working on existing problems. These workshops were ongoing and had become established by the EYP as part of the setting's leadership structure and had developed into a form of action learning: *'Me and [the other lead practitioner] felt it is important that room leaders feel confident within their rooms and are able to lead the room rather than manage it and get everyone on board.'*

Parental involvement

As in the first vignette, work with parents often focused on challenging their expectations.

'Sometimes we have parents who don't understand why we don't say thank you and it takes a lot of convincing that learning by rote is not what we do here. We do see the importance of politeness but it's the meaning of please and thank you so it's not just the words. [...] We spend a lot of time with parents talking about the importance of children making their own decision, making them independent, not having the need for adults or other children, their right to observe what is around them.' (EYP)

Impact

The work with room leaders was to create a network of learning relationships that connected staff across the setting. The SNA data collected indicated that several staff members were at the centre of supportive networks giving advice to other staff. These networks overlapped with the formal leadership structures and revealed the extent to which Nena's practice leadership role had been accepted by the room leaders and other staff. This had changed whom staff sought out for support and was underlined by the fact that, by the end of the study, most room leaders tended to discuss practice in their room or with other room leaders before they went to the manager or Nena.

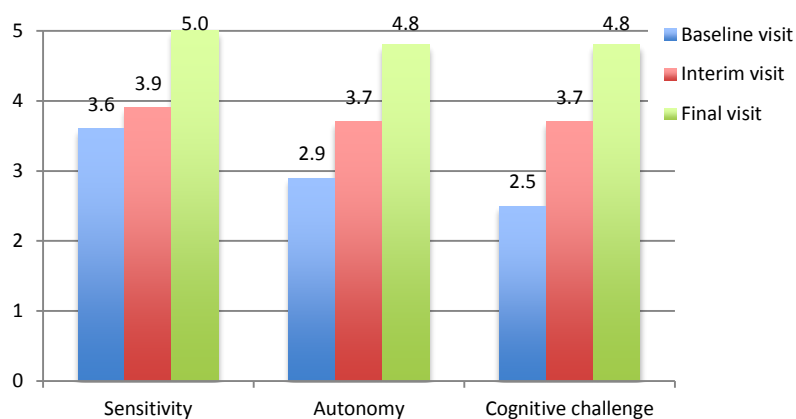
'Initially new staff would come to me or [the manager] but now they don't come as much. Now they go to any of the room leaders for advice. [...] It's not about what we do here, it's the guidelines of the EYFS, everything is a backup. We do what are doing here because it's the right thing to practice. I wanted room leaders not just to understand that but also relate that to others.' (EYP)

This had not only deepened the kinds of conversations Nena was having with staff, it had also improved the consistency and speed with which practice issues were dealt with and new ideas taken up in the nursery:

'Because the room leaders were feeling empowered, they were facilitating staff to be empowered within the room. So anything that these new staff were learning from the workshops was coming through to the children much quicker than it would do if we didn't have these workshops.' (EYP)

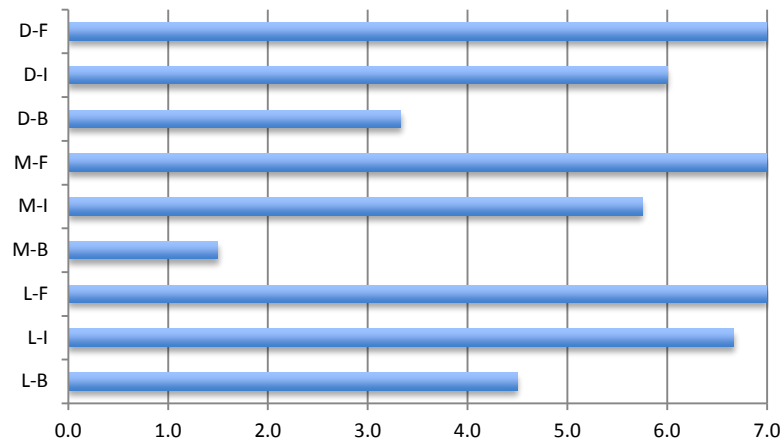
In terms of process quality this setting improved the most dramatically of all the settings. Its baseline ECERS-S score (5.5) went from below the mean for all the settings to above average (6.8) and it was one of the three settings to show educationally significant improvements in terms of both framing pedagogies (ECERS-R) and interactional quality (PCIT). It also had the highest PCIT improvement score of all the settings, moving from being below average to clear indications of a significant improvement in all areas (see Figure 22).

Figure 22 PCIT scores for sensitivity autonomy and cognitive challenge averaged for baseline, interim and final observations (LS22)



Instances of sustained shared thinking increased significantly from the baseline to the final observation for both the EYP and practitioners (from an average of 6 overall to 26.7 overall). Large increases were also to be found on key elements of the ECERS-E observations, as Figure 23 indicates.

Figure 23 ECERS-E trends for literacy (L) mathematics (M) and diversity (D) for baseline, interim and final observations (LS49)



4.3.9 Formalised and/or embedded approaches to practice leadership (LS06 LS08 LS13 LS19 LS28 LS29 LS35 LS60)

In this category all the settings were characterised by having above average quality at the beginning of the study and maintaining this throughout. All but one of them were rated by Ofsted as good or outstanding at the beginning of the research and all that had been re-inspected by the end of the study were rated outstanding. The main improvements that took place in these settings over the period of the study were in the area of pedagogical interactions, as they were already operating with high quality framing pedagogies. In those settings that had made significant improvements, they arose from the work of EYPs who had established roles as practice leaders and had embedded a systematic approach to quality improvement into the structures and ethos of their settings.

Strategically assessing the quality of the current provision and relating this to an overall vision of quality.

The EYPs' articulation of quality provision and how they used it to assess the development of their settings varied considerably depending on their position in their leadership structure. The fact that they had established practice leadership roles allowed them to do this with greater scope and depth than those in less established roles. They were also data-rich settings which used a number of external frameworks and perspectives to reflect on their practice and the assumptions that underpinned them, using evidence derived:

[...] from the information we gathered through Effective Early Learning , sustained shared thinking with the children, from feedback from parents

around children and changes they had noticed in the children at home, through feedback from other members of staff. One of the most recent things we have just developed is [a...] "listening to children" policy.' (EYP, LS19)

EYPs who worked closely with staff were able to work in much greater depth and spent time both modelling practice and using techniques, such as encouraging experienced practitioners to facilitate reflection on learning and the quality of interactions.

'Part of what I have been doing through training and development work with staff is using different mechanisms to identify when learning's taking place [...] looking at the EYFS in more depth, using video more for reflection.' (EYP, LS29)

The common thread among these EYPs was that they had the opportunity to develop a long term vision for their settings focused on continuous improvement: *'There is always vision for more. There is always a very hugely positive vision to put forward'* (EYP, LS19). Such a notion of continuous improvement led to the deployment of a wide range of tools to audit the quality of provision and monitor the changes they implemented.

'The initiative was actioned by an audit carried out with the speech and language therapist, which enabled targets to be set for developing the language-friendly programme. The initial audit inspired the EYP to tackle the problem.' (LS13 case report)

EYPs in settings in this category had integrated children's perspectives into their overall way of working with children where it was seen as part of their approach to co-constructing the learning environment and activities. They had built up a coherent programme to enable children to take ownership of their learning, the learning environment and their entitlement to be involved in designing and developing it, throughout their time in the setting. These EYPs regarded developing children's ability to be critical as essential and recognised that they needed to give them the confidence, opportunity and language to do this. These settings had embedded an inclusive ethos that treated children's perspectives as both a key quality assurance process and a key outcome for children of high quality provision.

'It's vital to improving provision and keeping provision at its best level because unless you are listening to children, you are missing out on a whole part of the picture. We could provide what we think is perfect equipment. We could provide what we think the parents would like to see but if it's not meeting the children's needs or what they want and we're not listening to them about that, that's a third of that equation out and in fact it's a much bigger part of the equation because it's the children's nursery.' (EYP LS19)

This inclusion ethos had become embedded in a number of the settings via policies around listening to children and through working in partnership with parents and children.

Establishing a common understanding of improvements that were required and establishing norms around quality

In many of these settings, a culture had developed that prioritised the quality of interactions with children. From staff induction onwards, this norm was established and reinforced so that staff became used to certain ways of working. In one setting, which focused on interaction from induction, new members of staff were encouraged to learn from observing others: *'I have just picked up on what the other playworkers do and tried to fit in. It comes across in the planning meetings too'* (Practitioner, LS06).

These norms were reinforced through ongoing professional development and joint planning with practitioners but also via *'lots of chat and also, where we are able to, [...] some timetabled opportunities away from the children to plan'* (EYP, LS19). This was also formalised. In the same setting the EYP tried to build coherence by instigating a review of the setting's policies that focused on the link between quality provision and positive outcomes for children: *'We are reviewing our policies and this is something I have initiated, putting them all out for staff to discuss [...] We are also evolving children's wellbeing and their involvement levels. We're trying to bring all the bits together.'* (EYP, LS19).

Developing, leading and evaluating professional development activities and improvement initiatives that focused on process quality

Again, these settings had established a philosophy of professional development that reflected their approach to child development: *'You've got to try and do it from different angles and different areas and it's basically looking at the ways people learn and trying to make sure you cover all the aspects - which is what we should be doing for children'* (EYP, LS08). These EYPs often had roles that connected managing improvements with overall responsibility for quality assurance and staff development. Indeed, one of the major advantages of having established practice leadership roles that encompassed these key areas of responsibility was being able to integrate improvement efforts with CPD so that they reinforced each other across the setting.

'The EYP's strategy was to dovetail reforms that complement each other on to existing practices. [...] The EYP initiates the reform, which she has 'picked up' from her practice networks and leverages external authority and internal expertise in order to validate the reform for staff. She then uses a part cascade training part mentoring model based on the room system to embed the reform.' (LS13 case report)

Recognition of the need for sustained and differentiated staff development in order to embed change was another common element. Moreover, the strategic overview that some of these EYPs had also allowed them to move beyond providing CPD to consider the career development of staff and how they might refresh practice by moving between rooms and settings.

'If you are doing the same job in the same setting for six years, you are going to get bored [...] So what I do is move staff around. They usually stay somewhere for two years and I move them on somewhere else. But I do try to look at who I'm putting them in with and what their strengths are and putting teams in that will have a roundedness.' (EYP, LS08)

Enhancing the practice leadership capacity in the setting

Embedding practice leadership in settings took a number of forms. In some settings it was based on developing a new leadership role for others or it was grafted on to existing structures, while in other settings it was consciously distinguished from routine management activity.

'We have been here longer than the EYP role has existed so we built the role of the EYP around the areas that we needed. We've also tried to keep it separate from the management role. So the EYP is about day to day practice and management would be about managing people and instructions.' (EYP, LS19)

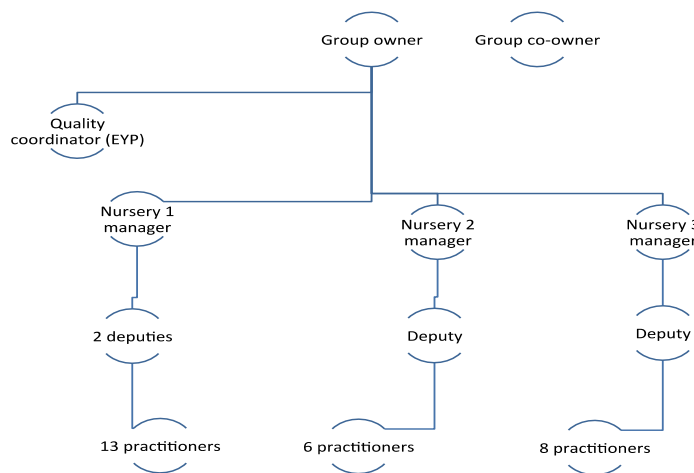
In smaller settings it was embedded less through defining new roles or changing structures and more through integrating it into the culture of the settings, which allowed them to 'grow their own' practice leaders: *'The previous EYP left but the new EYP was already here and inspired by the ethos of the setting. Even with a change in leader and two new members of staff in the last two months, things have stayed relatively consistent'* (Practitioner, LS06).

The third vignette, which follows, illustrated formalised practice leadership in the form of an EYP who works across three private settings, occupying a position in the leadership structure between the owners of the group and the setting managers.

Vignette 3: The quality coordinator as practice leader (LS28)

Jill was employed as Quality Coordinator and EYP across three settings in a group of private nurseries in the East Midlands and had worked with children under 5 for over 20 years. The amount of time she spent in each nursery varied during the study. Initially, she spent three days a week at Westgrove (nursery 1 in Figure 24), the largest nursery in the group with 16 staff and 90 children on roll, and one day a week in each of the other two nurseries. Towards the end of the study, Jill spent more time at Green Hill, the second nursery in the group, following the departure of its manager, initially deputising for her and then working closely with her replacement.

Figure 24 *Formal leadership structure (LS28) (March 2012)*



Approach to practice leadership

Jill's role as quality coordinator was practice-oriented and she spent up to 4 days in a typical week working directly with children. At the end of the study this was fairly evenly split between children aged under 2 and 3-4 year olds, but this depended on the needs of each nursery, agreed in conjunction with each manager. Her remaining time was spent leading, coordinating and evaluating practice and developing and delivering CPD. Her role was supernumerary and this allowed her to meet the needs of the nurseries in the group at different levels. She had a strategic leadership role across the three settings, responding to their change aspirations and bringing in ideas and initiatives such as Every Child a Talker (ECaT) from outside to improve practice.

She could consider how the demands of competing and sometimes contradictory notions of quality needed to be balanced, integrated and sequenced. At times the strength of her vision of quality provision and commitment to improvement meant she had to challenge managers.

'You almost feel you're overstepping your boss and you know that's not professional but by the same token you know the provision for that child, the care for that child and the development of that child is absolutely paramount

because that's where I come from. So occasionally you can come into conflict a bit with processes.'

Jill worked at all levels in the nurseries, working with room leaders and practitioners. With room leaders she focused on developing their leadership to take on more responsibility for improving children's learning and responsibility in the room.

'She [a room leader] does lack a lot of confidence, so change for [her] is perhaps a bigger thing than it would be for someone else. [...] It's just finding little ways where they can't fail, nothing's going to be a disaster, but making sure you just help enough to nudge her and then you're there.'

Her work with practitioners focused more on improving their practice by offering highly focused support and by modelling what she expected them to do. These opportunities also allowed her to show room leaders how they could lead practice. Jill's cross-nursery role and close working relationship with the group's main co-owner allowed her to move staff around to fill gaps or extend practice, particularly when staff went on maternity leave.

Focus for improvement

The major change priority which emerged during 2010 was introducing ECaT at Westgrove. They were accredited in November 2010, scoring 100 per cent. This was the culmination of 18 months work, with Jill taking the lead, working closely with one of the LA's Early Language Consultants. In addition to building the portfolio of practice, the major challenge had been losing seven members of staff on maternity leave during the year. The challenge going forwards was therefore maintaining momentum post-accreditation and ensuring that high standards in speech and language practice were sustained.

'ECAT was the springboard for everything; it really was, everything. I can categorically tell you that all the changes we have made all came as a result of ECAT because it focuses on the language and communication and that's paramount, but it also teaches about how your environment can have an impact.'

Later in the study the focus had shifted to transferring what they had learned to Green Hill. Essentially, Jill was using ECAT as a 'Trojan horse' for broader improvements.

'The interactions, the planning, the activities, the environment, all of that has springboarded from [ECAT]. We try to raise everybody's practice in interaction and really think about how they can interact best with those children on that date in that activity, but also to make it more consistent throughout the nursery.'

Parental involvement

Reflecting the previous vignettes, Jill's work with parents was largely concerned with shifting their expectations.

‘The general consensus of parents, and we have really tried hard to change that, is that they’re obsessed [that] their child has a reading book before they go to school and [is] learning to read; that [is even more important than] when the child sits at the table using a fork or [hangs] their own coat up. So we have a massive amount of work to do on changing parents’ perspectives, we have worked with schools on that a lot and that’s helped us delivering information to parents [...] But by showing the parents at our parents’ evenings videos of the children, we find [that] the more importance [we place...] on the right thing they gradually warm to it but it does take time.’

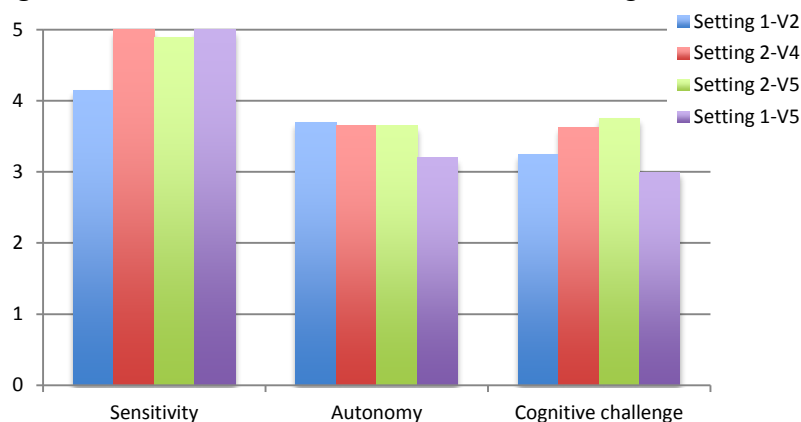
Impact

Jill was able to use the ECAT framework to challenge accepted practice and encourage practitioners to consider the children’s perspectives more thoroughly.

‘Things like the nursery routine, encouraging the staff members to think “OK, that might suit that group of children on that day”. [...] It’s opened up a lot more opportunities for the children for them to carry on and develop their thinking and what they want to do, knowing that the staff will support them and scaffold them and follow them.’

During the study, Westgrove was re-inspected by Ofsted and moved from being rated good to outstanding. Focusing on the two settings in which data was collected during the study⁷, ITERS-R scores were maintained at their overall high levels across both settings and the PCIT interaction scores showed a significant increase in sensitivity between the baseline and final visits, although autonomy scores dipped slightly and the cognitive challenge scores remained static. Instances of sustained shared thinking also increased. Initially high scores increased or were maintained for non-EYP practitioners in both settings for sensitivity and sustained shared thinking. Levels of autonomy and cognitive challenge in the interactions observed were sustained or increased at Green Hill (Setting 2 in Figure 25) but declined slightly in Westgrove (Setting 1 in Figure 25). Overall, this suggested that key elements of interactional process quality were being embedded in both settings, led by the EYP.

Figure 25 Practitioners’ interactions in two settings at LS28



⁷ These were the two settings in which most of Jill’s improvement efforts were focused at the time of the research visits.

4.3.10 Static or slow moving (LS15 LS24 LS30 LS53) and inconsistent settings (LS04 LS05 LS14 LS59)

The settings in these categories provide insights into why the practice leadership of certain EYPs failed to gain traction in their settings or to lead to significant improvements in process quality. They also highlight some of the structural quality factors that moderated impact. It should be noted that several of these settings were operating at relatively high levels of quality at the start of the study and were often categorised as static or inconsistent settings because they failed to make further progress in improving pedagogical interactions in the observations undertaken. The remainder of this section details some of the key factors identified in their inability to improve quality or practice.

Difficulties in establishing and embedding the practice leader role

This issue tended to arise either because managers failed to recognise the value of EYPs as practice leaders or because EYPs were not able to spend as much time in this role as they would have liked and had not developed others' ability to lead. For example, a small private setting in London (LS24), which was rated outstanding by Ofsted, had three EYPs: the owner, a practice leader EYP and a special needs coordinator who gained EYPS halfway through the study. The owner's illness early in the study led to the practice leader EYP being appointed as deputy manager. She had previously mentored practitioners but becoming deputy meant that this had come to an end by the middle of the study, although she remained the source of innovations: *'She comes up with some great ideas. She isn't frightened to try new things'* (Practitioner, LS24). The setting maintained high quality pedagogical framing throughout the programme and improved its outdoor environment but the PCIT observation of interactions remained below average throughout the study.

In another setting, a community-run pre-school, (PCIT) interaction scores initially rose but had reverted almost to their original levels by the end of the study. By this time, the EYP/Manager was absent from the setting for prolonged periods, undertaking further training and supporting another setting. When she had taken over the setting two years before the research began, it had been rated satisfactory by Ofsted and it was rated as good during the study. By focusing initially on improving planning and staff confidence, she managed to create a more stable staff group. However, her area manager thought this had been done at too great a cost to her personally and she now needed to 'let go' and let her staff develop their leadership skills: *'She addresses the needs [of staff] very well but she gives too much of herself. I think [she] does need to leave them – to let go a bit – let them be on their own a bit. I'm telling her she has got to step back a bit'* (Area Manager, LS15). This reluctance to delegate was reflected in decline in the practitioners' interaction scores during her absence.

Staff resistance and support

Highlighted as a challenge in both national surveys, staff resistance was an issue in some settings, especially in small settings where conflict with established practitioners in particular could suddenly affect work in the setting. However, in the majority of cases such resistance was dealt with sensitively by the EYP and, although time-consuming, was not a major obstacle to change.

'This nursery is very receptive to change, they take [change] on board, they are very enthusiastic, the staff here. But in the other nursery the workforce is very different, lots of them are entrenched in old style. Many of them were trained a long time ago, you find it takes a lot longer to get through there than it does here.' (LS14)

In contrast, the main issues EYPs highlighted tended to be related to problems with staff accessing professional development, difficulties in sustaining CPD activities which required high levels of involvement from staff and having to work with staff with low levels of qualifications who lacked the confidence to take risks. EYPs who were based in settings offering sessional care faced the greatest difficulties in finding time to support and develop staff either during or after sessions.

'This is where we kind of struggle sometimes because some of the things people expect them to get involved with I take on because I get paid extra to do it [...] So anything they do would have to be done voluntarily which isn't fair and we don't have time during the session. We are always on maximum numbers with the staff we have got and even when we've got children with additional needs in it's manic.' (EYP, LS15)

Summary: practice leadership

The case studies suggested that, in terms of quality improvement, effective EYPs adapted their approach to practice leadership in line with their settings' needs and capabilities. The main contextual factor that shaped EYPs' approach to practice leadership was the existing leadership capacity in a setting. The overall capacity for practice leadership was based on the extent to which EYPs had developed an understanding of what constituted high quality interactions and framing pedagogies in the setting, the degree to which improvement processes had become embedded, and the establishment of an ethos and culture which supported learning, innovation and risk-taking. Three overall stages of practice leadership development were identified:

- emergent/restricted
- established/comprehensive
- formalised/embedded.

EYPs who were trying to establish practice leadership in their settings set the quality improvement agenda themselves, relying on approaches to professional development that addressed gaps in practitioners' knowledge and focused on improving planning and the quality of the learning environment.

EYPs who had established practice leadership in their setting adopted a more inclusive approach to setting the quality improvement agenda, used high involvement professional development approaches that encouraged practitioners to take ownership of the change process and encompassed all aspects of process quality.

In settings where practice leadership had become embedded, quality improvement had become part of the culture and was built into leadership structures. Having developed data-rich environments and a collaborative approach to improvement, EYPs were able to build leadership capacity at all levels of the setting by integrating improvement efforts and professional development.

Social network analysis indicated that settings still establishing practice leadership depended on key individuals, such as EYPs or senior managers, as hubs of activity or improvement. In settings where practice leadership was established, internal networks tended to be multiple and overlapping, indicating a more interdependent web of learning and leadership relationships. The more formalised and embedded practice leadership was in a setting, the greater was its rate of improvement and the likelihood that it would be rated outstanding by Ofsted.

The other key contextual factors which affected EYPs' approach to practice leadership were the existing quality of provision in a setting, its size and nature and the resources available. In settings that did not improve in quality during the study, the major challenges faced by EYPs were supporting staff in accessing professional development, sustaining high involvement professional development activities and encouraging staff to innovate who lacked confidence and had low levels of qualification.

EYPs varied in their use of children's perspectives and this affected how they were integrated into their approach to improving the quality of provision. Three overall approaches were identified:

- choice
- consultation
- co-construction.

EYPs who viewed children's perspectives primarily in terms of supporting children to make choices employed a limited range of techniques to encourage, facilitate and respond to children's perspectives in practice. Their focus on enabling child choice limited them to improving aspects of current provision rather than making significant enhancements.

EYPs who regarded children's perspectives as a form of consultation focused their work on encouraging children to participate in the consultations and encouraged children to be critical. The EYPs recognised the need to balance both quality assurance and improvement but were still unsure as to how to reconcile children's perspectives with the demands of other quality initiatives and policies.

EYPs also integrated children's perspectives into their overall way of working with children as part of their approach to co-constructing the learning environment and

activities. This integration mean that EYPs had created a coherent programme to enable children to take ownership of their learning, the learning environment and their entitlement to be involved in designing and developing it, throughout their time in the setting. These EYPs had therefore embedded an inclusive ethos that treated children's perspectives as both a key quality assurance process *and* a key outcome for children of high quality provision.

5. Summary and conclusions

The study had a range of interrelated aims and objectives. Primarily, it set out to explore the following areas:

- a) Early Years Professionals' views on their ability to carry out their roles since gaining EYPS.
- b) Early Years Professionals' practice in relation to:
 - i) outcomes for children
 - ii) impact on leadership roles in early years settings
 - iii) impact on other aspects of early years settings, such as the quality of practice and interactions, as well as relationships with parents and other agencies.
- c) Early Years Professionals' career pathway and views on their career trajectory including any motivations or intentions to change setting, role or career.
- d) The extent to which Early Years Professionals have or have not undertaken (or plan to undertake) any further training or professional development.
- e) The issues faced by Early Years Professionals in integrating children's perspectives into their approaches to improving the quality of provision.

The two national surveys undertaken as part of the study provided the main source of data on the impact of Early Years Professional Status on the workforce as a whole. Early Years Professionals were questioned about the impact of gaining Early Years Professional Status on their ability to carry out their role, their career pathways and aspirations and their professional development activities and plans.

The findings from the surveys indicated that, overall, practitioners were extremely positive about the impact of obtaining Early Years Professional Status on their ability to carry out their current roles across a range of skills, knowledge and understandings. Overwhelmingly, respondents stated that gaining Early Years Professional Status had improved their own sense of professional status. They were equally clear that other professionals, particularly those outside of early years, had little understanding of what Early Years Professional Status meant. There was also widespread belief among Early Years Professionals that gaining Early Years Professional Status had improved their career prospects: Fifty-eight per cent thought that it had increased the likelihood that they would take on a leadership role and 54 per cent felt it had improved their prospects of employment in other types of early years setting.

Early Years Professionals were equally positive about whether they felt gaining EYPS had an impact on their ability to lead improvements in their settings. Eighty-seven per cent stated that gaining Early Years Professional Status had given them greater confidence in developing colleagues' knowledge and skills and nearly as many felt it had helped them become better at identifying and developing colleagues' good practice. An increasing number, from 49 per cent in the first survey to 67 per cent in the second, also felt that gaining Early Years Professional Status had increased their colleagues' readiness to accept their ideas.

Overall, gaining Early Years Professional Status seems to have had a positive impact on Early Years Professionals' sense of professional identity, their willingness to take

on leadership roles and their confidence to lead. These impacts varied among Early Years Professionals depending on their levels of experience, their role in a setting and the types of setting in which they worked. They were also affected by the extent to which others in their settings recognised and valued their new status and the extent to which Early Years Professionals were given the opportunity to take on practice leadership roles.

The survey responses indicated that Early Years Professionals were positive about Early Years Professional Status. They do not alone examine how changes in Early Years Professionals' ability to lead and affect improvements in the quality of provision in settings. In order to gather this evidence and analyse the process and dynamics, longitudinal case studies, lasting almost three years, were undertaken in 30 settings. The case studies combined objective external measures of quality with observations, interviews and documentary analysis in order to examine the connection between different practice leadership approaches and significant improvements in quality. The overall picture was that the majority of settings improved over the period of the study.

Creating a cohort of Early Years Professionals able to lead improvements in their settings

The surveys highlighted the impact of gaining EYPS on Early Years Professionals' willingness to take on new leadership roles and their growing confidence in their ability to bring about improvements in their settings. The case studies allowed for a consideration of whether this resulted in actual improvements in quality.

The first step in establishing the link between Early Years Professionals and impacts was to establish the extent to which their practice leadership had improved process quality in their setting(s). Process quality was then defined in terms of the quality of interactions between practitioners and children and the overall quality of planning, the curriculum and the environment. The analysis explores and evidences many aspects of Early Years Professionals' pedagogy. Objective measures of process quality were made in each setting over 30 months and these measurements were used to create individual improvement profiles for each setting. These profiles were analysed and used to create a series of detailed improvement categories into which each setting could be placed.

The case studies revealed that Early Years Professionals in those settings that made educationally significant improvements focused on four outcomes in their practice leadership.

- *Strategically assessing the quality of the current provision and relating this to an overall vision of quality*
- *Establishing a common understanding of improvements that were required and developing norms around quality*
- *Developing, leading and evaluating professional development activities that focused on improving process quality*
- *Enhancing the practice leadership capacity in the setting.*

Practice leadership and improving the quality of provision

Overall, the findings indicated that Early Years Professionals took very different approaches to developing these four areas of their practice leadership and this was highly dependent upon the context in which they worked. Of particular importance were the initial quality of provision in the setting, its existing leadership capacity and its size and nature. Early Years Professionals, as a result, achieved significant improvements in settings using very different approaches.

There were similarities in the strategies used by Early Years Professionals in settings that shared similar improvement trajectories during the study. Early Years Professionals who achieved substantial impacts in settings with low overall quality ratings, contributing to their moving from satisfactory to outstanding in their Ofsted inspections for example, often led by being very directive about what constituted quality provision and acceptable standards. They relied on 'transmission' approaches to professional development, focusing on establishing basic planning and improvements to the learning environment and addressing gaps in staffs' skills and understandings. Early Years Professionals who were leading in settings with high quality provision at the beginning of the study and maintained this level while improving or extending aspects of provision adopted a different approach to practice leadership. Here, the emphasis was more on collaboration and developing staff ownership of improvements, for example through facilitating multiple learning opportunities and relationships which gave the practitioners greater autonomy in what and how they learned and focusing on improving the quality of interactions and other aspects of provision. Early Years Professionals who were effective in terms of quality improvement adapted their approach to practice leadership in line with their settings' needs.

The settings that showed the greatest overall rates of improvement in the study were those that managed to improve all aspect of process quality – practice leadership is primarily concerned with such improvements – at the same time as building the overall leadership capacity of the settings. These priorities were interdependent. The longitudinal study highlighted how difficult it was to improve the quality of interactions between adults and children. Early Years Professionals could only change this on their own in the smallest, most stable and tight-knit settings. They managed this with a mixture of modelling, mentoring and formal professional development. Once settings increased in size and complexity beyond the point where Early Years Professionals were visibly interacting with children for extended periods of their working week, improving process quality at a setting level required other staff to develop practice leadership skills. In the most effective settings, those that established and maintained high quality for the most extended periods, practice leadership had become formalised and embedded in settings' leadership structures, roles and cultures.

Consequently, a key distinction needs to be made between Early Years Professionals as 'practice leaders', often regarded in isolation, and their ability to support and foster 'practice leadership' in settings. Both elements are important to improving the quality of practice. The ability of a number of case study Early Years Professionals to develop practice leadership across settings reflected the fact that many were in

senior management positions or worked in settings with other Early Years Professionals. Moreover, EYPS also developed their ability to enact effective leadership through increasing their understanding of how to bring about improvements in the very different contexts in which they worked. This contextual literacy (Siraj-Blatchford and Manni, 2006; Spillane *et al*, 2004), the ability to read the dynamics of their settings and determine how best to respond to them as leaders, lay at the heart of their ability to bring about improvements.

In conclusion, for the majority of Early Years Professionals in the case studies, gaining EYPS had either consolidated their existing understanding of quality provision and practice leadership or provided additional support in areas such as articulating their view of quality or in leading aspects of change or professional development. It was therefore unsurprising that, at a fundamental level, they shared a similar understanding of quality provision and what they needed to do to improve it. The development of this common understanding was supported by their engagement with the Early Years Foundation Stage, which was being implemented around the same time that many of them were establishing themselves as practice leaders. The significant differences in approaches to practice leadership in the settings arose from how Early Years Professionals enacted it in widely differing environments. The most effective Early Years Professionals adapted their own practice leadership to the needs of the setting and developed practice leadership among their colleagues. Overall across the study Early Years Professionals had a significant impact on the quality of practice.

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Glossary

Agency was defined in this study as the ability of EYPs to enact their developing sense of themselves as practice leaders in the settings and professional networks in which they operate.

Autonomy Used in the PCIT, this refers to the degree to which the child/children are responsible and empowered, having opportunities to experiment, where activities end naturally. Children negotiate conflict and rules. Lower level autonomy sees the adult as dominant, rigidly enforcing rules and restricting opportunities for children's self-management.

Children's perspectives The term 'children's perspectives' encompasses the various concepts of child consultation, participation, children's voice and listening to children, each of which resists clear definition. Recognising the perspective of young children is part of a culture of respect and listening to children, adults and families in the early years. It is also set within a broader recognition of children's rights.

Cognitive challenge A qualitative judgment used in PCIT relating to child-practitioner interactions ranging from high level: creative complex activities, planned and purposeful and introduces/develops new skills in the child/children, to lower level where interactions/activities are routine, repetitive and unsystematic.

CPD Continuing Professional Development

CWDC Children's Workforce Development Council

DCSF Department for Children Schools and Families

Delegated leadership middle leaders operated in a leadership/management structure in which they were given specific leadership roles by an individual above them in the hierarchy. Such EYPs' leadership responsibilities were directly related to the role or leadership post they held.

DfE Department for Education

DfES Department for Education and Skills

Direct teaching These are pedagogical interactions as assessed in the PCIT which include simple questioning, description of the activity, didactic instruction, task management, reading to the child/children and organising and allocating tasks.

Direct teaching These are pedagogical interactions as assessed in the PCIT which include simple questioning, description of the activity, didactic instruction, task management, reading to the child/children and organising and allocating tasks.

Distributed leadership middle leaders operated in more fluid team structures. They might be given sole responsibility for an aspect of provision or this might be shared with others. In such cases the roles EYPs held and the areas they led on were more dynamic and based on individual interests and expertise rather than on designated roles. Crucially, such EYPs were involved in deciding on which aspects they led or

'followed' others. EYPs included in this group included senior early years workers and room leaders.

ECaT Every Child a Talker - a national programme to develop the language and communication of children from birth to five years of age.

ECERS-E Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Extension. A rating scale of four subscales that assesses pedagogy and the curriculum within the setting, including the areas of mathematics, science, literacy and diversity.

ECERS-R Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised. A rating scale consisting of seven sub-scales which provide an overview of the pre-school environment, covering aspects of the setting from furnishing to individuality of care and the quality of social interactions.

EEL Effective Early Learning project

ELEYS Effective Leadership in the Early Years Sector research study

EPPE Effective Provision of Pre-School Education research study

EPPSE Effective Pre-School, Primary & Secondary Education research study

EYFS Early Years Foundation Stage

EYP Early Years Professional

EYPS Early Years Professional Status

Framing pedagogies EYPs could directly influence even when they were not in a formal leadership role, for example, by being included in curriculum planning and improvements to the environment by their managers. At this level, making substantive changes to planning and provision across a setting would require an EYP to influence policies at a strategic level.

Full Pathway (Pathway 4) was an intensive year-long course for graduates with backgrounds outside early years.

GLF Graduate Leader Fund

HEI Higher education institution

Improvement processes Activity that supports improvements to the quality of provision such as training/professional development and/or curriculum innovation, that takes place within the setting.

ITERS-R Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale – Revised

LA Local Authority

Leadership levels The three broad levels by which EYPs practice leadership is explored:

- **micro:** here the EYP is focused on colleagues' individual learning and practice and on influencing their beliefs and values.
- **meso:** here the EYP is focused on groups, teams and social networks and improving their exchanges of knowledge and practice and affecting group norms and interactions.
- **macro:** emphasis is on sanctioning and institutionalising knowledge into leadership, management and CPD structures. It also included looking outwards for new and emergent practices and knowledge.

Long Pathway (Pathway 3) offered a top-up from Foundation Degrees in Early Childhood Studies to an Ordinary Degree in addition to the requirements of the short pathway.

Middle leader Middle leaders such as room leaders and senior early years workers had wide-ranging responsibilities focusing on overseeing practice in general and ensuring quality care and education for children. Their responsibilities included leading and supporting staff in the delivery of the EYFS; deputising for senior colleagues, mentoring others and identifying and addressing CPD needs. Additional responsibilities included specific functions such as special needs coordinator or delivering parent workshops.

Ofsted The Office for Standards in Education

PCIT Practitioner Child Interaction Tool. This tool provided observation data of EYPs' and other practitioners' interactions with children based upon schedules and processes developed in the REPEY project and the Adult Engagement Scale used in the EEL Project (Pascal *et al*, 1996). PCIT measured pedagogical interactions.

Pedagogical framing This includes provision of materials, arrangement of space, and the establishment of daily routines to support cooperation and equitable use of resources, as measured by ITERS-R, ECERS-R and ECERS-E.

Pedagogical interactions Face-to-face encounters between practitioners and children measured by PCIT.

Pedagogical documentation Planning, observations, record keeping and assessment, including ECERS/ITERS observations made by the practitioners, if undertaken.

Process quality emphasises the actual experiences that occur in settings, such as adult-child interactions (pedagogical interactions) and the types of activities that children engage with. It includes practices such as curriculum planning, environment and resources and establishment of routines (framing pedagogies).

Professional identity Professional identity is a broad construct covering multiple aspects of individuals' sense of self as well as how they are constructed and perceived by others. In the study, the aspect of identity that was of particular interest was how EYPs viewed their role as practice leaders and change agents.

PVI Private, voluntary and independent early years care and education providers.

QTS Qualified Teacher Status

REPEY Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years research study

Senior Leader Senior leaders oversaw all aspects of provision, including improving provision and responding to early years policy, legislation and Ofsted requirements. The degree of strategic leadership they undertook varied. For some their strategic role was paramount, while others operated predominantly as practice leaders, supporting senior staff in delivering the EYFS and modeling practice across the setting.

Sensitivity A qualitative judgment made in PCIT observations that assesses the degree to which practitioners display warmth, affection, positive body language, praise, respect, listen to the child/children and engage in discussion.

Short Pathway (Pathway 2) was similarly intended for experienced practitioners who might need limited additional training to ensure competence across the standards and the 0-5 age range. For example, practitioners who had only trained and worked with children aged 3-5 had the opportunity to learn more about working with children aged 0-2.

Social network analysis (SNA) methodology maps and measures the flow of relationships between practitioners and their colleagues to build up a picture of the professional community in each setting.

SPEEL Study of Pedagogical Effectiveness in Early Learning

SST Sustained shared thinking

Structural quality The structural characteristics of the setting such as adult-child ratios, group size, qualifications of practitioners and their access to training, leadership and administration, policy formation/implementation and the wider strategic aims of the setting.

Sustained shared thinking Interaction where an adult and child work together to develop an idea or skill, solve a problem, clarify a concept, appraise activities or extend narratives and thinking. It is strongly associated with high quality teaching and learning for young children.

Validation pathway (Pathway 1) allowed those graduates with existing experience and training in early education to gather evidence over a four month period to demonstrate their competence against the standards.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Case study sample

Table 1 *Case study settings*

Setting	Region	Type	EYPs	Deprivation range	Size
LS01	West Midlands	children's centre	1	0-20%	medium
LS03	West Midlands	childminder	1	Over 80%	small
LS04	West Midlands	children's centre	4	0-20%	medium
LS05	West Midlands	children's centre	2	0-20%	small
LS06	West Midlands	voluntary/community	1	Over 80%	small
LS08	North West	children's centre	1	51-80%	small
LS09	North West	Private	1	Over 80%	small
LS11	North West	Private	1	21-50%	small
LS12	North West	Private	1	0-20%	large
LS13	North West	Private	1	0-20%	large
LS14	North West	Private	1	0-20%	medium
LS15	North West	voluntary/community	1	0-20%	small
LS17	North East	children's centre	2	0-20%	large
LS18	North East	Private	2	0-20%	large
LS19	London/South East	Private	2	0-20%	medium
LS20	London/South East	children's centre	1	0-20%	large
LS22	London/South East	voluntary/community	1	0-20%	small
LS24	London/South East	private	3	21-50%	small
LS28	East Midlands	private	1	21-50%	medium
LS29	East Midlands	children's centre	3	21-50%	large
LS30	East Midlands	private	1	51-80%	medium
LS32	North West	childminder	1	51-80%	small
LS35	East Midlands	private	1	21-50%	large
LS49	London/South East	voluntary/community	1	21-50%	medium
LS51	West Midlands	children's centre	1	0-20%	small
LS52	NW	voluntary/community	1	21-50%	small
LS53	East Midlands	private	1	21-50%	small
LS59	East	children's centre	1	21-50%	large
LS60	East	children's centre	1	21-50%	large
LS61	East Midlands	independent	1	21-50%	medium

Table 2 *Case study EYPs*

Setting	EYP's role	Level	Scope
LS01	Part of the Organisational Management Team working at a senior level, having responsibility for managing aspects of provision and supervising senior staff. In addition, the room leader for under 2s gained EYPS in 2009 but left the setting in 2011.	Senior leader	Internal/external: setting- based
LS03	Childminder based in her own home. She is part of a childminder network and meets a group of 6-8 childminders 2-3 times a week to share group activities. She was instrumental in setting up this group in part to facilitate gaining EYPS.	Childminder	Internal/external: Network/LA-based
LS04a	Deputy manager of this setting and since the centre manager was replaced by one who oversees 3 centres, her role has become more strategic though still works with staff, modelling practice and monitors developments with regard to change implementation.	Senior leader	Internal: sole
LS04b	Leader of the Nursery room and takes a lead on planning and supervision on a daily basis. Also delivers training to staff in developing adult/child interactions.	Middle leader	Internal: distributed
LS04c	Had only started working in the centre 18 months previously and quickly moved on to the EYPS full pathway and has been in her current role for 6 months. Has least amount of leadership responsibility, although as the bilingual staff member spends significant portion of her time supporting parent and child groups.	Practitioner	Internal: delegated
LS04d	Senior support worker in the nursery classroom and has some responsibility as a key worker for a group of children and for planning, and deputises for LS04b. Also has some responsibilities in cascading back to staff training sessions attended such as ECAT.	Middle leader	Internal: delegated
LS05a	Working as part of a senior management team beneath centre manager. Each member of the management team have defined roles. She takes the lead on day-to-day practice and staff development and delivers training to the local EYP network and to a local Foundation degree course in further education college.	Senior leader	Internal/external: network-based

LS05b	Has EYP status however this is not recognised per se as it is for LS05a and receives no remuneration for it. She has no leadership responsibilities and works one-to-one with a child with learning difficulties.	Practitioner	Internal: delegated
LS06a	Had 14 years' experience, as childminder then practitioner then leader for 3 years taking up sole leadership after LS06b's departure (previously joint play leaders) and now has sole responsibility in the management of the setting and the supervision of staff.	Senior leader	Internal: sole
LS06b	Left setting in 2010 (see above)	Senior leader	Internal: co-leadership
LS08	Children's Services Manager and EYP in a Sure Start Children's Centre working at a more strategic level across 5 settings.	Senior leader	External: multiple
LS09	Along with the managing director, responsible for strategic management of two settings yet has the autonomy in decision making regarding overseeing practice and leadership of staff.	Senior leader	Internal/external: setting based
LS11	Owner/manager of this privately run nursery and has sole responsibility for the development of the setting.	Senior leader	Internal: sole
LS12	Owner of this nursery. She works through a team of staff. She has a team of senior managers but she has overall direction and control.	Senior leader	Internal: sole
LS13	Manager of this private nursery. The owner has no involvement with the running of the nursery. Has a deputy working towards EYPS but is responsible for all things relating to childcare and forward planning, liaison with the council, staff development etc. Is also a trainer/mentor for other nurseries through the City Council.	Senior leader	Internal/external: network/LA-based
LS14	One of several settings in group. Manager works at a more strategic level while the pre-school teacher and EYP leads practice in the nursery with shared decision making with manager regarding staffing.	Middle leader	Internal: distributed
LS15	Has responsibility for decisions relating to management of this setting including supervision of staff with minimal direction from area manager.	Senior leader	Internal/external: setting-based

LS17a	This is a virtual children's centre comprising two linked Sure Start Children's Centres acting as a hub for provision and support for over 15 nursery/community settings. Decisions relating to the settings are agreed between the CC Manager, the two EYPs and LA Early Years Consultant.	Adviser/Consultant leader	External
LS17b	See above	Adviser/Consultant leader	External
LS18a	Although LS18a is Nursery Teacher and LS18b is manager, the two EYPs work collaboratively, sharing leadership responsibilities such as curriculum planning and leading practice.	Senior leader	Internal: co-leadership
LS18b	See above	Senior leader	Internal: co-leadership
LS19a	This setting manager works closely with deputy (EYPb) and EYPa but both EYPs work on relatively equal footing where they have both relatively distinct and some overlapping leadership responsibilities.	Middle leader	Internal: distributed
LS19b	See above.	Senior Leader	Internal: team
LS20	Assistant head teacher at this CC and is responsible for managing the team across the setting. Sally is managed by the head teacher who allows her significant autonomy in leading practice but also has assigned specific leadership responsibilities.	Senior leader	Internal: co-leadership
LS22	EYP and manager of the voluntarily run setting and is responsible for all aspects of the development of this setting.	Senior leader	Internal: sole
LS24a	EYP, owner and Principal of this private setting. Below her are the headteacher, deputy/EYP and SENCO/EYP. These two EYPs are given specific leadership roles by the owner and headteacher.	Senior leader	Internal: co-leadership
LS24b	See above	Middle leader	Internal: delegated
LS24c	See above. As SENCO gained EYPS during the study via the long pathway 2010.	Middle leader	Internal: delegated
LS28	Works as Early Years Professional/Quality Coordinator across the three privately run settings. Has a formalised remit for overseeing practice and quality assurance across the three settings. She leads agreed areas of practice and oversees other practitioners working closely with	Senior leader	Internal/external: setting-based

	the nursery managers but managed by the group's owner.		
LS29a	Crèche manager though spends a proportion of her time in the research base overseeing CPD and training alongside EYPb. At other times, EYP has distinct roles and responsibilities including supervision of 2 supervisors and 7 practitioners.	Middle leader	Internal: distributed
LS29b	Works in the research base overseeing CPD and staff training.	Middle leader	Internal: distributed
LS29c	Long term sick leave throughout research.	N/A	N/A
LS30	Promoted to Area Manager in September 2011 overseeing three settings and is part of the Senior Management Team with the owner. Supports practitioners across settings to develop their practice and improve provision.	Senior leader	Internal/external: setting-based
LS32	In the first year of this study, secured the role of regional coordinator for the childminding network in addition to her role of childminder and is responsible for guiding, supporting, monitoring and assessing childminders in the region.	Childminder	Internal/external: network-based
LS35	Manager of this privately run nursery and with some input from her husband in a financial/administrative capacity but EYP is solely responsible for all decisions relating to aspects of practice and directing and supporting staff.	Senior leader	Internal: sole
LS49	Lead practitioner working closely with staff to support and develop their practice particularly mentoring/coaching room leaders. Works on an equal footing with the manager working closely in most aspects including policy development, financial aspects but it is mostly EYP that leads practice. 2 further practitioners are due to gain EYPS in late 2012.	Middle leader	Internal: distributed
LS51	EYP is also a children centre teacher working half time at the nursery and half time at a local school. She is not part of the senior management team and has the specific role of leading curriculum; modelling practice when at the nursery.	Senior leader	Internal/external: setting-based

LS52	Works as part of the management team each having distinct role. Although her role of EYP is supportive to the deputy and the manager, her contribution to developing practice is significant and works autonomously in deciding and driving areas for improvement/change.	Middle leader	Internal: distributed
LS53	EYP/manager of this privately run setting and oversees all aspects of setting operation and development.	Senior leader	Internal: sole
LS59	Works alongside EYP in LS60 (see below) in a consultative capacity across numerous CC settings and other community initiatives. Works mostly autonomously with some input from other EYs education professionals	Adviser/Consultant leader	External
LS60	See above	Adviser/Consultant leader	External
LS61	This nursery is part of a large independent school. EYP is manager and works autonomously in the day to day running of the setting leading practice and staff. There is the occasional input from the Junior school Head Teacher in relation to more strategic aims of the wider school. A practitioner due to gain EYPS summer 2012 but as yet there is no differentiation between her role and the other practitioners.	Senior leader	Internal: sole

Appendix 2: Approach to data analysis

This appendix describes in detail the observation tools used during the study.

Assessing environmental quality: framing pedagogies

Use of the ITERS-R, ECERS-R and ECERS-E environmental rating scales was designed to allow the researchers to follow the REPEY (Sylva *et al*, 2010) and EPPE (Sylva *et al*, 2004) projects in their targeted observations of pedagogical framing to support key practices that research has shown has a positive impact on long term outcomes for children. A combination of observational and documentary evidence was used to evaluate the quality of intellectual development, parental engagement and pedagogical framing in the settings involved in this project. The following rating scales were used:

- The Infant/Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS-R) to record information on the following subscales: space and furnishings; personal care routines; listening and talking; activities; interaction; programme structure; parents and staff (for children under three).
- The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-R) to record information on the following subscales: space and furnishings; personal care routines; language-reasoning; activities; interaction; programme structure; parents and staff (for children aged three years and over).
- the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-E) to record information in the three subscales related to literacy, mathematics and diversity (for children aged three years and over)

Systematic observations of practitioners were undertaken during visits to the settings, with each element of each sub-scale being scored on a scale of 1-7 to give mean scores for each sub-scale and scale. Each complete observation took approximately 90 minutes and was undertaken at least three times over the period of the study for most settings. Observations took place at various times during the visit day to allow for the different aspects of setting's schedule (e.g. greeting, snack time, etc.) and parental involvement to be evaluated. Details of how the data collected was collated and analysed are included in Section 5.

Practitioner-child interaction tool (PCIT)

This tool provided observation data of EYPs' and other practitioners' interactions with children based upon schedules and processes developed in the REPEY project and the Adult Engagement Scale used in the Effective Early Learning (EEL) project (Pascal & Bertram, 1999). The PCIT looked for evidence that EYPs were engaging in pedagogical activities and practices that have been found to have an impact on outcomes for children. It has four main sections:

Section 1: Nature of the activity observed

This was based on the 15 categories used within the REPEY project with the addition of a child-initiated category. During the 20 minute observation period, these

categories were used to capture the major forms of activity the groups or individual children who are engaging with the EYP were involved in.

Section 2: Quality of practitioner interaction

This was a simplified version of the Adult Engagement Scale developed by Pascal and Bertram (1999). Every two minutes during the observation period the researcher made judgments about the sensitivity demonstrated by the practitioner to the children around them and the degree to which they promoted autonomy. The first category of sensitivity was included because of the emphasis placed within the REPEY work on the nature of the pedagogical interaction between practitioners and children and the particular need for highly skilled and sensitive responses contingent on children's intention and meaning in order to foster learning. Sensitivity was scored on a 1-5 scale every two minutes during the observation and a mean score for each observation was created.

The second category of autonomy was included because of the emphasis placed on child-initiated play and activity in the main EPPE findings. It is recognised that in certain contexts children may have less opportunity, or not be used, to taking the initiative and demonstrating autonomy of thought and action. This section allowed for an assessment of the extent to which EYPs were trying to encourage such behaviour in children. It also specifically looked at the extent to which practitioners supported children to talk through conflict and negotiate rules. Autonomy was scored on a 1-5 scale every two minutes during the observation and a mean score for each observation was created.

Section 3: Level of cognitive challenge in the activity

This section provided an assessment of the main activity, or activities, being observed at five minute intervals or at the point of transition between main activities. It was concerned with collecting data around the extent to which tasks appear to be differentiated. The assessment of cognitive challenge was based on assessing the reaction of the child the practitioner was interacting with at the time of the observation, or upon an assessment of the overall level of challenge for the group they were interacting with during the period of the observation. Cognitive challenge was scored on a 1-5 scale every five minutes during the observation and a mean score for each observation was created.

Section 4: Pedagogical interactions

This section was concerned with the extent to which opportunities for sustained shared thinking were created and the balance of pedagogical approaches being adopted. It was based upon the categories from the REPEY observation tools which have been developed by reference to research, practitioner and policy publications since the original report. This section was completed with frequency counts every two minutes during the 20 minute observation period, alternating with the assessments of the quality of practitioner interactions.

PCI process

Systematic observations of practitioner/child interactions (PCI) took place on visits 2-5 and in each setting where one EYP was present they were observed on three separate occasions. Where more than one EYP was present a minimum of four

observations were undertaken. The sessions observed were based upon a review of the EYPs' planned activities for the day in order to capture those points at which differing pedagogical practices and activities were planned. During visits 3-5, non-EYP practitioners were selected for observation in addition to the EYP and short follow-up interviews were undertaken with those who had been observed to ask about the typicality of the interaction, its cognitive complexity, and the overall aim of the activity and children's reactions to it.

The study's research team was made up of six key researchers who were trained in undertaking observations at the beginning of the study and, again, before visit 4 to refresh their approach and optimize inter-researcher reliability. Although settings were allocated to individual researchers, some paired visits were undertaken to some settings, particularly those with multiple EYPs, to maximise data collection and compare outcomes.

Social network analysis (SNA)

After the second round of visits to the settings, the issue emerged of how to 'isolate' the effect of EYPs' actions on any claimed or observed impacts from other practitioners in the setting(s). The decision was taken to focus attention on locating the individual EYP within both the leadership structures and the professional communities, which operate within their setting in order to understand the interplay between their individual agency and the collective agency of others within the setting.

Therefore, from the SNA undertaken in visit 3, a methodology that maps and measures the flow of relationships among groups of individuals was used to build up a picture of the professional community in each setting. Repeating the SNA on the following two visits made it possible to map the development of the community, the EYPs position within it, and their impact on its development. This was effected with the use of a simple questionnaire, completed by everyone in the setting on the day of the visit, which asked who individuals went to for help and support on a range of issues. The questionnaires (see Appendix 3) were then analysed using specialist software to map the pattern and intensity of interactions among practitioners in the setting, notably the EYPs.

Appendix 3: Data collection tools

Interview schedules

Visit 1: Interview Schedule: Manager/Head of centre or setting

Setting Code:

Researcher Code:

Date:

Confirm that all answers will be treated in the strictest confidence and no names of children, staff or settings will ever be used in the research. Confirm that the manager is happy for the interview to be voice recorded.

Section A: Biography and background

(Much of this data will have been collected prior to visit - check setting file)

1. Title e.g. Centre Leader, Manager, Owner, etc.
2. What is your highest qualification?
Educational/Professional
3. Do you have Early Years Professional Status (EYPS)?
4. What are your main responsibilities in the setting?
5. How long have you been in post/owner?
6. How long have you been working with children under five?
7. How would you describe the background characteristics of the children in your setting?
Prompts –Demographics of setting/ Family social backgrounds / parental attitudes towards the setting, and involvement in learning.
8. How many staff work in your setting?
Prompts - Number that have EYPS? Sessional staff? Part-time, Volunteers, Trainees? Staff turnover?
9. How many of your staff (if any) are currently undertaking EYPS?

Section B: Perception of EYPs and their impact on the setting

10. Have there been any benefits for your setting of staff gaining EYPS?
11. Have there been any negative aspects?
12. Have those staff with EYPS changed their leadership or support to other staff?
If yes, explore how.
13. Have staff with EYPS made any difference to the delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)?
EYFS – What? How? Evidence of impact?
Pedagogy – What and How?
Style of interaction with children, staff, parents? - What? How? Evidence of impact?
Planning - What? How? Evidence of impact?
Resources - What? How? Evidence of impact?
Organisation - What? How? Evidence of impact?

Section C: Improving outcomes for children

14. How does your setting record children's progress?
a) For the Foundation Stage Profile (FSP) b) Outside of the FSP

Is this standard practice across your setting?

15. Are the children involved in setting their own learning goals? If so, how is this achieved?

16. What strategies do you use in your setting for extending children's thinking?

Probes:

- a) *Encourage children to persevere with activities that they find difficult?*
b) *Engage children in more extended dialogue?*

17. What do you think is the correct balance between practitioner-led and child-initiated activities to optimise learning? How is this achieved in your setting?

Section D: Parental engagement

18. How important is it that your member(s) of staff, and in particular, EYPs engage with parents in relation to?

- a) *Engagement in their children's development*
b) *Other aspects of the work of the setting*
c) *Developing parents' expectations in any way?*

19. Do staff with EYPS play a particular role in these areas of parental engagement?? Or do they lead / support others to do so?

Section E: Biography

Age group

- a) 21-25 b) 26-35 c) 36-45 d) 46-55 e) Over 55

Years of experience in early years settings or working with children aged 0-5

- a) 0-3 b) 4-7 c) 8-15 d) 16-23 e) 24-30 f) 31 plus

Gender

- a) Female b) Male

Ethnicity

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Arab | White and Asian |
| Bangladeshi | White and Black African |
| Black African | White and Black Caribbean |
| Black Caribbean | White and Other |
| Black Other | White British |
| Chinese | White Other |
| Indian | Other |
| Pakistani | Prefer not to say |

Visit 1: Interview Schedule: EYP

Setting Code:

Researcher Code:

Date:

Confirm that all answers will be treated in the strictest confidence and no names of children, staff or settings will ever be used in the research. Confirm that they are happy for the interview to be voice.

Section A: EYP

1. Role and title

(Room leader, early years assistant nursery officer/nurse, teacher, etc.)

2. What is your highest qualification?

Educational/Professional

3. How long have you had EYP status?

4. Which EYPS training pathway did you follow?

5. How well, if at all, do you feel gaining EYP status has supported you in your current role?

6. What are your main responsibilities in the setting?

7. How, if at all, has gaining EYP status changed your role or post?

8. How long have you been in your current post?

9. How long have you been working with children under five?

10. How would you describe the background characteristics of the children in your setting?

Prompts – Family social backgrounds/demographics of the setting /parental attitudes towards the setting and involvement in learning.

Section B: Your impact on the setting since gaining EYPS

11. Have there been benefits for you of gaining EYP status?

In terms of your own work, self-esteem, effect on your own practice

12. Have there been any negative aspects of gaining EYPS?

13. Has having EYP status impacted on your leadership or support of other staff?

Probes:

Developing and implementing aspects of policy and practice such as and in particular, the EYFS

Mentoring and coaching of colleagues

Organising and running training workshops

Promoting rights and equality etc.

14. Have you made any changes to the delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in your setting? If so how far would you say that this is attributable to your EYP status?

EYFS – What? How? Evidence of impact?

Pedagogy – What and How?

Style of interaction with children, staff, parents? - What? How? Evidence of impact?

Planning - What? How? Evidence of impact?

Resources - What? How? Evidence of impact?
Organisation - What? How? Evidence of impact?

15. Are there any barriers to you being able to lead/effect change in your setting?

Section C: Improving outcomes for children

16. How do you record children's progress? (*EYPS Standard S01, S10, S21*)

a) For the Foundation Stage Profile (FSP) b) Outside of the FSP

Is this standard practice across your setting?

17. Are the children involved in setting their own learning goals? If so, how is this achieved? (*S01, S11*)

18. What strategies do you have for extending children's thinking? (*S01, S11, S16*)

Probes:

a) *Encourage children to persevere with activities that they find difficult*

b) *Engage children in more extended dialogue.*

19. What do you think is the correct balance between practitioner-led and child-initiated activities to optimise learning? How is this achieved in your setting? (*S01, S11;(EYFS Practice Guidance 1.27)*)

Section D: Parental Engagement

20. How important is it for you to engage with parents in...

Probes:

a) *Engagement in their children's development*

b) *Other aspects of the work of the setting*

c) *Developing parents' expectations in any way?*

(*S29, S30, S31, S32; EYFS Practice Guidance 1.1*)

21. Do you play a particular role in any or all of these areas? Or do you lead and/or support others to do so?

Section E: Biography

Age group

a) 21-25

b) 26-35

c) 36-45

d) 46-55

e) Over 55

Years of experience in early years settings or working with children aged 0-5

a) 0-3

b) 4-7

c) 8-15

d) 16-23

e) 24-30

f) 31 plus

Gender

a) Female

b) Male

Ethnicity

Arab

White and Asian

Bangladeshi

White and Black African

Black African

White and Black Caribbean

Black Caribbean

White and Other

Black Other

White British

Chinese

White Other

Indian

Other

Pakistani

Prefer not to say

Visit 2: Interview Schedule: Manager/Head of centre or setting

Setting Code:

Researcher Code:

Date:

Confirm that all answers will be treated in the strictest confidence and no names of children, staff or settings will ever be used in the research. Confirm that the manager is happy for the interview to be voice recorded.

Section A: Retrospective/ongoing change

1. Have there been any benefits for your setting of staff (you, if manager has EYPS) gaining EYPS, or for you in appointing an EYP? Can you explain/detail what they are, if any?

2. [Focusing on any changes the EYP has made] Have there been any negative aspects arising from the changes the EYP (or you) has made? [Remind respondent of changes made ...highlighted since first visit]

Possible areas of negative response could be: *Staff/parents/children's unwillingness/reluctance etc.*

3. Have those staff with EYPS (you) changed their (your) leadership or support to other staff as a result of gaining EYPS?

Substitute question: If you have recently appointed an EYPS how would you describe their ability to lead and support staff? If yes, explore how.

4. Have there been major contributions by staff with EYPS (you) to improving the delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)?

If so, what would you say they were? What have they been?

EYFS – What? How? Evidence of impact?

Pedagogy – What and How?

Style of interaction with children, staff, parents? - What? How? Evidence of impact?

Planning/Resources/Organisation - What? How? Evidence of impact?

Section B: Future changes

5. What do you see as the major priorities for change/improvement within practice or setting? (Depends on previously highlighted, role, or areas identified by others, from reflective practice and possibly confirmed by PCIT/ ECERS/ITERS)

Probe – Time frame, short, medium and longer term? Why were these selected, on what basis, have these been discussed with EYP/staff, any differences in priorities.

Probe around key ECERS/ITERS and PCIT areas

6. (If changes have been identified at 5 above) Which of these changes will you be making in the next 6-12 months?

Probe level of EYP involvement in each

Section C: EYP Leadership

7. What role do you see EYPs (yourself) generally taking in the leadership of the centre/changes? *Probe around general approach in conceptual framework.*

Probe distinction between an EYP leadership role and a manager/EYP role. What is the leadership role expectation for EYP?

8. Focusing on one of the current areas of change identified, can you describe what the EYP's (your) leadership looks like in practice?

Probe around if EYP is aware of this and whether you can discuss this with them.

Probe around which staff will be particularly affected, involved.

Visit 2: EYP(s) interview schedule (post-PCIT)

Setting Code:

Researcher Code:

Date:

To be held after PCIT observation(s) of EYP. Confirm that all answers will be treated in the strictest confidence and no names of children, staff or settings will ever be used in the research. Confirm that the EYP and manager are happy for the interview to be voice recorded. You will also have the opportunity in Section B to return to Schedule 2 to ask any questions you were unable to cover during the first visit. If you have multiple EYPs, you can interview them together if that is possible.

Section A: The interaction(s) observed

1. How typical was the interaction observed?
2. How has your practice with children in the setting changed, or developed since gaining EYPS? *Probe around their sensitivity; how they encourage autonomy; build cognitive challenge*
3. In the interactions observed, what do you think was difficult or problematic? What are you working on, or trying to develop in your practice? (In relation to what was observed) Has this been influenced by gaining EYPS?
Probe – origins of issues and how addressing
4. How were you encouraging sustained shared thinking?
5. [From SCHEDULE 2] What strategies do you have for extending children's thinking? *Probes:*
 - a) *Encourage children to persevere with activities that they find difficult*
 - b) *Engage children in more extended dialogue.*
6. How far would you say your approach/practice has been changed/influenced by gaining EYPS?
Can you give any examples? (Probe how you do things now, how you did them before?)

Section B: Schedule 2

IF NOT INTERVIEWED OR PARTIALLY INTERVIEWED DURING FIRST VISIT, GO THROUGH REMAINING QUESTIONS FROM SCHEDULE 2

Section C: Leading others and reflective journal

6. How do you work with other staff to develop and improve their interaction with children? What do you focus on? Types of interactions? Do they relate to EYFS? If so, how? (Include also their practice and delivery of EYFS?)

Ask them to identify staff member(s) to observe [if not done so already]

Could we ask more questions about this leadership role such as challenges, perception of other staff? Or is this not the correct place? Good idea!

6a Explore further mediating and moderating factors for working with staff. Challenges and perceptions of their role.

7. Reflective journal:

a) If they haven't entered anything, prompt them to and remind them that incidents recorded should focus on areas of change. Also probe around reasons for no

change. They may have made changes that they do not recognise as they are too close to practice. If no changes made explore reasons, moderating factors etc.

b) Reassure if entries not relevant and refocus them on change

c) If entry/entries relevant, explore approach to leading change

Interview schedule 5: (EYP debrief)

To be held at the end of the day after completing ECERS/ITERS

Section A: Completing ECERS/ITERS

1. Focus on completing and checking out any problematic issues on ECERS/ITERS.

Section B: Change strategies

This section is intended to identify (but NOT discuss) any areas of difference in the change strategies and priorities of the EYP and the manager

2. What do you see as the major priorities for change/improvement? What is your role in bringing them about?

Probe – Have these been discussed with staff? Probe around key ECERS/ITERS and PCIT areas.

3. Which of these changes do you think you will be making in the next 6-12 months?

4. What are your manager's main priorities for change/improvement? What is your role in them?

Thank them for their participation, and remind them about next visit and need to maintain reflective journal. Ask them if they have any questions about the research.

Also thank the manager and refer to next visit

Visit 3: Interview with EYPs

Schedule 3E

This interview is in three sections and is probably best done in two separate sessions (1, then 2 & 3) but this will depend on how you negotiate the day and the EYP's availability.

1. broad **strategy** section that looks at how leadership roles and responsibilities are negotiated in practice
2. more specific **practice leadership** section
3. **leadership interaction** section

In both sections you will be looking initially at **one** area of improvement, selected after revisiting the data from the previous interviews, journals etc., and working through the decision tree. However, in each section you will need at the end to develop an understanding of how the responses relate to the totality of their leadership activities. You will do this by asking them how typical the example you were discussing was and by probing around differences in other areas of leadership. Specific questions are included in the protocol.

As part of this process, you also need to get the EYP(s) to complete the social network questionnaire (Schedule 3Q) like all other staff members.

1. Strategic level

At this level with the EYP there are some specific questions directed at the particular change that is your focus, while others are more general. These are clearly marked in the following questions.

Interview Question	Probes
<p>Specific How was it decided that you would lead in this area? To what degree did you decide the focus?</p> <p>General How was it decided which areas you lead on, and has this changed over time? How focused is your leadership on issues of staff interactions with children?</p>	<p>Who is involved in these discussions? Relevance of Ofsted, development plans.</p> <p>Probe levels</p> <p>Areas of ambiguity versus clarity</p> <p>Probe SST</p>
<p>Specific What do you see as the main things your manager did to support you lead on this activity?</p> <p>General Generally what have they done to support you take on a leadership role</p>	<p>Have they changed any formal structures or procedures to help you lead? e.g. communication, line management, appraisal</p> <p>What resources do they provide to support EYP leadership? Time, budgetary</p>

<p>General How do you think your manager's and other colleagues' (including EYPs if appropriate), approach to leadership affects your ability to lead?</p>	<p>Is this changing as the EYP becomes more experienced, if so how?</p>
<p>Specific Did staff see this as an area you should be leading on?</p> <p>General Are there areas where you see it is more (or less) appropriate for you to lead on as EYP?</p> <p>Do staff see there being areas where it is more or less appropriate to lead on as EYP?</p>	<p>Levels as well as foci</p>
<p>General Overall how would you describe the balance of your leadership activity, with regards to working on improving the practice of colleagues and working more strategically on setting policies?</p>	<p>Probe around leadership of CPD</p>

2. Practice level

You will need a battery of questions to cover each category and then probe around these to identify the level(s) at which the EYP worked on this change and the overall balance between the levels. Below are a series of question roots you can use.

Visioning

How were you involved in determining best practice in terms of interacting with children/curriculum/environment?

How did you work with colleagues so that they understand what best practice looks like in terms of interacting with children/curriculum/environment?

Developing shared understanding

How did you build consensus around the need for this specific change?

Have you had to challenge staff who have had an alternative vision/view of how things should be?

How have you translated your vision into your plans/practices?

Communication with colleagues

What mechanisms/structures (formal and informal) have you used to communicate this change to colleagues?

Promote effective learning relationships and building professional communities

How have you built a culture that supports this change?

How do you encourage colleagues to experiment and take risks?

Engagement in ongoing professional development

Did you lead any formal CPD in this area? (Meetings, programmes, mentoring)

What processes did it involve?

What did they focus on?

What informal process did you use to promote aspects of [good] practice? (Modelling, mentoring)

Monitoring, assessing and innovating

How do you set and monitor targets for practice in this area?

How do you monitor progress?

How do you ensure improved practice is implemented throughout the setting?

What mechanisms do you use to evaluate impact?

Encouraging and facilitating parent and community partnerships

How do you work with parents to try to ensure consistent approaches to their children's development in this area?

Apart from parents were there other key partnerships you engaged in during this change?

In reality you will have limited time to complete all the sections of the grid with reference to general leadership practices. You should build up this picture from the previous responses in visits 1 and 2 but you do need to probe around responses to specific questions at least to ascertain whether this involved:

- a) Established ways of working
- b) Emerging practice
- c) EYPs having different levels of responsibility than in other interventions.

3. Leadership interaction level

N.B. Before asking these questions, ensure EYP has completed professional network questionnaire (3S).

1. Who in the setting are you **most likely** to talk about [*insert focus of the interview*]?

2. Who in the setting is **most likely** to come to you for reassurance and support about [*insert focus of the interview*]?

3. Who in the setting have you given new ideas about improving [*insert focus of the interview*] in the last 12 months? How often?

	Daily		Weekly		Monthly
	Less frequently than monthly		When I need to		

4. Whose practice in terms of [*Insert focus of the interview*] have you most influenced in the last 12 months?

5. Whose advice or support has substantively changed how you support children's [*insert focus of the interview*] in the last 12 months?

6. If there is anyone you have not influenced in terms of [*insert focus of the interview*] who were they and why do you think this was?

Visit 3: Post-PCIT interview with practitioner (not EYP) Schedule 3P

Short interview in three parts

a) Post-PCIT questions

1. How typical was the interaction observed?
2. In the interactions observed, what do you think was difficult or problematic?
3. What are you working on, or trying to develop in your practice? (In relation to what was observed)

b) Get them to complete professional network questionnaire if they have not already done so

c) Probe around PCIT

4. Who has influenced how you interact with children?

How?

What kind of training have you had (formal and informal)?

5. **[IF TIME]** Who in the setting have you given new ideas about improving [*insert focus of EYP interview*] in the last 12 months?

Visit 3: Focus group with staff

Schedule 3F

The focus group should only take 15-20 minutes.

Ideally you would hold the focus group with 6-8 people during a break but in practice you are likely to have to improvise and talk to people in shifts as and why you can.

1. Social network questionnaire

Get the staff to complete the social network questionnaire (3Q) if they have not already done so.

2. Reflection

After they have completed the questionnaire (give them back their questionnaire if already completed), ask them to reflect for 2 minutes or so on their answers.

3. Discussion (recorded)

Outline the change focus already identified and discussed with the EYP. Structure a discussion of this issue with the following questions comparing their approach to the issue with their social network questionnaire responses:

- 3.1 Do you go to different people to talk or get advice about *[issue]*?
- 3.2 Who are they?
- 3.3 Why those people?
- 3.4 What kind of advice and support did they give you?
- 3.5 How has that changed how you work in the area of *[issue]*?

Visit 4: EYP interview

Schedule 4E

The EYP interview is divided into three sections and is probably best done in two parts (1 and 2 at the beginning of the day and then 3 at the end). These focus on:

1. Overall development of improvement focus identified in visit 3 and its relationship with other improvement activities within the setting.
2. Impact of improvement efforts on staff, children and parents/carers.
3. Quality of provision and parent/carer/community involvement

Overall development of improvement focus and its relationship with other improvement activities in the setting

This section of the interview is based around the use of the activity map. It should allow you to develop a better understanding of how their improvement focus has developed since the last visit and enable you to set it in the wider development plan for the setting. This will help you understand how any improvements in the environment or practice are linked to the EYP's (or EYPs') work.

Interview Question	Probes
Can you give me a five-minute overview of your activity map?	<p>Have you recorded all improvement efforts?</p> <p>Have you recorded all the major leadership activities you were involved in?</p> <p>Do they provide a rationale for changes/shifts/increase in improvement foci?</p> <p>Have the aims and focus of the original improvement effort changed?</p>
Has your leadership role changed over this year?	<p>Have you been promoted?</p> <p>Have you taken on new formal roles?</p>
How did the nature of your leadership activities change as the work developed? (Start with original focus, progress to others if it was not sustained)	<p>Have they moved around micro-meso-macro levels?</p> <p>Is there evidence of them moving from the initiation to institutionalization stages?</p> <p>Have the scope and scale changed?</p>
What were the biggest issues you faced in leading this change?	<p>Barriers? Resources?</p>
How did your work in these areas (the improvement efforts they led) fit in with other areas of change and improvement in the setting? (If there were other areas of improvement)	<p>Are you aware of developments in other areas?</p> <p>Was there any kind of strategic overview/rationale behind all the improvement efforts?</p> <p>How involved were you in developing the strategy in the setting(s)?</p>

2. Impact of improvement efforts on staff, children and parents/carers

In this section you are trying to develop an understanding of the impact of the specific improvement focus identified in visit 3 on staff, children and where appropriate parents/carers and other professionals outside of the setting. If the focus identified has not been sustained, then identify the main improvement efforts from the activity map and focus on these sequentially through the period focusing most attention on the earlier efforts. The impact is based loosely on Kirkpatrick's model for evaluating CPD and therefore progresses from initial reactions and changes in colleagues' behaviour through to outcomes for children and others.

Interview Question	Probes
What were your colleagues' initial reaction to this focus?	<p>What level of understanding of it did they have initially?</p> <p>How were they made aware of why it was seen as a suitable focus?</p>
What kinds of changes to staff attitudes and understandings did you try and bring about at the beginning?	<p>What inputs or activities were important in affecting these changes in attitude etc.?</p> <p>How clear is the EYP about staff's original understanding/views of this area?</p>
What were the first improvements in practice you started to see/notice?	<p>How did you evaluate/recognize these as improvements to practice?</p> <p>How did you support the wider take-up of these changes by other staff?</p> <p>Was it difficult to sustain these changes?</p> <p>What evidence had you collect of these changes?</p>
How far have these changes extended?	<p>How many people have changed their practice?</p> <p>Has it affected parents?</p> <p>How consistently are you adopting/demonstrating/modelling these practices?</p>
What were the main impacts these changes to staff practices have had on children?	<p>How did you recognize/evaluate these improvements to practice?</p> <p>Was it difficult to sustain these changes?</p> <p>What evidence have you collected of these changes?</p>
To what extent do you feel these changes have embedded in the setting(s)?	<p>Have you developed new policies?</p> <p>Are new staff trained in them?</p>

3. Quality of provision and parents'/carers' involvement

In this section of the interview we want to develop a better understanding of the EYP's notion of quality provision and how they are trying to develop it within their setting. To do this rather than explore the EYP's generic notion of quality, we will focus on one aspect: their views on parents'/carers' involvement

Interview Question	Probes
<p>To what extent do you feel that parents'/carers' view of quality provision overlap with your own?</p>	<p>Do parents/carers' prioritise certain areas?</p> <p>Which areas do they seem least concerned about?</p> <p>Which areas do they seem least knowledgeable about?</p>
<p>Are there areas where you have had to challenge, or been challenged by, parents'/carers' view of quality provision?</p>	<p>To what extent have you had to deal with competing or contradictory views on quality? Was that in the setting(s) or outside?</p> <p>Are there tensions between provision that focuses on social, emotional and cognitive development and more specific notions such as school readiness?</p> <p>To what extent are you aware of cultural/religious differences in parenting? How do you respond to these?</p> <p>How do you consult parents about the quality of the provision? (reactive)</p> <p>To what extent do you draw on parents to develop the quality of their provision? (proactive)</p>
<p>How significant is supporting parents' involvement in their children's learning in your notion of quality provision?</p>	<p>How do you assess current levels of parental involvement?</p> <p>Do you differentiate between cognitive and language development and social and emotional wellbeing?</p> <p>Probe around developing professional identity, confidence and willingness to challenge parents (impact of EYPS)</p>

Visit 4: Post-PCIT interview with practitioner (not EYP) Schedule 4P

Post-PCIT questions

1. How typical was the interaction observed?
2. What are you working on, or trying to develop in your practice? (In relation to what was observed)
Probe around their understanding of SST and cognitive challenge.

Probe SST

Do they use the term SST in this setting or describe it in another way?

How do they define SST (or equivalent term used)?

Why is SST important?

Probe Challenge

How cognitively complex, i.e. involving the combination of several elements, materials actions or ideas, did they think the task was?

What was the aim of the task and how had they structured it?

Did they feel the children were engrossed and making a mental effort?

What new understanding or skill were they trying to develop?

3. How have you changed your interactions with children as a result of (*insert change focus if relevant*)?
4. Was there a part of the interaction I have just observed that you feel has changed because of (*insert change focus if relevant*)?
5. Why do you think it was important to change/improve what you were already doing in terms of (*insert change foci if relevant*)?
6. Who has influenced how you interact with children?
How? What kind of training have you had (formal and informal)?

Visit 5: EYP interview

Have a copy of your V4 data reduction to hand while completing this sheet. Add the V5 data under the headings listed below.

a) EYP interview

1. Context
2. Staffing
 - 2.1 Impact of EYPS
3. Scope and nature of EYP leadership
 - 3.1 Position in the leadership structure
 - 3.2 To what extent are EYPs working directly or indirectly to impact on children?
 - 3.3 To what extent does EYPs leading at different levels affect the scope and nature of the impacts they have on practice?
4. Change focus
5. Impact
 - 5.1 Inputs and processes
 - 5.2 Mediating and moderating factors
 - 5.3 Outcomes

Other relevant data

Quality assurance

Parents

CPD/learning relationships

Other

b) Workload and structural quality data

Workload

How much time do you spend on the following activities in a typical week?

(Mark with an x)

	Up to 1 day	1-2 days	2-4 days	More than 4 days	N/A
Working with children					
Managing staff					
Developing and delivering staff development					
Leading/ coordinating/ evaluating practice					
General administration					
Other (please specify):					

5.2. For all the age groups you work with, how much time do you spend with them in a typical week?

	Up to 1 day	1-2 days	2-4 days	More than 4 days
Up to 2 years old				
Between 2 and 3 years old				
Between 3 and 5 years old				
Over 5 years old				
Other (please specify):				

SNA questionnaires

Visit 3: Professional network questionnaire Schedule 3Q

Setting code:

Date:

Name:

Role:

This questionnaire is designed to build up a picture of how you work together and support each other in the setting

Section 1. All practitioners

1. Who are you most likely to talk to in the setting about your work with children?
(Choose up to 3 people)

2. Who in the setting are you most likely to go for reassurance and support about work related issues? (Choose up to 3 people)

3. Which people in the setting do you go to for help with routine work-related issues?

How often? (Please indicate if this varies by person)

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daily | <input type="checkbox"/> Less frequently than monthly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly | <input type="checkbox"/> When I need to |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |

4. Which people in the setting do you go to for new ideas about improving practice in the setting?

How often? *(Please indicate if this varies by person)*

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daily | <input type="checkbox"/> Less frequently than monthly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly | <input type="checkbox"/> When I need to |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |

5. Which people in the setting do you go for advice about areas you are leading?

How often? *(Please indicate if this varies by person)*

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daily | <input type="checkbox"/> Less frequently than monthly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly | <input type="checkbox"/> When I need to |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |

6. Whose advice or support has substantively changed how you develop children's social and emotional wellbeing in the last 12 months?

7. Whose advice or support has substantively changed how you develop children's learning in the last 12 months?

8. Who has mentored you at work in the last 12 months?

Section 2. EYPs only

9. Which EYPs outside the setting have you gone to for help with routine work-related issues in the last 3 months?

How often? *(Please indicate if this varies by person)*

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daily | <input type="checkbox"/> Less frequently than monthly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly | <input type="checkbox"/> When I need to |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |

10. Which other practitioners outside the setting have you gone to for help with routine work-related issues in the last 3 months?

How often? *(Please indicate if this varies by person)*

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daily | <input type="checkbox"/> Less frequently than monthly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly | <input type="checkbox"/> When I need to |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |

11. Which EYPs outside the setting have you gone to for advice about areas you are leading on in the last 3 months?

How often? *(Please indicate if this varies by person)*

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daily | <input type="checkbox"/> Less frequently than monthly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly | <input type="checkbox"/> When I need to |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |

12. Which other practitioners outside in the setting have you gone to for advice about areas you are leading on in the last 3 months?

How often? *(Please indicate if this varies by person)*

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daily | <input type="checkbox"/> Less frequently than monthly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly | <input type="checkbox"/> When I need to |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |

Visit 4: Professional networking questionnaire
(For all staff in your setting)
Schedule 4Q

Setting:

Date:

Your name:

Your role:

This questionnaire is designed to build up a picture of how you work together and support each other in your setting. Please use people's full names. All responses will be anonymised and no one's real name will be used in subsequent reports.

1. Who are you most likely to talk to in the setting about your work with children?
(Choose up to 3 people and please give their names throughout)

2. Who in the setting are you most likely to go for reassurance and support about work related issues? (Choose up to 3 people)

3. Which people in the setting do you go to for new ideas about improving practice in the setting? (Choose up to 3 people)

4. Whose advice or support has substantively changed how you develop children's social and emotional wellbeing in the last 12 months? (Choose up to 3 people)

5. Whose advice or support has substantively changed how you develop children's learning in the last 12 months? (*Choose up to 3 people*)

6. Who has mentored you at work in the last 12 months? (*Choose up to 3 people*)

7. Who have you gone to for advice or support about [*INSERT CHANGE FOCUS*] in the last 12 months? (*Choose up to 3 people*)

Examination & exploring	Cognitive challenge	5 min							Cognitive challenge Routine & repetitive Unsystematic
	Creative complex activities	10 min							
	Planned & purposeful	15 min							
	New skills (child)	20 min							
Cognitive challenge summary									
Adult-led/child-initiated	Pedagogical interactions	Frequency counts							What type of interactions are taking place at each two minute period?
	Sustained Shared Thinking								
	Scaffolding								
	Extending								
	Discussing								
	Modelling								
	Playing								
	Other								
	Direct teaching interactions								
	Simple questioning								
Digital tools engagement	Explaining activities								
	Direct instruction (didactic)								
	Task Management								
	Reading								
	Org/ allocating tasks/resources								
	Other								
	Monitoring								
	Observing								
	Being Available								
	Other								

Appendix 4: Correlational analysis

		Baseline quality	Setting size	Deprivation range	Baseline Ofsted
Baseline quality	Correlation Coefficient	1	0.302	0.025	0.303
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.142	0.906	0.141
	N	25	25	25	25
Setting Size	Correlation Coefficient	0.302	1	-0.246	-0.175
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.142		0.237	0.402
	N	25	25	25	25
Deprivation Range	Correlation Coefficient	0.025	-0.246	1	0.124
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.906	0.237		0.554
	N	25	25	25	25
Baseline Ofsted	Correlation Coefficient	0.303	-0.175	0.124	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.141	0.402	0.554	
	N	25	25	25	25

		Ofsted re-grading	Final quality score
Ofsted re-grading	Correlation Coefficient	1	0.439
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.101
	N	15	15
Final quality score	Correlation Coefficient	0.439	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.101	
	N	15	15

		Baseline SST	Baseline quality score
Baseline SST	Correlation Coefficient	1	0.556**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.004
	N	25	
Baseline quality score	Correlation Coefficient	0.556**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.004	
	N	25	25

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Appendix 5: Childminders

The two childminders in the study (LS03, LS32) represented extreme cases in that it was relatively straightforward to link the impact of changes in their practices to changes in quality, as they tended to work on their own. However, this also meant that they could not be regarded as 'settings' in the same way as the other case studies, which made it problematic to consider the effect of EYPS on their capacity for leadership. Therefore, they have been treated as a separate category and this appendix focuses on one of the childminders as a means of illustrating how gaining EYPS has affected both the quality of her provision and her practice leadership in a network of local childminders.

The childminder as system leader (LS03)

Eve had been a childminder in the West Midlands for 12 years and gained EYPS in 2009 through the Long Pathway. She worked four days a week in her own home, looking after children from the local area.

Approach to practice leadership

In addition to childminding, Eve supported students from the local FE college on early years and childcare courses, took students on placement, and mentored other childminders. She belonged to of a childminder network, which she was instrumental in setting up and had eight members who met two or three of times a week in a local community hall. Eve was clearly aware of the low status of childminders in some people's eyes. She had frequently encountered low expectations from parents and other professionals in relation to childminders' role in supporting children's learning:

I have had people from a nursery say, "How can you have the leadership skills?" People don't know what Early Years Professional Status is. Even people working in settings don't understand what EYP is.

In the network she encouraged her colleagues, led by example, shared information and modelled practice in shared sessions with her colleagues, who valued their meetings as opportunities to exchange ideas.

During the study she worked with the group on supporting children's language development, based around Every Child A Talker (ECaT). Eve arranged a trainer and room for 20 childminders to access a bespoke evening course to brief them on assessing early language development, as well as organising a regular Monday morning session at a local library including storytime and singing as well as sharing books. One of the network members emphasized the value of such work:

Doing the ECaT reviews has made us look at our communication with the children, made us more aware, look at our practice and how we can bolster it. We have all agreed on similar things and are working together on those things. [Eve] seems to know which way to point us with regard to that.

Eve perceived her role as bringing everyone in the group towards the same level of understanding and the main opportunity to do this was through informal

knowledge-sharing: *'I just talk through what they have talked through with me on the course. I photocopy handouts together with my notes and if anyone doesn't understand anything we can go through it one to one'*. She also tried to create relevant opportunities in activities during sessions to explore these further. She was very aware that she could not direct people to do things: *'at the end of the day it's their choice whether they take something on board or not'*.

In addition, Eve was able to maintain the focus on ECaT in the network by drawing in external support, as another network member attested:

[Eve] is now in a position to give us a bit more professional feedback on supporting children's language development. She has the contacts because she has accessed more training and she knows which way to point us. She accessed the ECaT training initially and then she arranged for us all to go together. She arranged for the coordinator to come in and see us and it has been ongoing [since then].

Eve balanced these external inputs with a range of formal and informal mentoring relationships. The childminders in the group valued the reassurance and support the group provided: *'I've been to other groups but they are not led like this group. It is not as structured and planned as here. Coming here has been a big influence on the way I engage with children'* (Network member). Towards the end of the study, Eve felt the group had developed to the point where she could adopt a less prominent role:

I'm less of a leader now as everybody is more on a par. They all take an active part now and I would say it is a strong group. Everyone is doing some kind of training: two are doing foundation degrees. Everybody is moving themselves forward.

Impact

By the end of the study, all the childminders in the group were using the ECaT trackers and their statements to monitor language development. Prior to that they had only used the statements in the EYFS. This had had an immediate impact on their practice:

Doing the ECAT reviews has made us look at our communication with the children, made us more aware, look at our practice and how we can bolster it. We have all agreed on similar things and are working together on those things, Eve seems to know which way to point us with regard to that.
(Network member)

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