

# Successful Placements in Early Years Settings

Early  
Childhood  
Studies

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QTS

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EYPS

Edited by

**Jo Basford**  
**Elaine Hodson**



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# Contents

	Editors and contributors	vi
	Introduction (Jo Basford and Elaine Hodson)	ix
1	The range and diversity of Early Years settings (Jo Basford)	1
2	Preparing for your placement (Carolyn Davis)	15
3	The placement experience (Nicky Hirst)	32
4	A unique child (Sue van Gaalen and Elaine Hodson)	47
5	Positive relationships (Wendy Whittaker)	62
6	Enabling environments (Jo Basford and Lynne Clarke)	78
7	Learning and development (Elaine Hodson)	93
8	Next steps (Karen Perry)	109
	Index	121

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# Introduction

*Jo Basford and Elaine Hodson*

This book is intended for all Early Years practitioners studying at undergraduate/graduate level. If you are required to undertake a placement in an Early Years setting, whether to gain a QTS, EYPS qualification, or if you are on an Early Childhood Studies programme which has a placement element, then you should find this book useful. Reference to the relevant QTS and EYP Standards are linked to each chapter.

During your university and college sessions, you will have covered a large number of aspects related to Early Years practice, including child development, pedagogical models and effective practice. Your placement experience is intended for you to put into practice what you have learnt. Yet the reality of what actually happens in an Early Years setting does not always match the rhetoric of what you have learnt or read about. We have included case studies, reflective and practical tasks in each chapter, and hope these will help you to reflect upon some of the tensions, challenges and dilemmas that practitioners experience. Some of these tensions are due to the nature of relationships which have been established in a setting, but there are also occasions when practitioners are grappling with implementing an approach that does not necessarily sit comfortably with their own beliefs and values. As an emerging professional, you too will find yourself in this situation. Therefore, we hope that this book provides you with opportunities to reflect on many aspects of practice, while anticipating your own professional development.

There are three key elements to the book.

- 1 An overview of the unique features of the range of Early Years settings in which students may be placed.
- 2 Guidance, support and reflection in relation to professional practice and conduct before, during and after the placement experience.
- 3 An understanding of how the themes and commitments underpinning the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are reflected in professional practice.

*Chapter 1 – The range and diversity of Early Years settings* provides an historical overview of the development of Early Years provision. It explores the unique features of settings within three specific contexts: the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector; the School context; and multi-professional context.

*Chapter 2 – Preparing for your placement* guides you through this process. You are introduced to the theoretical models of reflective practice.

*Chapter 3 – The placement experience* builds on models of reflective practice and encourages you to consider your professional conduct, and in particular how you build and maintain professional relationships.

The following four chapters are concerned with the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework principles, themes and commitments, and are intended to help you understand in greater depth the way the principles of this framework are implemented in practice.

*Chapter 4 – A unique child*, is an exploration of effective practice concerned with supporting the individual needs of children. It also covers specific guidance concerning inclusive practice; health and safety; and child protection.

*Chapter 5 – Positive relationships*, specifically focuses on four key 'commitments' linked to this EYFS theme: working as a member of a team; working with parents; interactions and relationships with children; and the key person role.

*Chapter 6 – Enabling environments* looks specifically at Observation, Assessment and Planning. It also encourages you to consider how the learning environment supports children's learning as well as the 'wider context'.

*Chapter 7 – Learning and development* will help you support these areas for children in your care. It explores some key research in the area, discusses significant pedagogical issues, and focuses in particular on the role of the adult in early learning.

The final chapter of this book – *Chapter 8 – Next steps* encourages you to take a step back and evaluate your own learning journey during your placement. It takes an anticipatory approach, where you will consider the next steps for your professional development.

Working with young children demands passion, professionalism and commitment. Throughout your professional working life you will be privileged to share significant and wondrous moments of a child's learning and development. There will also, undoubtedly, be times when you are grappling with your own professional identity and beliefs. Sometimes this will be the result of the environment you are working in, but on other occasions the circumstances will be beyond your control. Nevertheless, we hope that this book provides you with a suitable starting point to becoming an effective and professional practitioner.

# 1 The range and diversity of Early Years settings

*Jo Basford*

## CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

*By the end of this chapter you should:*

- *have an understanding of the historical development of Early Years provision;*
- *know about the range and diversity of Early Years settings available to children and families;*
- *have an awareness of some of the unique features of each type of Early Years provision.*

*This chapter addresses the following Professional Standards for QTS and EYPS:*

*QTS: Q3; 5; 6; 15.*

*EYPS: S1; 4; 24; 29; 33.*

## Introduction

This chapter is intended to give you a detailed insight into the range of Early Years settings you may encounter during your placements. A child's access to a particular type of provision is usually dependent on a family's needs. For example, parents who both work may well require a setting which offers full day care. Alternatively, some children are cared for by their family members, and will access sessional care in order to develop their social skills, or to prepare them for full-time schooling.

Early Years settings tend to fall into two broad categories.

- Settings 'maintained' financially by the local authority (LA).
- Settings which receive funding from other sources. These settings are commonly referred to as the PVI sector (Private, Voluntary or Independently funded) or 'non-maintained'. (See Table 1.1.)

Maintained settings (Public/LA funding)	Non-maintained settings (funded from revenue other than LA)
School – Nursery class/ Reception class/ Foundation Unit ( <i>term time only</i> ).	Private/Independent – Day nursery ( <i>up to 50 weeks per year</i> ) or school ( <i>term time only</i> ) run by a company or individual owner.
Nursery school – staffing commensurate with a primary school, including a head teacher ( <i>term time only</i> ).	Voluntary – preschool or playgroup run by a voluntary or charitable group. For example the PLA, Barnardos, NSPCC or social enterprise. These are not-for-profit organisations ( <i>usually only term time</i> ).
Children’s Centre – a multidisciplinary team (including a centre manager and teacher) employed by the LA ( <i>sessional ‘groups’ and full-time day care</i> ).	Children’s Centre – the day care element may be delivered by a PVI provider ( <i>up to 50 weeks per year</i> ).
Family Centre – usually funded through Social Care budget ( <i>sessions only offered to children and families as identified ‘in need’</i> ).	Childminder ( <i>up to 50 weeks per year</i> ).

**Table 1.1** The range of settings available to families

It is important that you understand how and why there is such a diverse range of settings available for parents/carers to choose from. The political landscape over the last 40 years has transformed and influenced society’s thinking about the needs of young children. This, in turn, has had a significant impact on the phenomenal growth within the Early Years sector. The first section of this chapter provides you with an overview of the way Early Years provision has evolved over time and considers the way government policy has influenced this growth. Understanding the sociological and political dimensions of policy and practice is an important area of your own professional development. The ability to critically reflect on, and to problematise some of the issues and tensions for practitioners within the Early Years field, will help you to understand the unique range of challenges practitioners face within their own provision. The remainder of this chapter outlines in more detail the unique features pertinent to the type of provision in which you may be placed.

## The historical development of Early Years services

In pre-industrialised times, childcare was predominantly the woman’s role. Mothers were expected to combine work and home. There was a great reliance on older siblings or the extended family to look after the younger children while mothers went out to work on the land. It was not uncommon practice for babies to be taken out to the fields with their mothers or for young children to participate, in a small scale, in cottage industries such as spinning and weaving, developing skills for their adult life.

Industrialisation had a significant impact on families, many of whom moved to the towns and cities to work in factories. Families no longer had access to their extended family, and older siblings were sent to work themselves in the factories and mills. Mothers had to rely on far less suitable care for their youngest, through either wet nurses or minding schools (commonly termed 'baby farms'). By the end of the nineteenth century, universal education had been introduced in order to purposefully occupy the youngest children who were unable to work. Large numbers of young children were forced into inappropriate formal learning conditions. Yet this was also the period of the enlightenment, and there was now a growing recognition of the need for young children to be nurtured and protected. Children under the age of five became excluded from the state system, and the care and education of these children was heavily reliant on such pioneers as Margaret McMillan and philanthropist mill owners such as Robert Owen who established nursery schools. Emphasis grew on the health and care of working-class children who were living in poor conditions. The expansion of nursery provision continued up to the Second World War, because of the demand for mothers in the labour force, and this practice continued. With the immense growth of provision, but very little money to provide suitable accommodation and an appropriately trained workforce, there was a need to regulate standards of childcare with the Nurseries and Childminders Regulation Act 1948.

## Post-1945 provision

After the Second World War, the education and care of young children became traditionally separated. This separation rested not only on the type of provision available, but also reflected society's views concerning the responsibility for the care and education of young children. Mothers were no longer required to work and returned home to make way for the returning soldiers, and day nursery provision was reduced by half. Alongside this, views regarding the damaging effect of day care on children (Bowlby, 1958) led to the belief that children needed the constant presence of their mother.

Government thinking was that childcare was predominantly the responsibility of parents. The nature and type of settings, therefore, available to children and their families reflected this notion. Provision available was limited in scope, accessibility and quality, and heavily dependent on local communities (predominantly parents) establishing their own voluntary resources to meet the needs of the families in that area. State-funded settings such as Family Centres and nursery classes/nursery schools, since they were costly, were generally only available to families in areas of significant social and economic deprivation. By the 1980s there became an increasing emphasis on equality of provision for all children. The 1989 Children Act (part x) provided specific regulatory requirements for provision in the non-maintained sector and, in 1991, the DfES commissioned the report *Starting with Quality* (Rumbold Report). This marked the inception of changes to Early Years provision, which gathered momentum as the political landscape changed.

## New Labour policies for children

In 1997, the Labour Party won the general election. The new government demonstrated a huge commitment not only to 'education, education, education', but also to the care,